FORUMS

The forum activity enhances the course with the possibility of asynchronous discussions for students. All students can start new discussions, view all posts and reply to them by default. Most common uses:
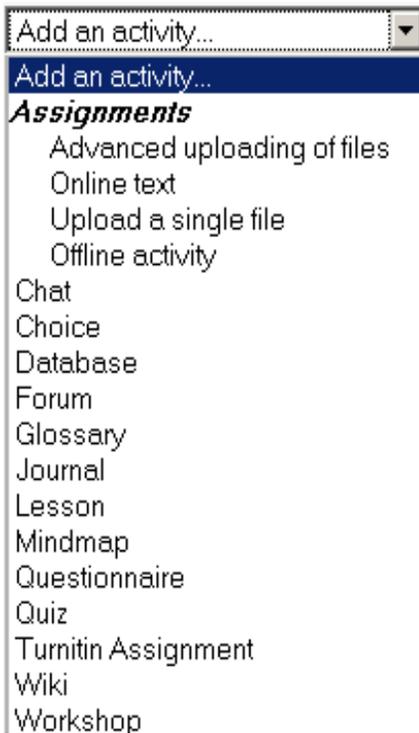
- **Group Discussion about a Topic**
- **Student "repository"** - this is the easiest way for students to upload files to a course. Everyone can read, reply to each discussion and check the files. The teacher can act as a moderator.

Note: The "**News Forum**" (or general news and announcements) is automatically part of all courses. *It is not applicable for student conversations* as it allows only teachers to post news to the participants of the course. So students are only able to read it – and they will receive an email about the post every time.

HOW TO CREATE A FORUM FOR STUDENT DISCUSSIONS?

STEP 1. : Go to your course and click on the **TURN EDITING ON** button (top right)

STEP 2. Many icons and drop-down menus will appear. Click on the menu called **ADD an ACTIVITY at the appropriate topic and Choose FORUM**

Add an activity...
Add an activity...
Assignments
  Advanced uploading of files
  Online text
  Upload a single file
  Offline activity
Chat
Choice
Database
Forum
Glossary
Journal
Lesson
Mindmap
Questionnaire
Quiz
Turnitin Assignment
Wiki
Workshop

STEP 3. A form will appear. You have to fill in the first few fields and change the settings if necessary. You can leave most of the settings on the default value except the following (detailed description is available next to each field): Click **Save and return to course when you are done.** You will see that a link appeared with the name of the forum. You just have to inform your students about the forum and the work can start. Make sure that you give all information necessary for them.

Settings

- **Forum name (mandatory):** This will appear as the link name on the main course page.
- **Forum introduction (mandatory)***:* Fill the details and expectations to this field.
  You can copy paste the following section too, to provide technical help: *You can find help and details on the "Student help page" about the technical details if needed.*
- **Forum type***:* a) *Standard forum for general use (default)* – Most of the time you want to use this. It is an open forum where anyone can start a new topic at any time. This is the best general-purpose forum.

b) *A single simple discussion* - is just a single topic, all on one page. Useful for short, focused discussions. c) *Each person posts one discussion* - Each person can post exactly one new discussion topic (everyone can reply to them though). This is useful when you want each student to start a discussion about a chosen topic and everyone else responds to these.

d) *Q And A Forum* - The Q & A forum requires students to post their perspectives before viewing other students' postings. Students can view and respond to others' postings only after their initial posting.. This feature allows equal initial posting opportunity among all students, thus encouraging original and independent thinking. **Note: The teacher have to start the first discussion topic after the creation of the forum** (this should be a question you ask from the students) This action is recommended for other forum types as well, to encourage the proactive use of this tool.

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- **Maximum attachment size -** The default is **5 MB.** You should change it if you think the student files will be bigger than that.

- **Forum aggregation (grading for forums)** defines how all the ratings given to each individual post of students are combined to form the final grade (for the whole forum activity). If you select this option, a menu will appear at the bottom right side of every post students make. Moodle will calculate a final grade depending on the aggregation method you choose:
    Average (default): The **mean** of all the ratings given to all posts in that forum.
    Count: The **number of rated posts** becomes the final grade. (rewards activity)
    Max: The **highest** rating is returned as the final grade. (only the best post counts)
    Min: The **lowest** rating is returned as the final grade. (only the worst post counts)
    Sum: All the ratings for a particular user are **added together**. (but can`t exceed the value of the **grade** – see below.)

