

# Discussions Guide

Updated July 2026

This tutorial will provide an overview of the discussion topic creation and grading workflows in Brightspace. All images in this tutorial are screenshots of the preceding step(s).

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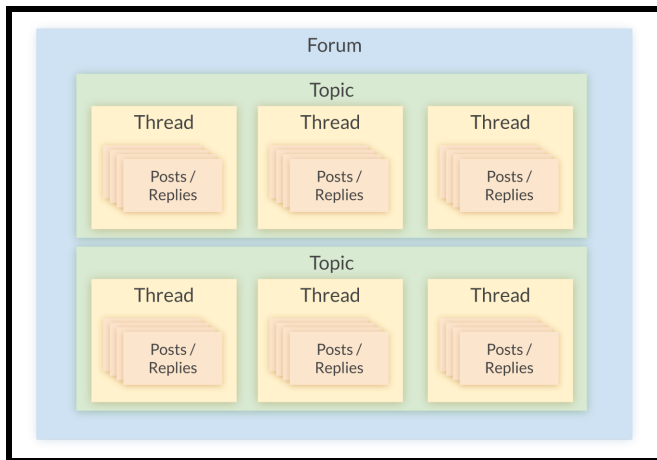
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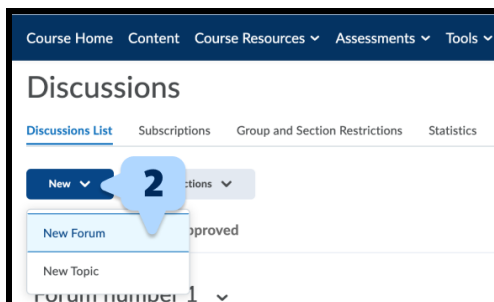
## Create a Discussion

**NOTE:** Forums are “containers” for Topics - an organizational tool used to group discussion Topics by theme, date of assignment, or etc. Forums cannot directly contain posts or replies, and cannot have grades attached to them. You will collect student submissions within and assign your grade items to the **Topics**.



## Create a Discussion Forum

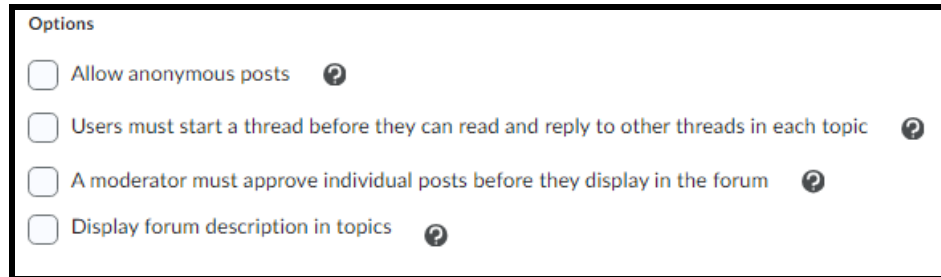
1. From your course **Navbar**, navigate to the **Discussions** page.
2. Click **New > New Forum**.



3. Enter a title and description for your discussion forum.

This screenshot shows the 'New Forum Details' form. It has two tabs: 'Properties' and 'Restrictions'. The 'Properties' tab is active. The form includes a 'Title\*' field with the text 'Week 1 Discussions' and a checkbox labeled 'Create a new topic in this forum with the same title'. Below the title field is a 'Description' field with a rich text editor toolbar. The description text reads: 'This forum contains all of the discussions for Week 1 of the course. Please refer to the associated reading materials for Week 1 on the course Content page before making your initial posts.'

4. In the **Options** section, select any of the checkboxes that suit your needs. All topics created under this forum will have these same options.
  - a. **NOTE:** If you click on the question mark icon , it will provide you with more information about each setting.



