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Introduction

The Discussion and Private Messages tool is great for group collaboration and online discussions where students can create Topics and Messages. Instructors and students have the ability to reply to one another on the discussion board as well as create private messages. One of the greatest benefits of the Discussion and Private Messages tool is its ability to effortlessly create group Forums or Categories that control access to only those members in the group. Another feature that is common in most online forums is the potential to create a unique profile with an avatar that displays next to your messages.

Comparing Forums to Discussion and Private Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Forums</th>
<th>Discussion and Private Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great for asynchronous conversations among the whole class that can be easily graded</td>
<td>Great for asynchronous group collaboration and communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Forums</th>
<th>Discussion and Private Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Forum</td>
<td>• Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Topic</td>
<td>• Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thread</td>
<td>• Topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Message</td>
<td>• Message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threads and order of messages</th>
<th>Forums</th>
<th>Discussion and Private Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threads are ordered by when they were first created, from oldest to newest.</td>
<td>Discussions have flat threads – messages are in one reverse chronological list, replying to the topic itself. Topics are bumped up to the top of a discussion when a new message is added.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Forums</th>
<th>Discussion and Private Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum statistics are available for site owners to determine the participation level of individual participants.</td>
<td>Statistics for Discussion and Private Messages are not available.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Grading** | Messages can be assigned a point value and sent to the Gradebook with comments.  
- Grades are associated with a previously created Gradebook entry. | You can enable grading of "Categories," "Forums," or "Topics," assign point values, and give comments. However, you cannot grade specific messages, as you can in Forums.  
- A Gradebook entry is created when you enable grading for a Category, Forum, or Topic. Grades cannot be associated with a previously created Gradebook entry. |
| **Groups** | Permissions to particular Forums or Topics can be modified for predefined Groups (as well as for various site roles). | Site leaders can easily change Forum and Topic settings in combination with predefined Groups to allow or deny access to specific discussions per Group. |
| **Attachments** | Users can add attachments to messages. | Users can add attachments to messages. |
| **Permissions** | The site owner (or another participant with the appropriate role) can modify permissions of contributors, including modifying the template from which new Topics are created.  
- For example, you can enable participants to submit their posts to a Topic before they have permission to read the responses of others. | Modification of permissions is more basic than in Forums, and they cannot be modified based on site roles of users – participants of a particular Forum are all given the same permissions. |
| **Managing** | *Forums* is more intuitive. | Discussion takes more time to learn. |
| **Embedding media** | .mov, .bmp, .jpg/.jpeg, .gif, .png, .psd, .tiff, .swf, emoticons | Can not embed media, only display “emoticons” |
| **Profile** | Only a participant's name and user name are displayed when they post something. | You can add information to a discussion profile. It is independent of your Sakai profile and can include things like a signature and an avatar. |
Chapter 1

Layout

There are three main areas to the Discussion and Private Messages home page.

Section 1: Navigation within the Discussion and Private Messages
Section 2: Main content and messages
Section 3: Legend for the symbols in Discussions and Private Messages

Navigation

The home page of Discussion & Private Messages is considered the "Discussion Home" area. As you navigate through your forums and topics, you can return to home from any page of the tool by click on "Discussion Home" or "Discussion List." As you click on forums, the software will build a navigation menu (breadcrumbs), showing you the path you've taken. You may also navigate in between forums by using the drop-down menu at the bottom of the Discussion forum pages. This is especially useful if you have finished reading a topic and its messages and you are at the bottom of the screen.
**Legend**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="New Messages" /></td>
<td>New Messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="No new messages" /></td>
<td>No new messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Reply Only" /></td>
<td>Reply Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Select Groups" /></td>
<td>Select Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Grade By Forum" /></td>
<td>Grade By Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Grade By Topic" /></td>
<td>Grade By Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Read Only" /></td>
<td>Read Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Deny Access" /></td>
<td>Deny Access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The legend above explains the different types of icons used to highlight functionality, such as new, blocked messages, etc. **Hot messages** refers to messages that have had heavy dialogue and have reached the maximum number of replies to be considered hot (default is 30). **Student posts** are always "normal" posts. Special types of postings can only be created by instructors. They include Announce, Sticky and Reusable topics.
Chapter 2

Creating Discussions

For optimum performance it is very important to have a clear layout for your Discussion and Private Messages. Keep in mind what will be considered a Category, Forum, Topic, and Message. A Category is going to be a broad term comprised of multiple Forums. In most cases, the instructor will create a Topic providing instructions and expectations. The Topic can be “Sticky” so that it always displays at the top of the list. Then students reply to the Topic, which is called a Message. It is still possible for students/instructors to reply to Messages. Another thing to keep in mind is how to set up your grading. Instructors can grade at multiple levels, such as at the Category level, Forum, Topic, and individual Messages. In most cases grading occurs based on Messages, which are replies to the instructors original topic with instructions.