- **Grade:** The *default 100* means that you can assign any value to the posts of individual students from *0 to 100.* You can change this value (number of the **maximum** points students can get for this activity)**.** Unlike assignments, it is possible for multiple teachers to give different ratings to posts. Moodle will calculate all of them depending on the chosen aggregation method. \

Note about deadlines: Unlike assignments, this activity **does not have** the option to set **deadlines**. If you want to give a deadline to students, you have to use other methods.
For example: Send messages with the news forum, and/or create an "offline" type assignment with the deadline linking to this forum This deadline will appear for students in their calendar and "upcoming events" block as assignment deadlines automatically do.

- **Force everyone to be subscribed? – Email notifications about posts**
When a person is subscribed to a forum it means that they will be sent email copies of every post in that forum. (emails are sent about 30 minutes after the post was first written).
People can usually choose whether or not they want to be subscribed to each forum.
However, if you choose to **force subscription** on a particular forum then all course users will be subscribed automatically, even those that enroll at a later time. This is especially useful in forums towards the beginning of the course (before everyone has worked out that they can subscribe to these emails themselves). If you choose the option "**Yes, initially**" then all future course users will be subscribed initially but they can unsubscribe themselves at any time. If you choose "**Yes, forever**" then they will not be able to unsubscribe themselves. **You do not have to deal with this with "News forums"** – students will **always** receive an email about the posts every time.

Important note about subscription: **This setting will not affect** *existing* **course participants**!
Changing from "Yes, initially" to "No" *will not unsubscribe existing users*, it will only affect future course users. Similarly changing to "Yes, initially" will not subscribe *existing* course users but only those enrolling later. To *subscribe/unsubscribe existing users*, you have to manually edit students` subscription.

STEP 1. Go to the forum.
STEP 2. Show/Edit current subscribers (top right)
STEP 3. Turn editing on (this button only affects this page)
STEP 4. Select the users and use the **arrows** to subscribe/unsubscribe them.

HOW TO USE A FORUM?

All roles (student, teacher) can start new discussion topics and reply to posts by default. You can also act as a **moderator**, so they can **edit** or **delete** all posts or **move posts** to a new discussion topic (split).

1. TO REPLY to a thread, click on the name of the thread in the forum, and click the "**Reply**" link at the bottom right of the post you want to reply to. Give the thread a title in the "**Subject**" heading, and type your post in the "Message" section. You can attach a file if needed. When you are done, check your post for errors and click the "**Post to forum**" button at the bottom. Be sure to check the Subscription setting underneath the message box — if you want to receive emails of every post to the forum, set it to "Send me email copies of posts to this forum." If not, set it to "I don't want email copies of posts to this forum." After you've posted, you will have 30 minutes to edit or delete your post.

2. TO POST A NEW THREAD in a **forum**, go to the forum, then click the "**Add a new discussion topic**" button at the top of the list of threads. The fields are the same as above.

Students can change whether they are subscribed to a given forum at any time by clicking on the name of the forum, then clicking the "**Subscribe/Unsubscribe me from this forum**" link in the top right of the window (if you did not forced them to stay subscribed)

Recommendation: You may have problems with **copy/pasting text directly from MS Word** rarely as these documents have many "hidden" formatting options (and you copy these options as well without knowing it). You can prevent this happening if you clear formatting in Ms Word / save your text into **Notepad** first OR if you save your Word document as a **HTML file** (file/save as a web page) first, copy/paste afterwards and format the text directly in Moodle.

GROUP WORK

The **Groups** feature allows you to divide the students in your course into different groups to easily separate them. Students can use Moodle activities as members of these groups afterwards, allowing them to work together closely.

MAIN BENEFITS

- **No need for multiple activities**
  Using Groups, you only need to **create a single instance of any activity**, rather than one for each group. This feature is the best with **forums**. You will be able to handle the groups separately but group members will be able to cooperate only with their own group.
  E.g. G*roups of students share presentations or have discussions with a forum . Alternatively small groups of students can work together on a topic – this will increase individual participation and allow you to compare the different conclusions drawn by each group.*

- **Restrict Access**
  Groups can also be used to **restrict access** to a particular resource or activity to a specified group of students. (a file, and assignment, etc – see **Groupings** for more information.)

- **Easier grading for assignments**
  Groups can make it easier for you to separate different groups of students while giving feedback and grading.(view data by groups)

- **Makes several other special workarounds available**
  For example**, creating "technical" groups for each student in the course** (and assigning only one student to each group) makes it possible to easily restrict access to forum posts of other students. You can change this setting later and change the group forum to a normal one to allow students to read and respond to the posts of their classmates.

