

Setting up and using forums

The Forum activity is a powerful communication and discussion tool. Tutors and students are provided with an area where they can post messages and reply to each other at any time.

Setting up a forum

Tutors may opt to create various forums within a VLE area, each of which is used for different purposes. Apart from the *Announcements* forum (refer to the [Sending announcements](#) quick guide), a tutor might consider providing students with a forum to be specifically used to discuss VLE area related matter.

To create a forum:

1. Click the **Start editing** button (top-right corner).
Each section in the content area displays the **Add an activity or resource** link.
2. Scroll down to the section where you want to add the forum.
3. Click the **Add an activity or resource** link.
4. Click **Forum**. The *Adding a new Forum* page shown below is displayed.

Adding a new Forum
Expand all

General

Forum name !

Description

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help
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Display description on course page ?

Forum type ? Standard forum for general use

> Availability

> Attachments and word count

> Subscription and tracking

> Discussion locking

> Post threshold for blocking

> Whole forum grading

> Ratings

> Common module settings

> Restrict access

> Activity completion

! Required Send content change notification ?

Save and return to course
Save and display
Cancel

5. In the **Forum name** field, type a short name for the forum e.g. *FAQ Forum*. This will be displayed in the VLE area homepage.
6. In the **Description** field, type in a description or introductory text for the discussion. It is good practice to include precise instructions for students regarding the subject of the forum and any possible assessment criteria that might be used in this forum.
7. From the **Forum type** drop-down menu, choose the preferred forum type. Typically, select **Standard forum for general use**.
8. In the *Availability* section, you may set a **Due date** as well as a **Cut-off date** for discussion-based forums. A forum activity with a set due date is added to the VLE area's *Calendar* and *Scheduled activities* block (available on the users' VLE Dashboard). This allows students to manage their work effectively.

Availability

Due date ? 30 November 2023 23 59 Enable

Cut-off date ? 28 June 2023 08 54 Enable

9. Set the **Subscription mode** as desired, by clicking on the *Subscription and tracking* section. When a participant is subscribed to a forum it means they will receive email copies of forum posts.

There are 4 subscription mode options:

- **Optional subscription** - Participants can choose whether to be subscribed
 - **Forced subscription** - Everyone is subscribed and cannot unsubscribe
 - **Auto subscription** - Everyone is initially subscribed but can choose to unsubscribe at any time
 - **Subscription disabled** - Subscriptions are not allowed.
10. Set **Read tracking for this forum** if you want students to easily identify read and unread messages in the forum and in discussions. This is also enabled from the *Subscription and tracking* section.
 11. Click the **Save and return to course** button.

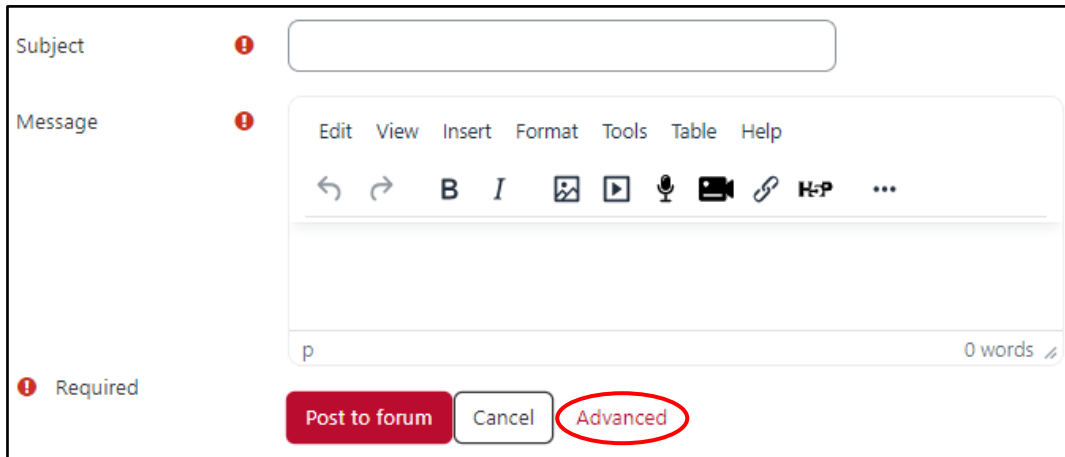
Adding a new discussion topic within a forum

Forums are made up of a number of discussion topics.

To add a new topic within a forum:

1. Access the forum.
2. Click the **Add a new discussion topic** button.
3. Type a short descriptive title for your topic in the **Subject** field.
4. Type in the content of your post in the **Message** editor.
5. If you would like to add files as attachments, follow steps a - b below, otherwise proceed to step 6.

a. Click the **Advanced** link.

