

GRADE DISCUSSIONS

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.

| Activity | Description |
|--------------------|---|
| Create | 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. |
| Participate | 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. |
| Grade | You view students' posts and assign grades. You can lock threads after they are graded. |
| View Grade | The grades are saved in the discussion board and the Grade Center. Students can view their grades in My Grades . |

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.

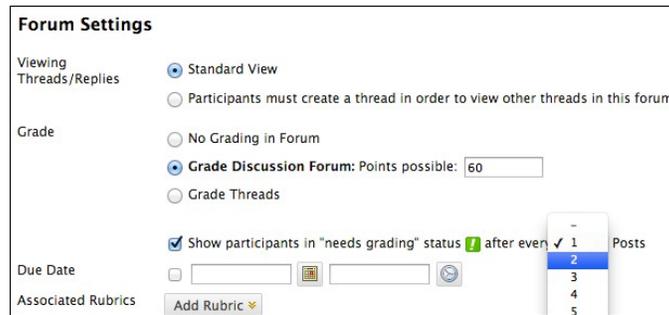
The grade settings appear in the **Forum Settings** section of the **Create Forum** page and the **Edit Forum** page.

- 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.



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.

- 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.
- Click **Submit**.
- In the forum, the **Grade Thread** function appears in the thread's **Grade** column.



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

- Click the **Grade** function in a thread's **Grade** column.
- 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.



| Grade Discussion Forum Users | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------|-------|---|
| <input type="button" value="Email"/> | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Last Name ▲ | First Name | Username | Posts | Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Brown | Tony | tbrown | 3 | -- <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Casper | Chris | ccasper | 0 | -- <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cooper | Ashby | acooper | 2 | -- <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |

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.

| Grade Discussion Forum Users | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|-------|--|
| Email | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Last Name | First Name | Username | Posts | Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Brown | Tony | tbrown | 3 | 10.00 <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Casper | Chris | ccasper | 0 | ** <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cooper | Ashby | acooper | 2 | ** <input type="button" value="Grade"/> |

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 screenshot displays the Blackboard interface for grading a forum thread. It is divided into three main sections:

- Forum: Pluto Controversy:** Shows a table of threads. The first row is selected, showing a thread titled "Pluto Opinion" by Cathy Chu, published on 6/15/11 at 2:30 PM, with 7 posts. A "Grade Thread" button is visible next to it.
- Grade Discussion Thread Users:** A table listing users who have posted in the thread. The first user is Brown, Tony (username: tbrown), with 1 post. A "Grade" button is next to the user's name.
- Grade Discussion Thread: Chris Casper:** This section shows a post by Chris Casper. The post text reads: "Alas, Pluto, which is small and icy and orbits just beyond Neptune and has an eccentric orbit that is tipped out of the plane of the solar system, is none other than a Kuiper belt object—a leftover comet from the solar system's formation. If Pluto's orbit were ever altered so that it journeyed as close to the Sun as Earth, Pluto would grow a tail and look like a jumbo comet. No other planet can make this (possibly embarrassing) claim." Below the post is a source link: http://www.planetary.org/explore/topics/topten/tyson_pluto_is_not.html. The right-hand side of this section contains a sidebar with "Thread Statistics" (Total Posts: 1, Date of Last Post: Jun 15, 2011 4:29:50 PM, Average Post Length: 641, Minimum Post Length: 641, Maximum Post Length: 641, Average Post Position: 2), "Thread Grade" (Grade for: Chris Casper, Grades: --- out of 10, View Rubric), "Feedback", "Grading Notes", and "Contributors" (Chris Casper (1), Henry Wagner (1), Javier Perez (1), Linda Herrera (1), Ryan Johnson (1), Tony Brown (1)).

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.

| Grade Discussion Thread Users | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|-------|-------|
| Email | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Last Name | First Name | Username | Posts | Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Brown | Tony | tbrown | 1 | -- |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Casper | Chris | ccasper | 1 | 10.00 |

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.



The screenshot shows a 'Forum Settings' dialog box. It has two sections: 'Viewing Threads/Replies' and 'Grade'. Under 'Viewing Threads/Replies', there are two radio buttons: 'Standard View' (which is selected) and 'Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum.'. Under the 'Grade' section, there are three radio buttons: 'No Grading in Forum' (which is selected and highlighted with a yellow box), 'Grade Discussion Forum: Points possible: 50' (with a text input field containing '50'), and 'Grade Threads'.