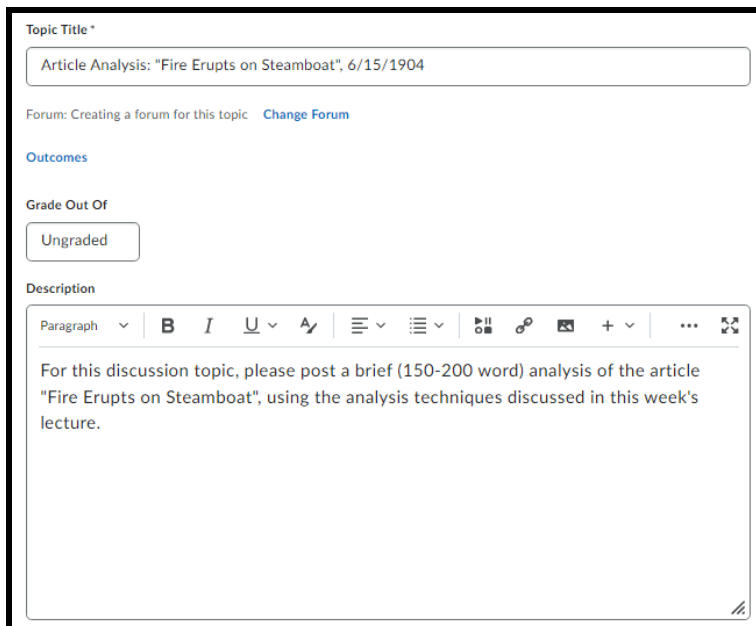
Options

- ☐ Allow anonymous posts 
- ☐ Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads in each topic 
- ☐ A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum 
- ☐ Display forum description in topics 

5. Click **Save and Close**.

## Create a Discussion Topic

1. From your course **Navbar**, navigate to the **Discussions** page.
2. Click **New > New Topic**.
3. Enter a title and description for your discussion topic.



Topic Title \*

Article Analysis: "Fire Erupts on Steamboat", 6/15/1904

Forum: Creating a forum for this topic [Change Forum](#)

[Outcomes](#)

Grade Out Of

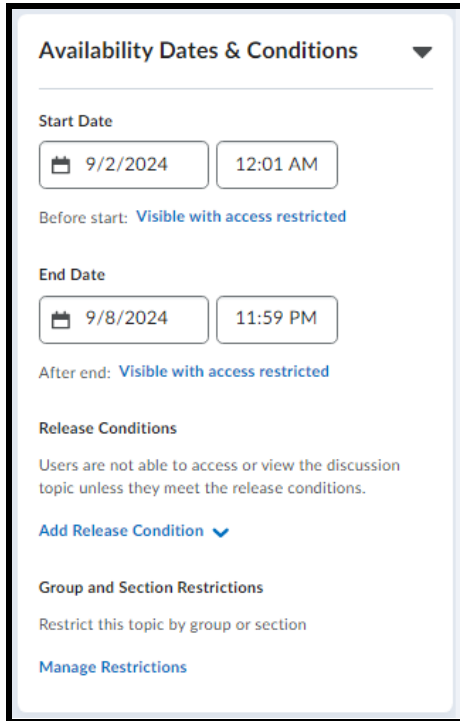
Ungraded

Description

Paragraph 

For this discussion topic, please post a brief (150-200 word) analysis of the article "Fire Erupts on Steamboat", using the analysis techniques discussed in this week's lecture.

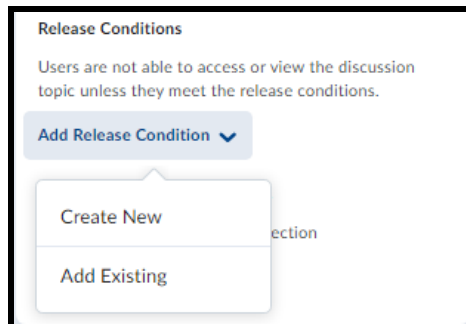
4. Set the **Availability Dates & Conditions** as needed.



The screenshot shows a settings panel titled "Availability Dates & Conditions" with a dropdown arrow. It contains sections for "Start Date" (9/2/2024, 12:01 AM), "End Date" (9/8/2024, 11:59 PM), "Release Conditions" (a text description and an "Add Release Condition" button), and "Group and Section Restrictions" (a text description and a "Manage Restrictions" link).

