

Adding a Forum Activity

Course participants can have asynchronous discussions, i.e. discussions that take place over an extended period of time, using the **Forum** activity module. Teachers using the courseware can add new **Forum** activities or they can deploy the pre-existing ones.

Forums are one of the most widely used tools for collaboration in online education and training. Moodle offers teachers a variety of forum types such as a standard forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, a forum where each student can post exactly one discussion, or a question and answer (Q and A) forum where students must first post before being able to view other students' posts. Teachers can allow files to be attached to forum posts and image attachments are displayed in the posting.

Participants can subscribe to a **Forum** to receive notifications of new forum posts. A teacher can set the subscription mode to optional, forced or auto, or prevent subscription completely. If required, students can be blocked from posting more than a given number of posts in a given time period; this can prevent individuals from dominating discussions.

Forum posts can be rated by teachers or students (peer evaluation), and the ratings can be aggregated to form a final grade in the grade book.

Using the Forum Activity to Enhance Blended Learning

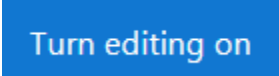
Forums have many uses in linking the online learning environment to the face-to-face classroom. In addition to enabling students to communicate with each other socially or about learning tasks outside of the classroom, forums can be used to:

- make course announcements by using a news **Forum** with forced subscription
- discuss course content or reading materials
- continue discussing an issue raised in a face-to-face class
- privately support students one-on-one by using a **Forum** with separate groups and with one student per group

Step-by Step-Instructions for Adding a Forum Activity

Important note: Since our upgrade to Avenue, some of the following screenshots may appear slightly different in your course, but the principles remain the same.

1. On your course, click the **Turn editing on** button.

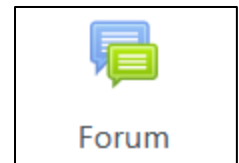
A blue rectangular button with the text "Turn editing on" in white.

2. In the topic where the link to the **Forum** should appear, click the **Add an activity or resource** link.

The **Add a new activity or resource** pop-up appears.

A white rectangular button with a blue plus icon and the text "Add an activity or resource" in blue.

3. Select **Forum** in the **Activities** tab.

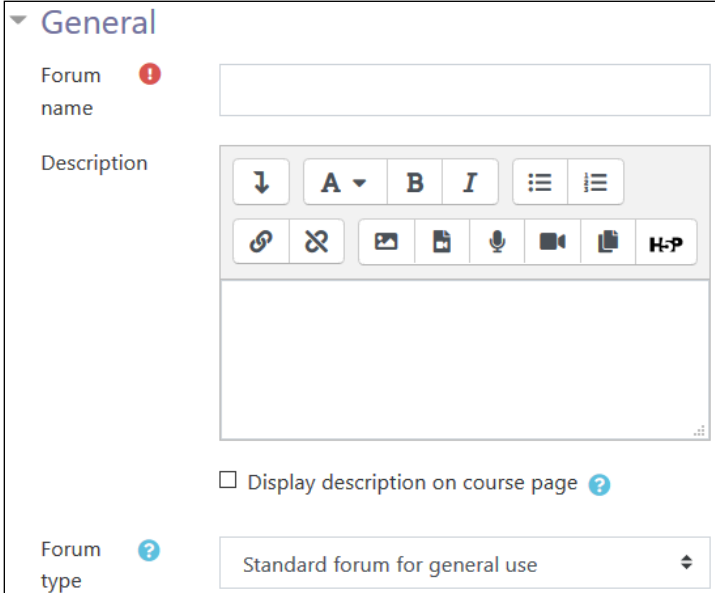


The **Adding a new Forum** page appears. Settings in the **General** section are used to set the general information about the activity.

