In a face-to-face classroom setting, students are expected to participate in class discussions and that participation is part of the equation when assessing performance. You may find that assessing this type of participation is ambiguous. How do you differentiate between a student who is active, but does not advance the discussion, from a student who speaks less frequently, but with greater impact?

Student interactions with the discussion board create a permanent record of participation, yet you also need to have reasonable expectations about what can be accomplished in an online discussion. Due to its nature, more time may be needed for well-articulated points to emerge in the online environment. In addition to providing a practical number of course discussion opportunities, students need timely and constructive responses regarding the quality of their contributions. Evaluation not only lets them know how they performed, but shapes the improvement of future interactions.

You can assign discussion grades within a forum or thread. You can assign grades based on student participation, on the quality of their posts, or a combination of the two. You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading forums and threads, but you need to create and associate the rubrics in advance.

The following table details the four steps in the discussion grading process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>When you create a graded forum or thread, a column is created automatically in the Grade Center. The name of the forum or thread is used as the column title. You can edit the title in the Grade Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>Students participate in the discussion. As the discussion progresses, you can participate and provide feedback by replying to, rating, and moderating posts. To learn more, see Reply to Discussion Posts and Moderate Discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>You view students' posts and assign grades. You can lock threads after they are graded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View Grade</td>
<td>The grades are saved in the discussion board and the Grade Center. Students can view their grades in My Grades.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW TO ENABLE DISCUSSION GRADING**

When you create or edit a forum, you can enable grading options. After you enable grading, a Grade Center column is created automatically.

The grade settings appear in the **Forum Settings** section of the **Create Forum** page and the **Edit Forum** page.

- Select **Grade Discussion Forum** and type a point value to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum.
- Select **Grade Threads** to evaluate participants on performance in each thread.
- Optionally, select the check box for **Show participants in needs grading status** and the number of posts required to show participants in needs grading status. Applying this setting will show
the needs grading icon—the exclamation mark—in the Grade Center. The posts are placed in
the queue on the Needs Grading page after a user makes the specified number of posts. If you
select a grading option and do NOT select the check box, the needs grading icon does not
appear in the Grade Center and posts do not appear on the Needs Grading page.

Note: If you choose three posts from the drop-down list and a user submits two, the in
progress icon appears in the Grade Center cell and the discussion board until the
specified number of posts is met.

• Optionally, associate a rubric by pointing to Add Rubric. This option appears in the Forum
Settings section when Grade Forum is selected, and in the Grading section of the Create Thread
page when Grade Threads is selected.

![Forum Settings]

**ENABLE THREAD GRADING BEFORE OR AFTER THREAD CREATION**

If you chose to grade threads when you created a forum, you decide on a thread-by-thread basis
whether to grade a thread.

*Note:* If you select the **Grade Threads** option, users cannot create new threads.

1. On the **Create Thread** page, select the **Grade Thread** check box and type the **Points possible**.
   You can determine when posts go into needs grading status by selecting the check box for **Show
participants in needs grading status** and selecting the number of posts from the drop-down list.
2. Click **Submit**.
3. In the forum, the **Grade Thread** function appears in the thread’s **Grade** column.

![Forum: Oceans in the News, Part Two]

You can also enable thread grading directly from the thread list in a forum.

1. Click the **Grade** function in a thread’s **Grade** column.
2. Type the **Points possible**.
3. Click Submit. The Grade Thread function appears in a thread’s Grade column.

HOW TO GRADE FORUM PARTICIPATION

You can assign discussion grades to evaluate participants on performance throughout a forum. When you create or edit a forum, you can enable forum grading options and a Grade Center column is created automatically.

Only users with a role of manager or grader can assign grades for posts. However, a grader cannot view his or her own work. To learn more, see About Forum Roles.

You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading forums, but you must create and associate the rubrics in advance.

1. Access the discussion forum where you enabled forum grading and click Grade Discussion Forum on the action bar.

2. On the Grade Discussion Forum Users page, click Grade in a user’s row with a number in the Posts column.

3. On the Grade Discussion Forum page, a collection of the student’s posts made to the graded forum appears. Since you can assign a forum grade based on multiple threads, all messages posted by a student are included for review. On the action bar, click Print Preview to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the Filter function and the Sort By and Order drop-down lists on the action bar.

The side panel contains three sections:
• **Forum Statistics**: Includes information about the user’s posts, such as **Date of Last Post**, **Average Post Length**, and **Average Post Position**.

• **Forum Grade**: Includes **Grade**, **Grade Date**, **Feedback**, and **Grading Notes**.

• **Contributors**: Users who have submitted the required number of posts appear with exclamation marks—the needs grading icon or, if they have not yet reached the required number, the in progress icon. In this section, use the **Previous User** and **Next User** arrows to navigate among users to grade or click a user’s name in the list. Click **Show All** to view all users in your course. Users who have not posted to the graded forum are included in the list. Click **Show with Posts Only** to return to the list of users who have posts to grade.

4. In the content frame, evaluate the currently selected user’s posts. To assign a grade, click **Edit Grade** in the **Forum Grade** section.

