Online Teaching 301: Using Creating, Managing, and Leveraging Discussion Threads in D2L

# Training Video

Watch Zooom hands-on training session: <https://youtu.be/X2c_BHjqTjA>

# Setting group discussions

* [How do I create a discussion forum?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/instructor/create_discussion_forum.htm)
* [How do I create a discussion topic?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/instructor/create_discussion_topic.htm)
* [How do I create a discussion thread?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/learner/create_discussion_thread.htm)
* [How do I reply to a discussion?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/learner/reply_discussion_thread.htm)
* [How do  I subscribe to a discussion?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/learner/subscribe_to_discussion.htm)
* [How do I edit a discussion forum or post?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/instructor/edit_discussion_forum_topic.htm)
* [How do I delete a discussion forum, topic, thread, or post?](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/le/discussions/instructor/delete_discussions.htm)

## Step-By-Step

### Details

This article is intended for those with little experience setting up a discussion using the LE’s Discussion tool, and for those who’d like to build on their existing knowledge. You’ll find a list of best practices, tips and tricks and extra information to help you create an engaging Discussion.

### Forum Best Practices

The first step is to create a new Forum. To do this, navigate to Course Administration and select Discussions. Select the New button, and choose New Forum.  
Forums are intended to help organize multiple course discussions. You may choose to have one forum for the entire course, or you may choose to have a forum specifically for a particular week or topic, if there will be several discussions that fall into that category.

### Properties Tab

Once you’re in the editor, you’ll be able to edit the forum details on the **Properties** tab. All settings are optional at Forum Level EXCEPT Title. See topic level for detailed descriptions and best practices of these properties.  

Most of these properties are also set within each Discussion topic created, so you have a two options. You can simply create a forum title and move on to creating Discussion topics, without adjusting any of the other settings. Alternatively, if you would like all of your discussion topics to follow the same settings, it is helpful to associate those at the Forum level, so they transcend down to all Topics and don’t need to be set in each individual topic. If the latter is the choice, you still have the option to alter all options on any given Topic, should you choose that one to be unique from the others in the Forum.

* **Title** – Enter a descriptive title for your Forum, for example: “Course Discussions” or “Week 1 Discussion Forum”. This is not what learners will be replying to, so it doesn’t need to be a question or topic title.
* **Description**– The Discussion’s description will appear below the title in the Discussion section. Fill out this field with text, images, videos and hyperlinks that give a general introduction of the forum and Topics inside it.
* **Options**– There are a few additional settings that may be applied to a how instructors and learners interact with the discussion threads.
* **Availability**– By default, the Forum is always visible. It can also be available for a specific date range.
* **Locking Options**– If a forum is locked, it is still visible, but no posts can be added. This is an alternative to Availability.

When you have completed the steps above, you can move onto the **Restrictions Tab.**Anything beyond the properties tab is optional, but there are a few best practices to keep in mind.

### Restrictions Tab

* **Release Conditions** – Select “Attach Existing” or “Create and Attach” to include Release Conditions that must be met before a learner can access the Forum.

### Topic Best Practices

When your Forum is set up, you can create your Topic. Here are a few best practices.

### Properties Tab

* **Forum**– Select a parent forum for the topic, or create a new one.
* **Title** – Enter a descriptive title for your Discussion topic, which can be the question or statement your learners are meant to discuss. Example: “Discussion: What is the most important topic to discuss?” More information can be added in the Description field.
* **Description**– Add any additional information in the Description field, including instructions around post requirements, word count, and follow up on peers’ posts. Be as specific as you can, so your learners know the expectations from the start. You can also include images, videos, or other important resources.
* **Options**– Just like in the Forum settings, there are a few additional settings that may be applied to a topic. These settings are also optional, but here are some things to keep in mind:
  + Posts can require that a user starts a new thread in a topic before viewing or replying to other threads in that topic in the forum. This is a good setting for opinion pieces, where the instructor would like genuine responses from each learner, instead of learners crafting theirs based on others’ responses.
  + Users can anonymously reply to a topic.
  + Moderators can approve individual topic replies before they are displayed in the forum. This helps control the content going into the discussion before the rest of the class sees it. Some instructors have found this setting helpful in course FAQ discussion so they can ensure the forum is used for its intended purpose and not for unnecessary feedback about the course.
* **Rate Posts**– To incorporate an additional social aspect to discussions, you can enable a rating system, so learners can quickly indicate if they like someone’s response (this is similar to a ‘like’ on social media accounts). Note that learners cannot rate their own threads. Rating schemes can be changed at any time, even after learners have posted. If you’d like learners to be able to rate discussion posts, you’ve got a few different options:
  + A Five-Star Rating Scheme, which allows users to give each post a score out of five.
  + An Upvote/Downvote Rating Scheme, which allows users to increase or decrease a post’s rating by 1 vote – be cautious of this one because of the downvote functionality.
  + An Upvote Only Rating Scheme, which only allows users to increase a post’s rating by 1 vote – this is the most common rating scheme
  + No Ratings, which hides all rating controls from users. This is the default setting.
* **Availability**– By default, the topics are always visible. They can also be available for a specific date range. Enable and enter start and end dates to create due dates.
* **Locking Options**– If a topic is locked, it is still visible, but no replies can be added. This is an alternative to Availability.

### Restrictions Tab

* **Release Conditions** – Just like the Forums, additional Release Conditions can be added to a Discussion topic. These conditions must be met before a learner can access that topic. If multiple Release Conditions are attached, users must meet them all before they can access the Forum.
* **Group and Section Restrictions**– If you would like for students to discuss in smaller groups, instead of as a whole class, enable group restrictions (you’ll have to set these groups up separately beforehand, but you can set the number of groups or number of learners in groups).

### Assessment Tab

If a Discussion topic is worth marks, you can manage these settings under the Assessment tab.

* **Grade Item**– We strongly recommend associating a grade item with any graded Discussion Topic so the final mark can be automatically linked to the Grades tool.
* **Score Out Of**– Topics can be marked out of anything between 0.01 and 9999999999, but we recommend a whole number. Example: 10, 50, or 100.
* **Rubrics**– Select an existing Rubric to be associated with the topic, or create a new one by selecting [Create Rubric in New Window]. This allows you to communicate exactly what is expected of your learners on their post, and how grading is broken down.
* **Allow assessment of individual posts**– Instructors can assess each individual post a learner contributes in a topic, instead of assigning one grade for all a learners’ posts. By enabling this feature, grades can be calculated by:
  + Average post score
  + Maximum post score
  + Minimum post score
  + Sum of post scores
  + **Note:**Unassessed posts in the topic can be automatically scored as zero

# Brightspace Pulse App

iOS and Android App. Used for admin, but primary focus could be on discussion threads. <https://www.d2l.com/products/pulse/>

Tutorial Video: <https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/Brightspace+Pulse+App+for+iOS+Tutorial/1_xbdpxttw>

# The Basic Toolkit

## Microsoft 365 Basic Toolkit for Faculty and Students

* [**Microsoft 365**](https://portal.office.com/)**: Make documents/presentations/spreadsheets, etc.**
  + All students and faculty have free licenses for Microsoft Office.
  + All students are able to access and create these file types.
  + You can log in with your MSU NetID to use the web version or to download current versions from <https://portal.office.com/>.

## Support

* For additional support, the MSU Service Desk is open 24/7 to help you transition to remote teaching:
* Call local: 517-432-6200, toll-free: 844-678-6200
* Chat: [go.msu.edu/itchat](https://go.msu.edu/itchat)
* Email: [ithelp@msu.edu](mailto://ithelp@msu.edu)