- **Category**: Discussions
- **Forum**: Modules
- **Topic**
  - Module 1
  - Module 2
  - Module 3
- **Messages**
  - Student A: About Fox News
  - Student B: About Sports
  - Student C: Fashion

Categories are created by instructors. Typically they are a title that represents a theme and comprised of multiple Forums.

Forums are created by instructors. Typically they represent what students can expect from the Topics.

Topics are where instructors provide instructions for students. Students read the topic then reply-creating a Message.

Students can create Messages based on the Topic. Instructors can grade Messages.
If you want your Discussions to be for the whole class then the Category might simply be “Discussions”. If you intend on using small group discussion boards then you might have multiple Categories such as “Group 1”, “Group 2”, “Group 3”, etc. etc..

Example for whole class group discussions:

Category: Class Discussions
  Forum: Introductions
  Forum: Modules
    Topic: Module 1
    Topic: Module 2
    Topic: Module 3
  Forum: Reflections
    Topic: Article 1
    Topic: Article 2
    Topic: Article 3

Example for small group discussions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Group 1</th>
<th>Category: Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum: Modules</td>
<td>Forum: Modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Module 1</td>
<td>Topic: Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Module 2</td>
<td>Topic: Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Module 3</td>
<td>Topic: Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum: Reflections</td>
<td>Forum: Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Article 1</td>
<td>Topic: Article 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Article 2</td>
<td>Topic: Article 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Article 3</td>
<td>Topic: Article 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CREATE A NEW FORUM
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click Add
5. Provide a name for your Forum.
6. Select a Category from the drop down menu.
7. The description is usually brief. Instructions and expectations for the Forum will usually be provided by the instructor in the Topic area.
8. Modify the settings as necessary (refer to Grading and Managing Groups for more details).
9. Forum Type: Reply only, allows the instructor to create a Topic and students can only reply to the topic. In most cases, that will allow the instructor to keep an organized structure to their discussions and make it possible to see students contributions in a threaded view vs. having multiple Topics created by students and having to “click around” to view their contributions.
10. Click on Update.
DELETE A DISCUSSION
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Check the boxes for the Forums you want to delete.
5. Click on Delete selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forums listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Lounge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MODIFY FORUM SETTINGS**
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Select Click to edit next to the Forum.
5. Modify title and other settings.
6. Click on Update.

**REORDER FORUM**
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click Up or Down for the appropriate Forum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forums listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Study #254</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omega Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXPORT DISCUSSIONS FOR OTHER COURSES**
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click on Import/Export from the Forum Admin panel.
4. Click on Export.

**IMPORT DISCUSSIONS FROM OTHER COURSES**

1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click on Import/Export.
4. Click on Browse.
5. Search for .zip file you export from another site.
6. Click on Import.
Chapter 3

Managing Groups

Group access is managed at the Forum level. You might consider creating a Category that is unique for all the discussions, then create your Topics based on groups and restrict access. In the following tutorial a course reviews multiple case files. The instructor does not want every group reviewing the same case file so he created multiple Categories based on the case file numbers. Then the instructor created multiple Forums and allowed access to only one group per Forum. Within the Forum, students have the ability to create Topics and from those Topics the other students in the group can reply with comments (which is called a Message). The following image is an example of the end result.

**Category:** Case study #
**Forum:** Named after group
**Topics:** Created by students
**Messages:** Student’s reply to each others Topics

![Discussion and Private Messages](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion List</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Messages</th>
<th>Last Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Study #254</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alpha Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01/31/2012 02:03:45 PM Morgan Haskell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omega Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01/31/2012 02:19:17 PM student_demo3 student_demo3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 002</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01/31/2012 02:20:24 PM student3 Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 003</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01/31/2012 02:17:57 PM Student Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Study #912</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gamma Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No messages</td>
<td>No messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 001</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No messages</td>
<td>No messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CREATE A NEW CATEGORY
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Categories from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click on Add.
5. Give it a title.
6. Click on Update

CREATE A GROUP FORUM
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click Add.
5. Provide a name for your Forum.
6. Select a Category from the drop down menu.
7. The description is usually brief. Instructions and expectations for the Forum will usually be provided by the instructor in the Topic area.
8. Modify the settings as necessary.
9. Under Allow Access select Allow Access to Selected Groups
10. From the menu select which group(s) will have access to the Forum.
11. Click on Update.

Example of the list of Forums:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study #254</th>
<th>Forums listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omega Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 002</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 003</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study #912</th>
<th>Forums listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gamma Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 001</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study #107</th>
<th>Forums listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 004</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tango Group</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 005</td>
<td>Click to edit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4

Contributing to Discussions

CREATE A TOPIC
1. Navigate to the Discussion List
2. Click on a Forum title
3. Select New Topic

Please note: Instructors will usually create the first Topic and provide instructions along with attaching a rubric for student expectations. It is also useful to make the instructions “Sticky” which means it will always display at the top for students to see first.

4. Create a title, add content, attachments if necessary, and modify settings.
5. Set topic as Sticky so that it will always display at the top.
6. Click on Submit to post topic.
REPLY TO A TOPIC
1. Navigate to the Discussion List.
2. Click on a Forum title.
3. Select the Topic.
4. Click Reply or select quote if you want to include all or some of the message in your reply.

