Online discussion forums - tips for student engagement

When to use a discussion forum

Forms are used for asynchronous, one-to-many communication. Use them to communicate learning and teaching news to students, to manage frequently asked questions or to support learning discussion activities.

Top Tips

1. Include clear guidance for students about
    - the purpose of each discussion forum
    - how you expect students to participate (e.g. post queries, respond to others, length of responses)
    - what students should expect from staff (e.g. response times, regular responses to the whole cohort)

2. Monitor forum activity regularly. Respond to questions, either by replying to individual posts, or by posting a summary for the whole cohort. Coordinate with your teaching team to ensure staff presence in the forum

3. Encourage students to use the forum instead of emails so all students can see the response

4. You can monitor activity using the **Course participation report**, and send a message to students who haven't contributed

5. You can create **Groups in Moodle** and set your forum to **separate** or **visible** groups mode, so students can discuss in smaller peer groups

Every Moodle course has a **Announcements forum** by default. This is a one-way forum for staff announcements to students. All participants are subscribed by default.

For two-way discussion, set up a **Standard forum for general use.** Check the **forum subscription settings** to make sure all students are subscribed to receive updates.

To manage forum notification emails, set your **Preferences** to receive a 'daily digest', instead of an email notification for every forum post. Make students aware of how to do this. The forum digest is sent out daily after 5pm, so be aware students may not receive an instant email notification.

Follow the links from notification emails to reply to posts in the forum in Moodle.

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