

Forum for WebLearn Fundamentals Course
Those who attend the Fundamentals course may use this forum to practice reading and sending messages within topics

[Topic 3: The value of online discussions](#) (0 message - 0 unread) [Topic Settings](#)

[Topic 2: My favourite photo and why](#) (21 messages - 16 unread) [Topic Settings](#)
[Read Full Description](#)

[Topic 1: Sample topic](#) (1 message - 0 unread) [Topic Settings](#)
Dear Participants. This is an example of a short TOPIC description and how it will display.

Discussion Forums

Purpose

A *discussion forum* is designed to facilitate communication between any number of people where face-to-face contact is limited and/or where discussions need to take place over an extended period of time. The discussion postings are saved and thus create written records of the interaction over time between the participants.

Description

A *Discussion Forum* (also called a *Discussion Board* or simply a *Forum*) is an online 'area' in which participants exchange their views and contribute *postings* on a given topic. A *discussion thread* builds up in the form of a hierarchy of messages that are posted in response to an individual who initiates the thread. Discussion forums usually provide facilities to view messages in different ways – such as by subject, date order or contributor.

Many Virtual Learning Environments such as WebLearn contain a *Discussion Forum tool*, with the ability to restrict who can participate (and so read the discussion), who can contribute, and who can edit or delete messages.

Benefits

A discussion forum is a powerful and popular tool for collaborative learning through the social construction of knowledge. Online discussion forums support asynchronous, text-based communication and interaction. This means that discussions are independent of time and place. The discussion is preserved in the tool for review, reflection and response at any time.

Discussions that have started in the classroom can be continued in the electronic forum, or conversely, initial opinions can be gathered in advance of a face-to-face class. Discussion forums make it possible for students who are less forthcoming in oral discussions to express their opinions.

Ways of using this tool

- **Staff/student committees.** Open access to a discussion forum for all of a department's students can potentially gather a wider range of input and opinions than are traditionally gained through staff and student representatives. Issues can be brought to the attention of staff quickly and dealt with early.
- **Support of specific tutorials, lectures or key topics.** The discussion could constitute a more-or-less continuous seminar room. Lecturers can design topics for immediate feedback on problems of both administrative and conceptual nature. The discussion area can develop into a useful repository or archive of common and frequently asked questions and their answers.
- **Problem solving.** Students can be set different tasks to be conducted in groups, each with their own private forum. They can report back to the group and collaborate in a discussion to optimise their group solution. The full text of individual contributions and the joint solution are recorded in the forum and are available for assessment by either the tutor or peers.
- **Guest experts.** A recognised international guest expert in the field could be invited to 'seed' and moderate a discussion for a set period of time. This enables participants to interact with an expert anywhere in the world, in a structured and stimulating way.

Learn More

WebLearn: Step-by-step guide to Forums

<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/vle/draft-beta-docs/forum.pdf>

E-moderating – the key to teaching and learning online: Gilly Salmon (2004) <http://www.atimod.com/e-moderating/intro.shtml>

Free discussion tools:

<http://c4lpt.co.uk/Directory/Tools/discussion.html>

Access

To be able to use the *Forums tool* in WebLearn, you need to have an Oxford (Single Sign-on) account and a WebLearn site. You need to be a *maintainer* or a *contributor* (in order to build and moderate forums and topics), or an *accessor* (to contribute to discussions).

This document is part of a larger set aimed at introducing the reader to a wide range of technologies. Please visit this web page for more information:

<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/resources/guides.xml>

Your primary support for IT issues comes from your department or college. Your first port of call for questions and advice should always be your local IT support staff.