5. Set the **Release Conditions** as needed.

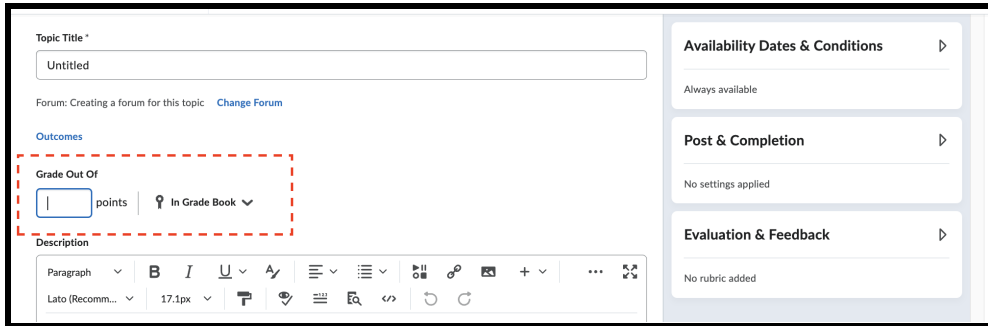
- a. **NOTE: Release Conditions** can be used to grant students access to course content (a Discussion Topic, Quiz, Assignment, etc.) contingent on their completion of predefined conditions. Further information can be found here: [Release Conditions](#).



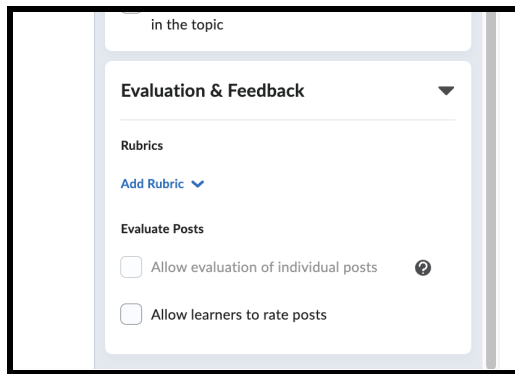
The screenshot shows the "Release Conditions" settings panel. The "Add Release Condition" button is highlighted, and its dropdown menu is open, showing two options: "Create New" and "Add Existing".

6. Enter a value in the **Grade Out Of** field. This value defines the granularity of scoring for your Topic, and can be set as

you prefer.



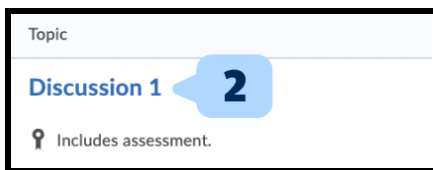
7. If desired, attach a Rubric under the **Evaluation & Feedback** section.
  - a. **NOTE:** Further information on Rubrics can be found here: [Brightspace Rubrics](#).



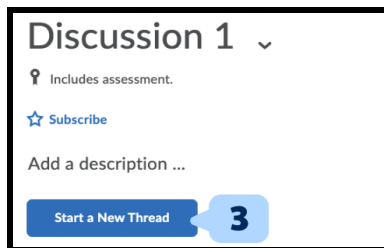
8. Click **Save and Close** once you have reviewed and set all the options for this discussion topic.

## How to Start a Thread

1. Select "**Discussions**" from the "**Assessments**" link on the course **Navbar**.
2. Locate the **Forum** and click on the correct **Discussion Topic**.



### 3. Click on “**Start a New Thread.**”

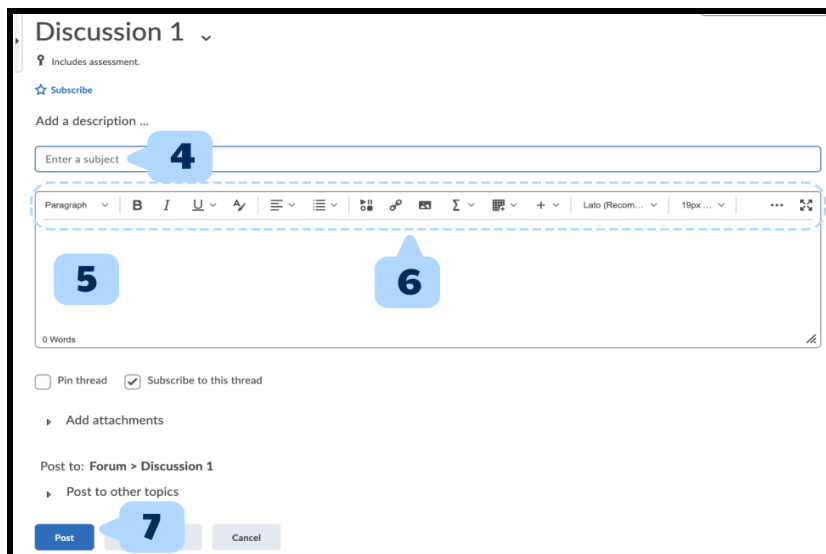


### 4. Enter a “**Subject**” for your discussion post

### 5. Add **text content** within the text box.

### 6. If you have any additional **media** that needs to be added to the discussion, you can find insert options in the HTML editor.