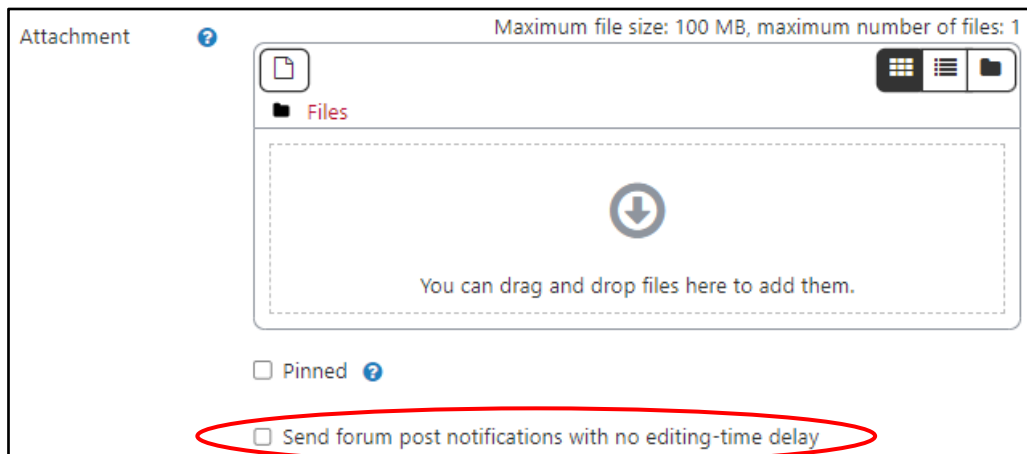


b. In the **Attachment** setting you can upload files through one of two options: [Method i – Traditional upload](#) or [Method ii – Drag-and-drop](#).

Note:

- Files will be added as attachments and can also be accessed within the email notification sent to students.

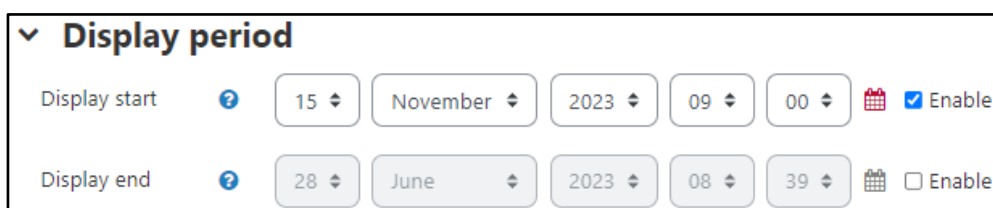
6. By default, an email notification is sent to VLE area participants who are subscribed to the forum, typically some 30 - 45 minutes after it is made. Tick the **Send forum post notifications with no editing-time delay** check box (available within the **Advanced** link), if you want participants to receive the email notification immediately.



Alternatively, you may schedule a forum post to be made visible and/or sent to students at a later time.

a. Click the **Advanced** link.

b. Within the *Display period* section, tick to enabled the **Display start** date. Subsequently, set the date and time, as needed.

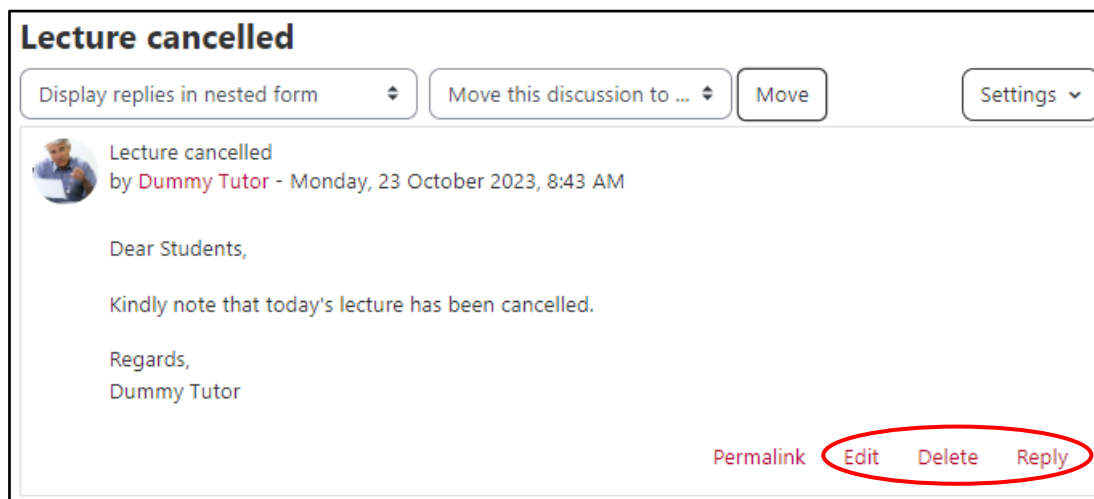



The forum post will be made visible on the date and time set for the **Display start** setting. Moreover, if the particular forum activity has subscription enabled, an email notification will also be sent to all participants on the set date and time.

- Click the **Post to forum** button.

Note that:

- Students have a 30-minute time window to edit or delete message posts they made to a forum. On the other hand, tutors do not have such restrictions as they can edit or delete any message posts (including students') made to a forum. You will notice that the links to edit or delete message posts are added to the bottom of each post.



- When you copy text from MS Word (or any other word processor) and paste this to the text editor, you might need to use the **Clear formatting**  tool (available via the *Format* menu) to remove unnecessary HTML tags. If not removed, these tags might appear as extra text in line with your message post.

Another way to prevent the unnecessary tags from showing is to:

- Open a simple text editor, such as Notepad.
- From MS Word (or the word processor you are using), copy the text that you wrote.
- Paste the copied text into Notepad.
- Copy the text again, this time from Notepad.
- Paste the text into the discussion forum.

Note:

- If a forum, including the **Announcements** forum, is set as hidden (i.e. not visible to students), the email containing the post is only sent to participants who can access the hidden forum, namely Tutors and Guest Tutors.
- Similarly, the above-mentioned behaviour applies if a forum is visible but within a hidden VLE area. Again, in this case, the email notification is only sent to participants who can access the hidden VLE area, namely Tutors and Guest Tutors.
- Thus, a forum post is sent via email to those participants who are subscribed to the forum, **and** have access to the particular forum activity.