5. Add content in the text box editor.
6. Click on Submit to reply.

SEND A PRIVATE MESSAGE
1. Navigate to the Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Click on Member Listing.
3. Click on the PM icon to send a private message.
4. In a Topic, you can also send a private message by clicking on the PM icon.

SEND A PRIVATE MESSAGE TO MULTIPLE RECIPIENTS
1. Navigate to the Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Click on Private Messages.
3. Click on New PM.
4. Select one or several users to receive the private message.
   Hold the Control (PC) or Command (Mac) key to select multiple names.

5. Provide a subject line.
6. Write message in text box
7. Scroll down and click on Submit.

READ A PRIVATE MESSAGE
1. Navigate to the Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Click on New Private Messages.
   Notice there is a (1) which represents how many new messages there are.
3. Select Message from inbox.
**Paste from Word**
1. Copy your text from Word.
2. Navigate to the Topic or Message.
3. Click on the Paste from Word icon.

**Mark as Read**
A Topic or Message will display in a highlighted text box.
1. Navigate to the Discussion List.
2. Click on the Forum title.
3. Check the boxes for each Topic read.
4. Click on Mark Topic as Read.

**VIEW ONLY RECENT TOPICS**
1. Navigate to the Discussion List.
2. Click on Recent Topics.
3. Topics will be listed in chronological order (most recent at the top).
Chapter 4

Grading

ENABLE GRADING BY CATEGORY
Please note: Grading by Category is not recommended. However, if you grade based on contributing to the discussion and not on the content, then grading by category level is the simplest option.

1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Categories from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click on Click to edit next to the Category you want to grade.
5. Select Yes to Enable Grading by Category.
6. Give the max point value.
7. Check the box to Send to Gradebook.
8. Click on Update.

ENABLE GRADING BY FORUM
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Manage.
3. Click Forums from the left Forum Admin panel.
4. Click on Click to edit, next to the Forum you want to grade.
5. Select Enabled to allow grading.
7. Give a max point value.
8. Check the box to Send to Gradebook.
9. Click on Update.
ASSIGNING GRADES AND FEEDBACK IN CONTEXT

1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select the Forum you want to grade.
3. Click on the Topic.
4. Click on the Grade icon.

5. The grading dialogue box will pop-up.
6. The feedback is private and will not display to other students.
7. Fill in the appropriate grade value.
8. Check box to Send to Gradebook.
9. Click on Update.
ASSIGNING GRADES TO ALL USERS WITH POSTS
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Grade Forum.
3. Enter a score for all users with posts.
4. Add comments to all users with posts if necessary.
5. Click on Save Grades.

ASSIGNING GRADES TO ALL USERS INDIVIDUALLY
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select Grade Forum.

3. Enter a score.
   If a student posted on the Forum, then you can click on their name and it will bring up their post.
4. Click on Grader Comments to open a text box for comments.
5. Check box to Send to Gradebook.
6. Click on Update.

**Viewing Grades**

Students can view their grades and feedback in the Discussion and Private Messages tool along with viewing them in the Gradebook tool.
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Click on View Scores.
3. Students can view scores and comments
4. Click on Discussion List to return to main page.

**VIEWING STUDENTS TOTAL NUMBER OF POSTS**
1. Navigate to Discussion and Private Messages.
2. Select an individual by clicking on their name/link anywhere in Discussions.
3. View all students total number of posts by clicking on Member Listing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Private Message</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlie, student3</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christin, student5</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskell, Morgan</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John, student2</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam, student4</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Student</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student, test</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student2, test</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student3, test</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student4, test</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student_demo2, student_demo2</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student_demo3, student_demo3</td>
<td>🕒 9:28 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Custom Profile

You set your preferences once, and your profile settings are visible in all sites where you are a participant or facilitator.

- If users have not set any preference in their profile, only their name will be listed and a link to Private Messages.
- Setting profile preferences is optional.
- Preferences users choose to complete will appear under their profile link by their posts.
- Discussion list members can view others' profiles by clicking on a user's name and under Member Listing.
- The first, last name, and email address of users is retrieved from the system. It cannot be changed in My Profile.

Edit Profile
1. Navigate to Discussion & Private Messages.
2. Select My Profile.
3. Fill in the necessary information.
   Please note that user and email address can not be modified.
4. Upload an image
5. Click Submit to save your profile

---

**ADD PROFILE IMAGE**
1. Navigate to Discussion & Private Messages.
2. Select My Profile.
3. Scroll down to Avatar Control Panel
4. Click Browse to search your hard drive for an image.
5. Click on Submit to save changes.

---

**VIEW PROFILE(S)**
1. Navigate to Discussion & Private Messages.
2. Click on a Forum.
3. Select a Topic.
4. Click on Profile icon from individuals posts.
5. Alternatively, you can select Member Listing from the top navigation.

6. From the list of site members select one to view their profile.
Chapter 6

Credits & License

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