5. Type a numeric value in the **Current Grade Value** box. Assigning a score here removes any Grade Center override that may exist for this user for this forum grade.

   **Note**: If you created and added a rubric for this graded forum, click **View Rubric** to reference it while grading.

6. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the user and **Grading Notes**, which appear to the forum manager or grader only. Optionally, use the check spelling function in the bottom of each text box.

7. Optionally, click **Text Editor** to access the content editor in a pop-up window. Use the functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia and mashups to your feedback or notes.

8. Click **Save Grade**. The information appears in the **Forum Grade** section.

9. Click **Edit Grade** to make changes at any time. The changes appear in the **Forum Grade** section and in the Grade Center column. The changes are recorded in the Grade Center on the user’s **Grade Details** page on the **Grade History** tab.

10. When grading is complete, click **OK** to return to the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page or use the orientation bar to return to the discussion board.

Grades appear in the **Grade** column on the **Grade Discussion Forum Users** page and in the Grade Center.
HOW TO GRADE THREAD PARTICIPATION

You can assign discussion grades to evaluate participants on performance in each thread. When you create or edit a forum, you can enable thread grading options and a Grade Center column is created automatically.

Only users with a role of manager or grader can assign grades for posts. However, a grader cannot view his or her own work. To learn more, see How to Assign Forum Roles.

*Note:* Students cannot create new threads in a forum where threads are graded.

You can create rubrics and refer to them while grading threads, but you must create and associate the rubrics in advance.

1. Access the discussion forum containing a thread you want to grade.
2. On the thread listing page, in **List View**, click **Grade Thread** in the thread’s row.
3. On the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page, click **Grade** in a user's row with a number in the **Posts** column.
4. On the **Grade Discussion Thread** page, a collection of the student’s posts made to the graded thread appears. Since you can assign a thread grade based on multiple messages, all messages posted by a student are included for review. On the action bar, click **Print Preview** to open the page in a new window in a printer-friendly format. Posts print in the order they appear on the page. To select which posts appear and in which order, you can filter and sort posts using the **Filter** function and the **Sort By** and **Order** drop-down lists on the action bar.

The side panel contains three sections:

- **Thread Statistics**: Includes information about the user's posts, such as **Date of Last Post**, **Average Post Length**, and **Average Post Position**.
- **Thread Grade**: Includes **Grade**, **Grade Date**, **Feedback**, and **Grading Notes**.
- **Contributors**: Users who have submitted the required number of posts appear with exclamation marks—the needs grading icon or, if they have not yet reached the required number, the in progress icon. In this section, use the **Previous User** and **Next User** arrows to navigate among users to grade -OR- click a user’s name in the list. Click **Show All** to view all users in your course. Users who have not posted to the graded
thread are included in the list. Click **Show with Posts Only** to return to the list of users who have posts to grade.

5. In the content frame, click **Edit Grade** in the **Thread Grade** section.

6. Type a numeric value in the **Current Grade Value** box. Assigning a score here removes any Grade Center override that may exist for this user for this thread grade.
   
   Note: If you created and added a rubric for this graded thread, click **View Rubric** to reference it while grading.

7. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the user and **Grading Notes**, which appear to the forum Manager or Grader only. Optionally, use the check spelling function in the bottom of each text box.

8. Optionally, click **Text Editor** to access the content editor in a pop-up window. Use the functions to format the text and include files, images, web links, multimedia, and mashups to your feedback or notes.

9. Click **Save Grade**. The information appears in the **Thread Grade** section.

10. Click Edit Grade to make changes at any time. The changes appear in the Thread Grade section and in the Grade Center column. The changes are recorded in the Grade Center on the user's **Grade Details** page on the **Grade History** tab.

11. When grading is complete, click **OK** to return to the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page or use the orientation bar to return to the discussion board.

Grades appear in the **Grade** column on the **Grade Discussion Thread Users** page and in the Grade Center.
HOW TO EMAIL USERS WHILE GRADING DISCUSSIONS

While assigning grades, you can use the email tool in the discussion board to quickly contact students. For example, send a student a question prior to assigning a grade or send feedback after assigning a grade.

1. Navigate to a forum or thread to assign a grade.
2. On the Grade Discussion Thread Users page -OR- the Grade Discussion Forum Users page, select one or multiple users' check boxes, or select the check box in the header row to select all the users you want to email.
3. On the action bar, click Email.
4. On the Email Forum User page, edit the Subject, if needed.
5. Type a question or feedback in the Message box.
6. Click Submit.

HOW TO DISABLE DISCUSSION GRADING

Even if grades exist, you can disable grading for graded forums and threads.

1. Access the discussion board and access a forum's contextual menu.
2. Select Edit.
3. On the Edit Forum page, in the Forum Settings section, change the grading option to No Grading in Forum.
4. Click Submit. If you already assigned grades for a forum or its threads, a warning message appears stating that disabling grading will delete all existing grades. This action is final.
5. Click OK to continue or click Cancel to preserve the Grade Center items.