HOW TO CREATE GROUPS

It is important to set up the groups **before** releasing an Activity using them.

STEP 1. : Go to your course and click on Groups in the Administration block (menu).

STEP 2. Create the Groups
You will see a screen with two columns: *Groups* and *Members*.
If no groups have been set up, both columns will be empty. Create each group by clicking the **Create Group** button, typing a name into the Group name field and clicking **Create group**.
The other fields are optional. The new group then appears in the left-hand column.
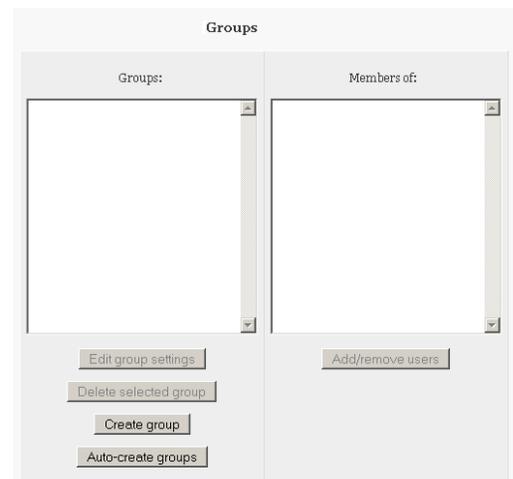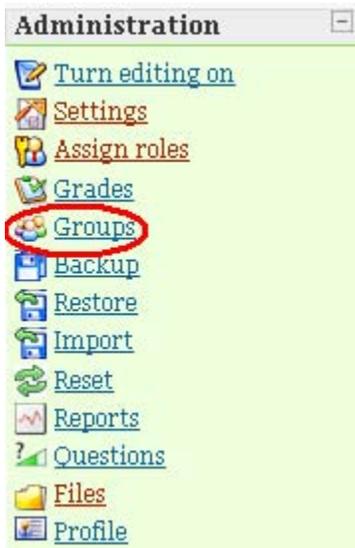
STEP 3. **Add users to the Groups**
This process is manual and is **dependent on the students having already enrolled on your course**.

Select and highlight the group you want to set by clicking it once.
Click **Add/Remove Users button on the right.**

You will see lists of *existing (left side)* and *potential (right side)* members. In the "Potential members" list, select the users you want to add to the group (hold down the Ctrl key to select multiple users). Then click the **"add"** button to add them to the group. Repeat these steps for each group you want to use. You can add a single user to multiple groups if it is needed.

Note: You do not have to add teachers to any groups by default, teachers can **check all of them**.
However, you may need to add teachers (including yourself) to separate groups if you want to restrict them from interacting with **all** groups. This way, they will be able to check and grade work of those groups they are members of.

STEP 4. **Enable Groups for the Activity**
Go back to the main page of the course and "Turn editing on" if needed. Find the **group icon** 👤 next to the activity (forum, assignment, etc.) to change the group settings.
   •👥 **Visible groups:** students can view other groups' activities *but can not participate only in their own.*
   •👥 **Separate groups:** students can neither view nor participate in other groups' activities (other groups are invisible for them
   Alternatively you can use Edit icon ✏️ for the activity you want to use for group work and click on it. Scroll down and change the group mode, then click "save and return to course".

CHANGE THE ENTIRE COURSE INTO "GROUP MODE"
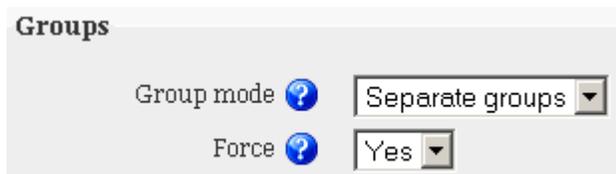
If you want to set the group work for **all** activities in a course, then go to the **Settings** in the **Administrative menu**, and select the **Group mode** there (separate or visible groups). Also change the **Force** option to "yes" (below this.)

If you change only the "**group mode**" but not the "**force**" option then the activities **will not change**, but the students will be able to check the teams / team members in the **participants** block of the course (top left).
Note: Changing this setting will also change the default group mode of any new activity that you may add later.

USING THE CONFIGURED GROUPS IN ACTIVITIES
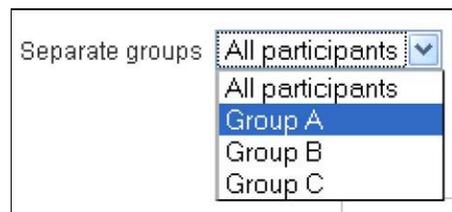
Go to the activity where you set the group work. You will see a new drop-down menu at the top left side, where you can select if you want to see/interact with all participants or only the members of one group.

