MOODLE Discussion Forum Types

Overview

MOODLE offers five different types of Discussion Forum and each can be used for specific pedagogic purposes. This tip-sheet describes each type of forum and how they can be used. It is useful to fully understand the options available and how best they can support your Students.

First, this tip-sheet will introduce and explain the MOODLE Discussion Forum structure and terminology before describing the five Forum options available to you. You’ll then be ready to decide what Forum Type(s) to use.

This Should Take Approximately 10 Minutes

Step 1 - The Jargon-Buster

The hierarchy of any MOODLE Discussion Forum is as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forum format/type</th>
<th>at the top level, you create a Forum Type. In MOODLE, an example could be a Standard Discussion Forum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum Topic</td>
<td>next, within a given Forum Type, Topics are added usually by the Forum Moderator (unless you permit otherwise). You use Topics to introduce the subject of the discussion. The Discussion builds and develops as others respond within that Topic. Some Forum Types permit the discussion of only a single Topic. Other Forum Types permit many Topics to be introduced and discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum Posting</td>
<td>once a Topic has been added, the Discussion can be begin. Users post their discussions to the Topic and the discussion develops as more users post their contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum Reply</td>
<td>as the name suggests, users reply to Postings within the Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum Thread (Thread View)</td>
<td>when combined, a Topic, Posting and a Reply creates what is known as a ‘Thread’. Using Thread View, you are able to match replies to specific postings in the time-date order they were posted and thus see how the discussion builds over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum List (List View)</td>
<td>Unlike Thread View, viewing discussions in List View lists all postings chronologically. In List View, for example, Replies are not linked (threaded) to an initial posting. The obvious disadvantage is it much more difficult to track a specific discussion within a given Topic. However, it is much easier to see the volume of discussions within a given time/date-frame.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2 – MOODLE’s Five Discussion Forum Types

- **Type 1 – A Standard Discussion Forum**
  This format is probably one many existing forum users are most familiar: a *Standard Forum is an open forum and it permits anyone to start a new Topic*. There can be many Topics within the Standard Forum and anyone can introduce a new Topic. Most online Modules use a Standard Discussion Forum format as it is usually the best (or only) option available. They offer the most flexibility but if you envisage a high volume of postings or Topics, they require more management.

- **Type 2 – A Simple Discussion Forum**
  *A single topic Discussion developed only one page.* Only one Topic is introduced and discussed, therefore, this format is very useful for short, focused discussions regarding a specific subject. This option requires less management compared to the Standard Discussion Forum format and is useful if you envisage a introducing a low number of Topics.

- **Type 3 – Each Person Post One Discussion**
  This forum type requires *each forum member to post exactly one new Discussion Topic*. In turn, other members can reply as usual. This is an useful format should you wish to allow everyone the opportunity to initiate a discussion Topic rather than solely (or instead of) the Forum Moderator. An useful application of this particular format could be, for example, individual reflections upon that week’s Topic.

- **Type 4 – Q&A Discussion Forum**
  The Q&A Forum Moderator adds an introduction for others to reply. The *MOODLE’s Q&A Forum format then requires all discussion forum members to post a question or answer in response*. This is useful when you require a forum to allow students to ask questions or provide answers following lectures or other resource materials. Also, this format encourages original thought and critical thinking as answers from other students will not be revealed until their own response has been posted.

- **Type 5 - Standard Forum in a Blog-like Format**
  This forum type offers all the functionality of the Standard Discussion Forum. However, instead of discussions presented in List of Thread View, members will *view the Discussion as a collection of pages, with each page introducing the Topic and all postings, replies scrolling underneath*. For members more used to - or preference for - Blog tools, this format offers more familiar layout and structure.