### 7. Once complete, click “**Post.**”

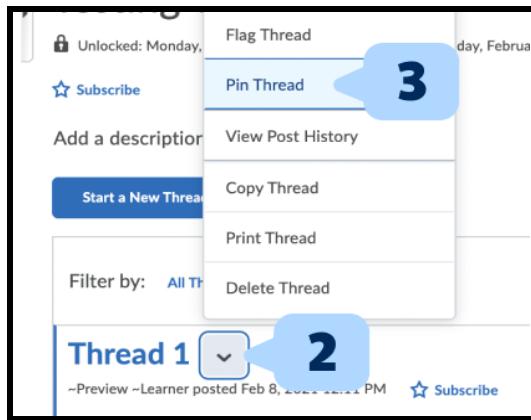


## Pinning Posts

If you have a Thread you’d like to stay at the top of the Threads, such as an example thread you’ve posted, you can **pin** the post.

1. Navigate to the **Discussion Topic** page where all the threads are held.
2. Click the **Action Button**  next to the thread you want to pin.

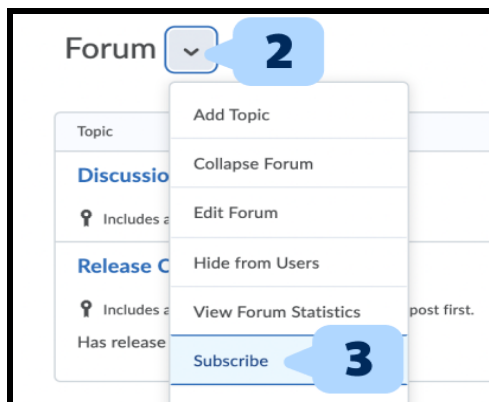
### 3. Click "**Pin Thread.**"



## Subscribing to Posts

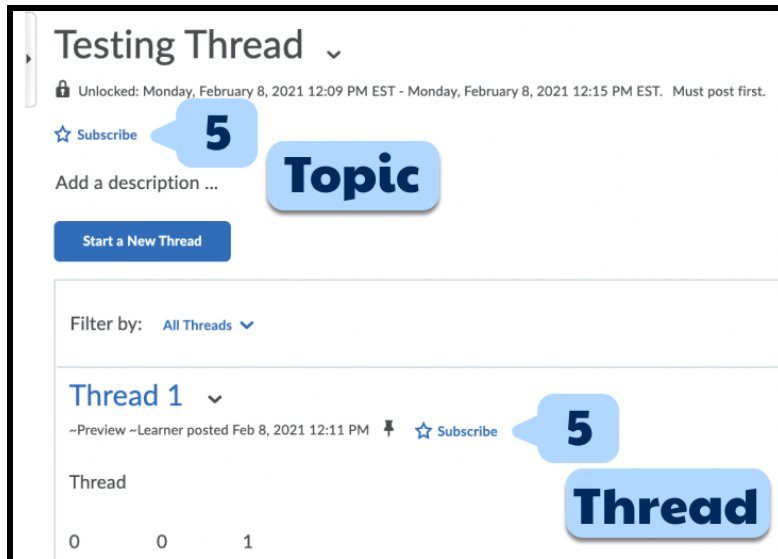
You can subscribe to posts to get notifications for it. You can subscribe at the forum, topic, or thread level.