4. Type a descriptive name in the **Forum name** text box.

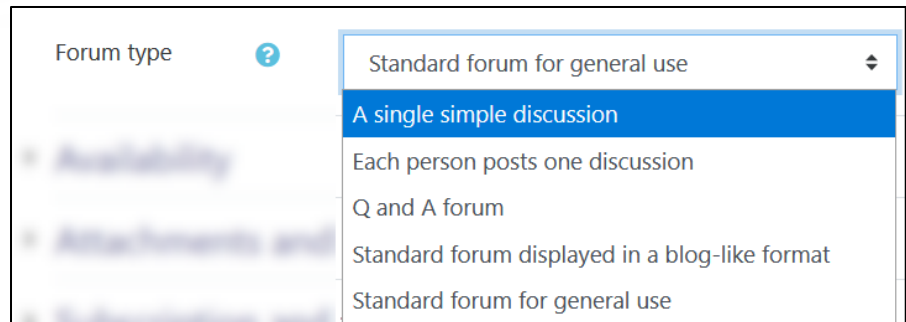
5. Click in the **Description** text box.

6. If students are supposed to perform a specific task, type the task instructions in the **Description** text box. Otherwise, enter a general description of the purpose of this forum.

A screenshot of the "General" settings section for a forum. It includes a "Forum name" text box, a "Description" text box with a rich text editor toolbar (containing icons for bold, italic, list, link, unlink, insert link, insert image, insert video, insert audio, insert file, and H-P), a checkbox for "Display description on course page" with a help icon, and a "Forum type" dropdown menu currently set to "Standard forum for general use".

7. To display the instructions on the course home page, select **Display description on course page**. However, to keep the page less cluttered this is not recommended.

8. Select the appropriate type of forum in the **Forum type** option.

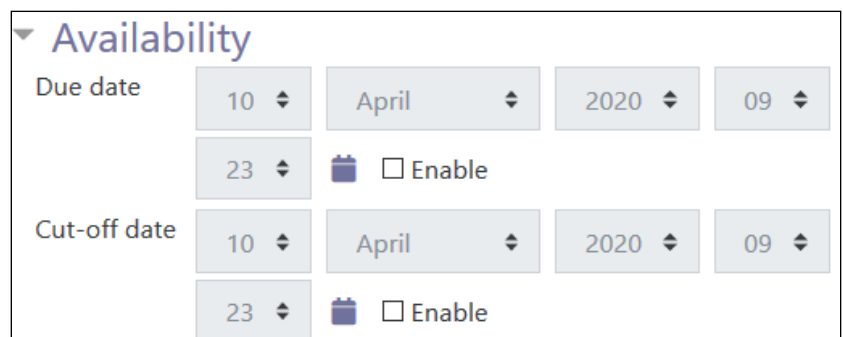


The screenshot shows a dropdown menu for 'Forum type'. The menu is open, displaying several options. The first option is 'Standard forum for general use'. The second option, 'A single simple discussion', is highlighted in blue. Below it are 'Each person posts one discussion', 'Q and A forum', 'Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format', and another 'Standard forum for general use' option. A question mark icon is visible next to the 'Forum type' label.

- **Single simple discussion:** This does not allow students to add a new topic. All postings are under one topic, in one thread. Many teachers like this because it helps keep the forum very focused.
- **Each person posts one discussion:** Participants can start only one new topic, but they can reply to other topics.
- **Q and A forum:** Participants cannot see other participants' postings until they have posted something themselves.
- **Standard forum displayed in blog-like format:** This is an open type of forum for participants to start new topics. It is displayed on one page and users click a **Discuss this topic** link to reply to a posting.
- **Standard forum for general use:** This is the standard forum throughout the courseware that allows any participant to start a new discussion topic.

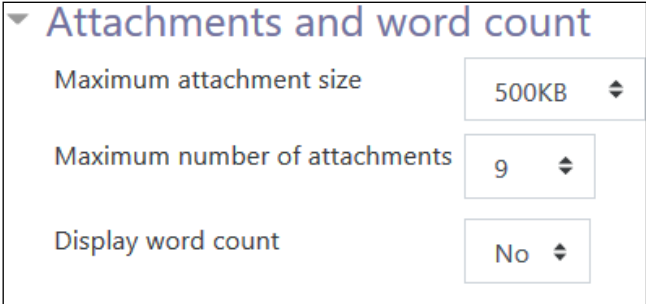
9. Settings in the **Availability** section can control when the activity is available to students.

To control the times and dates for students to access the forum, use the Restrict access to this time period setting. (The **Show/Hide** function discussed in the Pre-Stage 2 and Stage 2 training is another option to restrict student access to the activity.)