Forums - Communicate with just a group of students in an activity
Moodle Teachers can post to all groups or to individual groups. Remember to select the group to whom you want to post from the drop-down menu in the top-left corner before you post to a forum. If you choose "**all participants**", members of **every group** will be able to read your post – but unable to respond in that topic!

Assignments/other individual activities: Groups will not change the way students interact with assignments as these are **individual activities**. But groups can make it easier for you to separate different groups of students when you grade assignments or give feedback (view students by groups)

ADVANCED MATERIAL - GROUPINGS:
USING DIFFERENT SETS OF GROUPS & RESTRICTING ACCESS TO ITEMS

Sometimes you will not use the same groups of students for the whole course and you will need a different setup for different activities. The **Groupings function** is designed for this purpose. A grouping is a collection of groups within a course, also used to restrict access to an item to a subset of students.

For example you may create a set of groups for the course in general and a separate set for a particular project.

HOW TO SET UP GROUPINGS?
To use Groupings you must first have created at least one group.(see the process on the previous pages).

1.

STEP 1. Click on the "**Groupings" tab** at the top of the **Groups page.**
STEP 2. Click the **"Create grouping"** button, type a name for the grouping and save changes.

STEP 3. Add Groups to the Grouping
On the Groupings page click on the "**Show groups"** icon in the edit column and use the "**Add"** button to place the appropriate Groups to the Grouping..

STEP 4. Apply a Grouping to an Activity or Resource

Go to the resource or activity you want to change and click on the **Edit icon** next to it. Scroll down and select the appropriate **grouping**, then "save and return to course":

Note: If you do not see this option, you have to click on the "**show advanced**" button on the right side. Group mode must be set to separate or visible groups as well as a prerequisite.

If a grouping is selected, then all users assigned to the groups within the grouping will be able to use the activity, but they will still work by groups in that activity as usual.

Important note: If the "**Available for group members only**" checkbox is also checked, then *the activity (or resource) will only be available to users assigned to groups within the selected grouping*, or to any group member if no grouping is selected. (for other users this activity will be completely invisible).

EXAMPLES FOR GROUPINGS

Example 1. Not all students need to participate in all activities in the course

You have 12 students and 4 different projects. 6 different students work on each project, all students will take part in 2 projects. What you have to do:

Grouping	Groups
Project 1	Team 1
Project 2	Team 2
Project 3	Team 3
Project 4	Team 4

STEP 1. You will create 4 groups (Team 1, 2, 3, 4) and assign the appropriate students to these.

→ Team 1 will contain Student A,B,C,D,E,F;

→ Team 2 (G,H,I,J,K,L);

→ Team 3 (A,B,C,G,H,I);

→ Team 4 (D,E,F,J,K,L).

STEP 2. You need to create the 4 Groupings as well (Project 1,2,3,4)

STEP 3. Assign the groups to the groupings (Team 1 to Project 1, etc.).

STEP 4. In the end, you create an individual Forum for each project (4 forums total), and select the appropriate Grouping in them and check "available for group members only". (E.g. *Group Mode – Separate Groups; Grouping – Team 1; Check "available for group members only"*)

You are done. Each student will see only the 2 project forums they are members of and will be able to work with only the other team members for that project. You will see all four groups, and easily supervise the work in them.

Example 2. Everyone will participate in all activities, but the composition of groups will change

Lets modify the previous example for the above purpose. You have the same 12 students and 2 different projects. All 12 will take part in each project and will be assigned to groups of 4, but with different classmates. What you have to do:

STEP 1.You will need 6 groups this time (Team 1-2-3 for project 1 and 4-5-6 for project 2) and assign the appropriate students to these.

For the first project: Second Project
Team 1 will contain Student A, B, C, D;   Team 4 will contain Student A, E, K, D;
Team 2 (E,F,G,H);   Team 5 (B,I,H,J);
Team 3 (I,J,K,L);   Team 6 (G,L,F,C);

STEP 2. You need to create 2 Groupings for the 2 projects (Project 1, 2)

STEP 3. Assign the groups to the groupings (Team 1,2,3 to Project 1, Team 4,5,6 to project 2).

STEP 4. In the end, you create an individual Forum for each project (2 forums total), and select the appropriate Grouping in them (e.g. *Group Mode – Separate Groups; Grouping – Team 1*)

You are done. Each student will see both projects forums and will be able to work with the appropriate team members for both projects.

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