1. If subscribing at the forum level, go to the "**Discussions**" page from "**Assessments**" on the **Navbar**.
2. Click the **Action Button**  next to the forum name.
3. Click "**Subscribe.**"

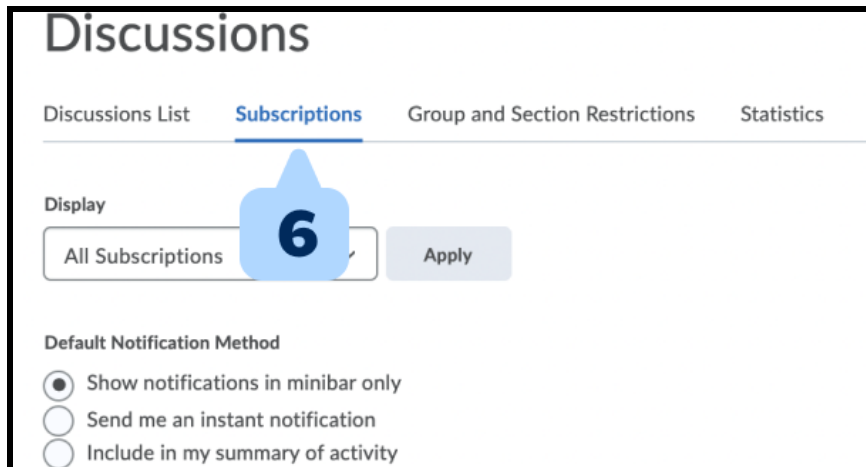


4. If subscribing at the topic or thread level, you will need to click into the **Topic** page from the **Discussions** page.

5. Then you will click the “**Subscribe**” button next to the name of the **Topic** or **Thread** that you want to subscribe to.



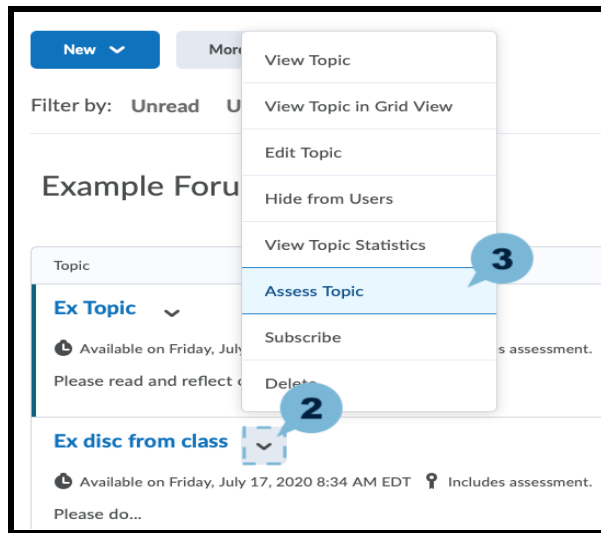
6. To view your subscriptions, you can click on the “**Subscriptions**” tab from the main **Discussions** page.



## Grade a Discussion

1. Click the “**Assessments**” link in the **Navbar** and select “**Discussions.**”
2. Click the **Action Button**  next to the Discussion Topic you wish to grade.

3. Select **"Assess Topic"** from the menu that appears.
  - a. If you do not see the **Assess Topic** option, it means you did not connect a Grade Item to this topic. Once you have a Grade Item in the Grades tool for this discussion topic, select **"Edit Topic"** from the **Action Button**, and click the **"Assessment"** tab to set the **Grade Item** and **Score Out Of** fields.