The screenshot shows the 'Availability' section of a settings form. It has a dropdown arrow on the left. The section contains two rows of date pickers. The first row is for the 'Due date', with fields for day (10), month (April), year (2020), and time (09). Below this is a second row with a day field (23), a calendar icon, and an 'Enable' checkbox. The second row is for the 'Cut-off date', with fields for day (10), month (April), year (2020), and time (09). Below this is another row with a day field (23), a calendar icon, and an 'Enable' checkbox.

10. Settings in the **Attachment and word count** section are used to set the parameters for students using the forum.



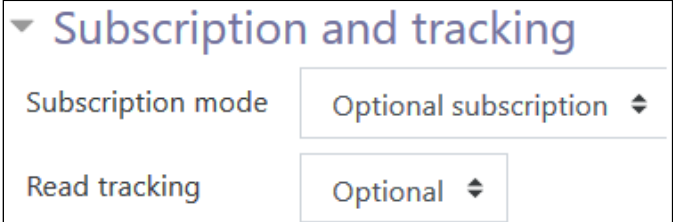
▼ Attachments and word count

Maximum attachment size 500KB

Maximum number of attachments 9

Display word count No

11. The **Maximum attachment size** setting is used to restrict the size of a file that can be attached to a forum posting. There is also a setting to prevent any attachment.
12. The **Maximum number of attachments** setting limits how many attachments can be added to a posting.
13. The **Display word count** option can be used to display the number of words in a posting.
14. The **Subscription and tracking** section allows the teacher to provide options to participants to subscribe or unsubscribe and to track read and unread forum postings.



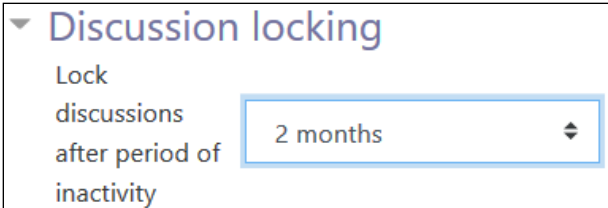
▼ Subscription and tracking

Subscription mode Optional subscription

Read tracking Optional

15. The **Subscription mode** setting enables the teacher to allow participants to decide if they want to subscribe to the forum (**Optional subscription**); require everyone to be subscribed (**Forced subscription**); automatically subscribe everyone but allow them to unsubscribe (**Auto subscription**); and not allow anyone to subscribe (**Subscription disabled**).
16. The options in the **Read tracking** setting allow students to choose whether to use this function (**Optional**) or whether it is always **Off**.

17. The **Discussion Locking** section can be set by teachers to close dormant discussions. Instructors can reactivate the forum whenever they want.



▼ Discussion locking

Lock discussions after period of inactivity 2 months

18. The **Post threshold for blocking** section can be used by teachers to restrict the number of postings a student can make within a time frame. It also will send a warning message to students advising them they have a limited number of postings in this forum.

Post threshold for blocking

Time period for blocking: Don't block

Post threshold for blocking: 0

Post threshold for warning: 0

Time period for blocking options: Don't block, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 1 Week

The **Whole forum grading** section allows teachers to select the type of grading for the forum activity. There are two types **Point** and **Scale**.

19. Below the **Whole forum grading Scale Type**, instructors can set an advanced **Grading method**. These include **Simple direct grading**, **Marking guide** and **Rubric**. **Grade category** is an option as well. In the **Grade to pass** field, type a minimum grade score. The **Default setting for "Notify students"** section allows instructors to share students' scores after **Forum** posts are graded.

Whole forum grading

Grade: ?

