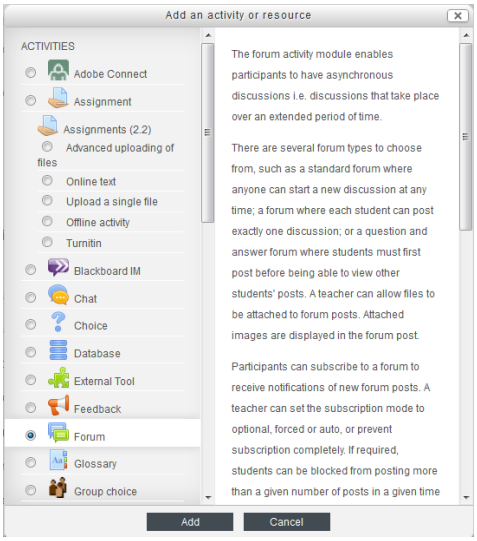
How to add a discussion forum to a Moodle course

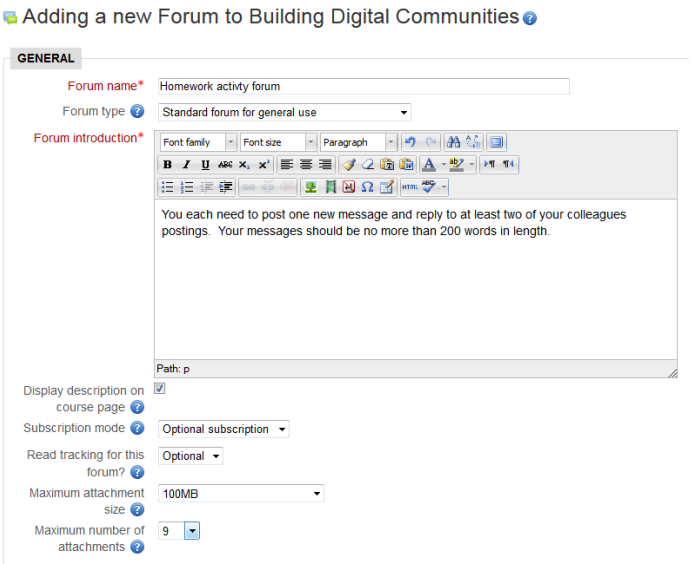


Firstly turn editing on and then scroll down to the section you want to add your forum to. Click on the **Add an activity or resource** link and then choose **Forum** from the activity or resource picker menu. Click on the **Add** button to complete the process.

Fill in the **Forum name** field.

There are five different types of discussion forum available in Moodle each with slightly different functionality:

1) A single simple discussion – this allows module leaders to post one single message that everyone can then reply to. Students are not able to start new messages with this type of forum. This type of forum is not suitable for group work.
2) Each person posts one discussion – this allows each student to post *only one* new message that everyone can then reply to. Once they have posted their new message they will only be able to reply to other messages. This is useful for peer work if you want your students to post a piece of work for the rest of the group to comment upon.
3) Q and A forum – the module leader poses a question that the students have to reply to. The documentation states that students can only see other replies once they have submitted a response but this does not seem to be the case for our Moodle installation. Staff and students can post new messages and reply to other messages so this forum type seems to behave very much like the standard forum.
4) Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format – this is an open forum where anyone can start a new message at any time. New messages are added onto one page with students having to click on a **Discuss this topic** link in an individual message to post a reply to it.
5) Standard forum for general use – another open forum where anyone can start a new message at any time. Each new message appears as a row in a table. Replies show as a clickable number. We recommend this forum type as it gives staff and students the most flexibility.



Choose your **Forum type** from the dropdown menu. Please note once students start posting to the forum, if you need to edit the settings, you will not be able to change the Forum type.

Add a **Forum introduction** such as the purpose of the forum or netiquette guidelines.

Choose whether you want to display the description on the course page under the link to the forum by ticking the **Display description on course page** checkbox.

When someone is subscribed to a forum it means that they will receive either an email or pop-up notification (depending on the messaging settings in their profile) each time a new message or reply to an existing message is posted.

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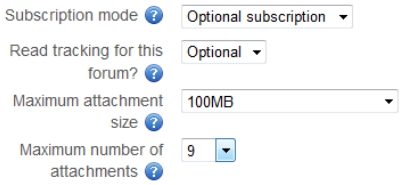
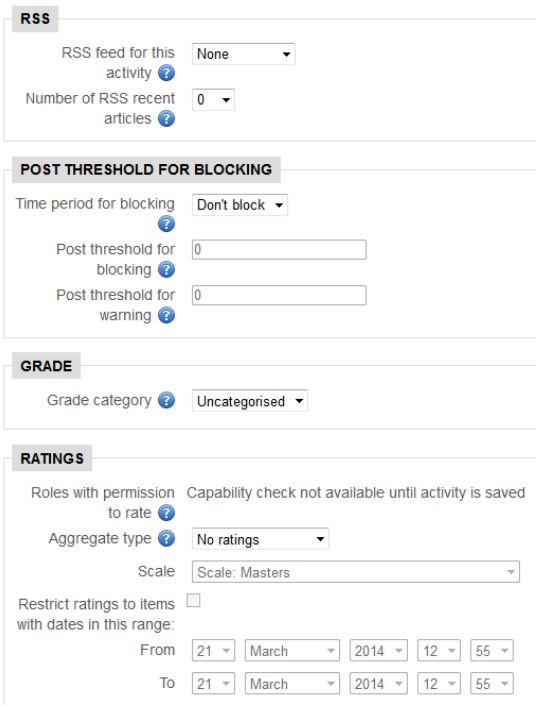
There are four **Subscription modes**:



1) Optional subscription – students can choose to subscribe to the forum (this is the recommended setting unless you are assessing student participation).
2) Forced subscription – all students are subscribed and cannot unsubscribe themselves. If you are using your forum for assessment it is recommended that you force subscription.
3) Auto subscription – all students are subscribed initially but they can then choose to unsubscribe at any time. This is useful for induction discussions.
4) Subscription disabled – subscriptions are not allowed.

The **Read tracking for this forum?** field can be set to *Optional*, *Off* or *On*. This enables students to track read and unread messages. It is recommended that you turn tracking *on*.

Set the **Maximum attachment size** and **Maximum number of attachments** fields to whatever you think is appropriate depending on what you plan to use the discussion forum for. If you expect your students to attach large image files (for example) set the attachment size to 100MB (the maximum setting). Set the number of attachments to two or three unless you expect your students to regularly attach more files than this.



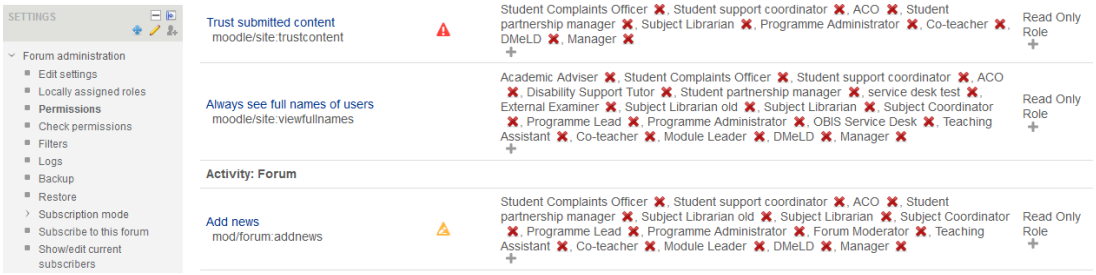
RSS feed for this activity turns the RSS functionality on or off (for this specific forum). If you choose *None* the RSS is switched off. If you choose *Discussions* the RSS feed will send out new forums to subscribers. If you choose *Posts* the RSS feed will send out new posts to subscribers.

Number of RSS recent articles lets you choose how many articles to include in each RSS feed. If this number is set to ten, then the ten latest articles will be sent to subscribers. If your forum gets a lot of posts each day (or you have a large group of students), you may want to set this number quite high.

Post threshold for blocking lets you limit how many messages students can post in a given period of time. The minimum period is per day and the maximum is per week. You can choose to set the maximum number of messages they can post and a threshold warning to alert them that they have nearly reached their posting quota for that time period. It is generally not recommended that you set this as we want to encourage students to use the discussion forums not limit their use.

Grade allows you to choose the category in which this forum's grades are placed in the Moodle gradebook if you want to use it for assessed work. Simply click on the appropriate category from the drop down menu. If you choose not to grade a discussion forum you will not be able to change it to a graded one once the students post messages.

Ratings is the section you need to complete if you want to grade student forum activity or use your discussion forum for peer assessment. To see the roles that can submit ratings for peer assessment you will need to save your forum activity then click on the yellow pencil icon to re-edit it. If the student role is not listed in the ratings field you will need to activate the *moodle/rating: rate* capability via the left hand **Settings>Permissions** menu.



The **Aggregate type** defines how ratings are combined to form the final grade in the Moodle gradebook. If *No ratings* is selected, then the activity will not appear in the gradebook.

- Average of ratings – this is the mean of all ratings.
- Count of ratings – the number of rated items becomes the final grade. NB: the total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the forum.
- Maximum – the highest rating becomes the final grade.
- Minimum – the lowest rating becomes the final grade.
- Sum – all ratings are added together. NB: the total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the forum.

The **Scale** field will only become active if you choose something other than *No ratings* from the **Aggregate type** menu. This is the scale that you (or your students) will use for marking/peer marking.

The **Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range** checkbox (if checked) will enable the date and time boxes underneath. This lets you choose a date and time range to grade the forum posts between rather than having to rate the whole forum activity.

The **Common Module Settings**, **Restrict Access** and **Activity Completion** (if you have chosen to enable this) sections can be completed in the usual way or you can ignore them and just click on either of the **Save** buttons.

To access the forum activity, staff and students just click on the link from their Moodle course page.