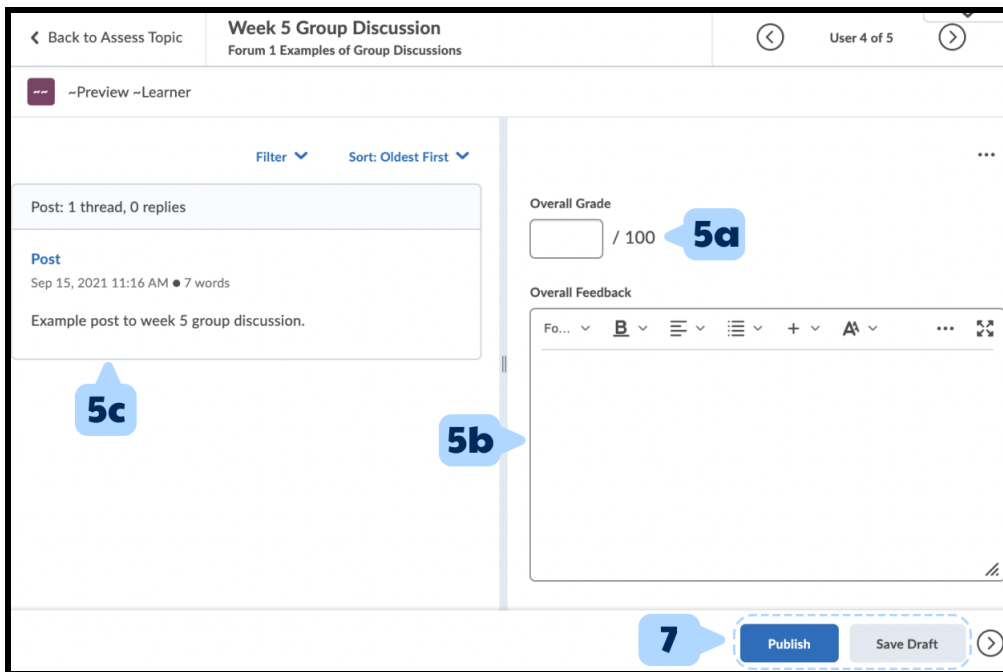


4. When the **Assess Topic** page appears, you will see a list of your students. Click the **"Topic Score"** link underneath a student's name.

|                          |                             |      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | First Name, Last Name       |      |
|                          | Demo Learner10              |      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">Topic Score</a> | 25   |
|                          | Demo Learner11              |      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">Topic Score</a> | 8.33 |
|                          | Demo Learner12              |      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">Topic Score</a> |      |

5. A pop-up window will appear with the student's name and profile photo at the top.

- a. The “**Score**” field is located in the upper-right corner of the pop-up.
    - i. If you set this topic to be graded by individual posts, the top **Score** field will show a total grade instead of an editable field.
  - b. A “**Feedback**” text area is in the middle of the pop-up for you to provide direct feedback to the student. Only the student can see what you enter here.
  - c. At the bottom of the pop-up is a listing of all the students’ **posts** in the topic.
    - i. If you set this topic to be graded by individual posts, there will be individual score fields next to each post for you to distribute points.
6. Score the student’s performance in the topic and provide them with feedback.
7. Click either the “**Publish**” or “**Save Draft**” buttons.

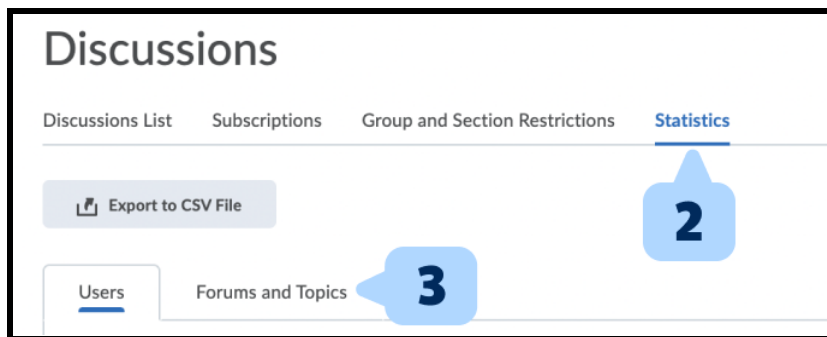


The screenshot shows the 'Week 5 Group Discussion' assessment interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Back to Assess Topic', 'Week 5 Group Discussion', 'Forum 1 Examples of Group Discussions', and 'User 4 of 5'. Below this, there's a 'Preview ~Learner' section. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column shows a post titled 'Example post to week 5 group discussion.' with a callout '5c' pointing to it. The right column shows the 'Overall Grade' field with a callout '5a' pointing to it, and the 'Overall Feedback' text area with a callout '5b' pointing to it. At the bottom, there are 'Publish' and 'Save Draft' buttons with a callout '7' pointing to them.

## Statistics

Within the “**Statistics**” tab, you can see how many students are participating in discussions. You can view it by the student or by the Forum/Topic.

1. Go to the “**Discussions**” page from the “**Assessments**” tab on the **Navbar**.
2. Click on the “**Statistics**” tab.
3. You can toggle between the “**Users**” and “**Forums and Topics**” tabs to view participation in the discussions.



## Create a Group Discussion

Information on group enrollments as well as the creation and grading of group discussions can be found here: [Create a Group Discussion](#).

## Create Private Journals

Information on creating private journals using groups and discussions can be found here: [Creating Private Journals Using Discussions and Groups](#).