Type: None

Type: Point

Maximum grade: 100

Type: Scale

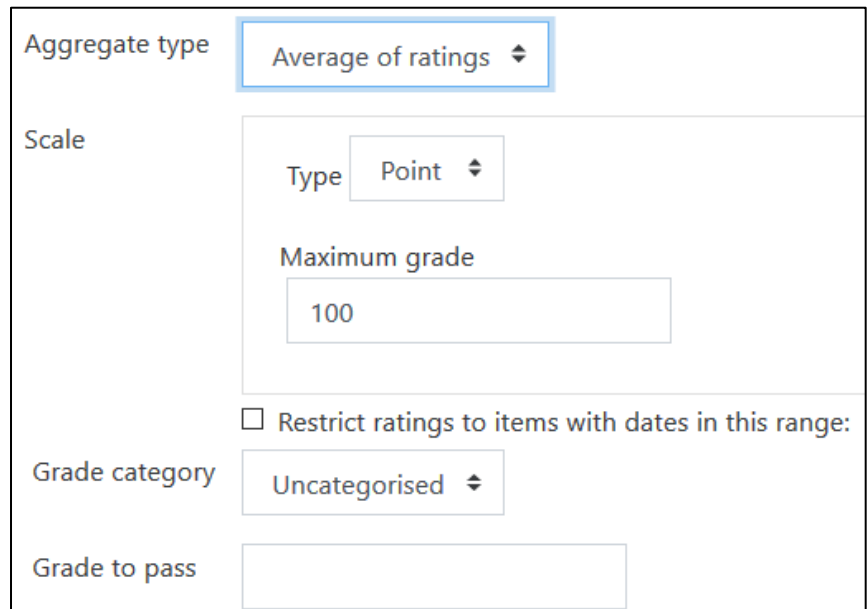
Grading method options: Default competence scale, Separate and Connected ways of knowing

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Grading method | Simple direct grading ▾ |
| Grade category | Uncategorised ▾ |
| Grade to pass | <input type="text"/> |
| Default setting for "Notify students" | No ▾ |

20. The **Ratings** section is used to rate students' forum postings and calculate a grade in the grade book. The options in the **Aggregate type** setting are used to specify how the grade book score is calculated. Options include the **Average of ratings**, the **Count of ratings**, the **Maximum rating**, the **Minimum rating** and the **Sum of ratings**. There will not be a score in the grade book if **No ratings** is selected.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ▼ Ratings | |
| Roles with permission to rate | Capability check not available until activity is saved |
| Aggregate type | <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"><div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 2px;">No ratings ▾</div><div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px;">No ratings</div><div style="padding: 2px;">Average of ratings</div><div style="padding: 2px;">Count of ratings</div><div style="padding: 2px;">Maximum rating</div><div style="padding: 2px;">Minimum rating</div><div style="padding: 2px;">Sum of ratings</div></div> |

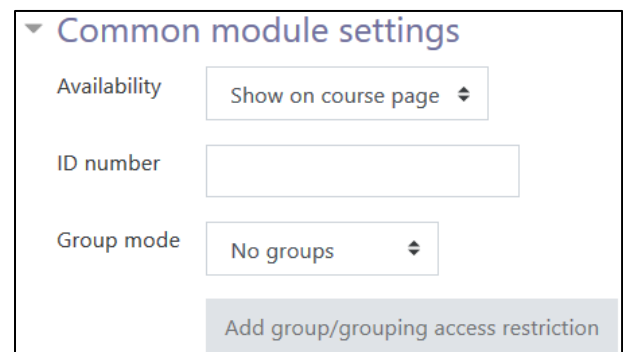
21. The **Scale** setting, whether selected as **Scale** or **Point**, allows the user to specify the **Maximum score** for the rating.



The screenshot shows the 'Aggregate type' dropdown menu set to 'Average of ratings'. Under the 'Scale' section, the 'Type' dropdown is set to 'Point' and the 'Maximum grade' text input field contains the number '100'. There is an unchecked checkbox labeled 'Restrict ratings to items with dates in this range:'. Below this, the 'Grade category' dropdown is set to 'Uncategorised' and the 'Grade to pass' text input field is empty.

22. The **Restrict rating to items with dates in this range** setting indicates when the ratings for the postings start and finish using the **From** and **To** options.

23. The **Common module settings** section is common to many Moodle activities and resources.

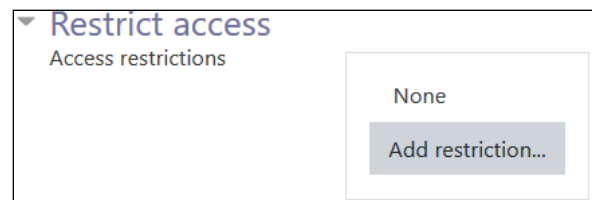


The screenshot shows the 'Common module settings' section. The 'Availability' dropdown is set to 'Show on course page'. The 'ID number' text input field is empty. The 'Group mode' dropdown is set to 'No groups'. At the bottom of the section is a button labeled 'Add group/grouping access restriction'.

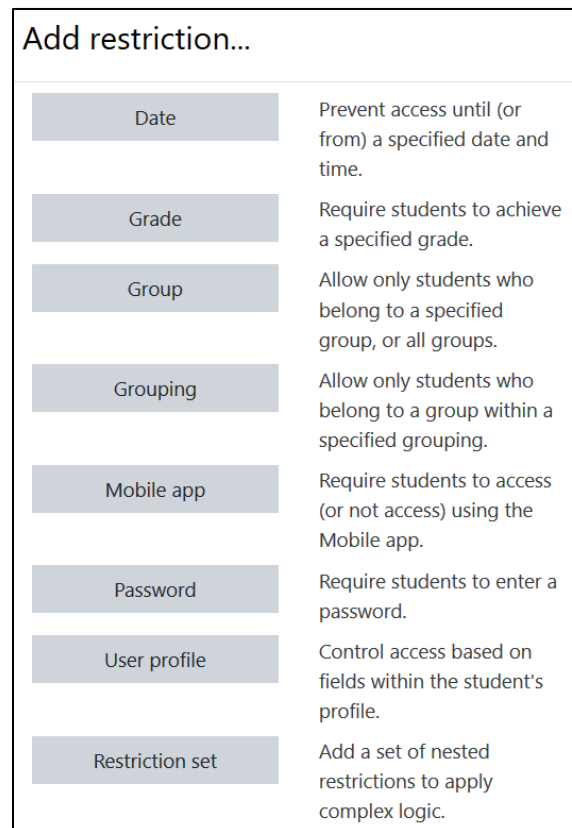
24. The **Availability** setting is used to **Show/Hide** the activity. This is identical to using the **Show/Hide** icons when the **Turn editing on** function is enabled on a course home page.

25. The **ID Number** setting sets an ID number for advanced use of the grade book. (This is not used in the Avenue courseware.)

26. The **Group mode** setting enables the use of groups. (More information is available in the **Groups** documentation in the Stage 3 **Course Management** section.)
27. If you choose **Separate groups** for **Group mode**, another option appears for **Grouping**. This option enables a collection of groups to gather together and work as a larger group.
28. Settings in the **Restrict access** section can be used to limit access to the activity. (More information is available in the **Setting up and Using Restrict Access Settings** documentation in the Stage 3 **Course Management** section.)



29. Upon selecting the **Add restriction...** button a pop up appears.



30. Click the **Save and return to course** button to save/update the activity.

Deployment Tips

- Consider adding a single, simple discussion forum if your **Forum** task has a narrow focus. Students will not be able to add new topics.
- You can use single-member groups to create a private **Forum** for journal writing and course-related communication between individual students and the teacher.
- Teachers should subscribe to all active **Forums** and receive emails of all postings. This will make it easier to moderate the **Forum** activity.
- It is possible to record audio in a forum posting by starting a new posting, clicking **Add** in the **Attachments** section and using the **Record Audio** function in the **File picker** panel. More information about this feature is available in the **Label module - Creating a Label (with audio)** document in the **Blending Learning by Adding Resources** section of the Stage 3 course. (Students can also use this feature.)
- Many tips and ideas about using forums in a class are available online. Try this search term:
Moodle forum tips

Video Resource

[Moodle Forums](#)

Forum Activity Help files

[Moodle documents - Forum module](#)

<https://docs.moodle.org/39/en/Forum_activity>

[Moodle documents - Forum settings](#)

<http://docs.moodle.org/39/en/Forum_settings>

[Moodle documents - Using Forum](#)

<http://docs.moodle.org/39/en/Using_Forum>

[Moodle documents - Forum FAQ](#)

<http://docs.moodle.org/39/en/Forum_FAQ>