

Communicating with your students

Welcome to UNSW's series on communicating with your students in Moodle. In this series we will show you how to send announcements, emails, messages and have conversations with your students using Moodle. For public announcements, we will show you how to use the news forum. For private messages sent to individuals or certain groups of students, we will show you how to use messages. For discussions, we will also show you how to set up other kinds of forums that you can use in Moodle as well as a case study on integrating other web2.0 tools in your Moodle course.

Using the news forum for announcements

The news forum is commonly used for posting announcements to the whole class.

It's kind of like your public announcement board which only instructors can post on.

Students cannot reply to this particular kind of forum. They can however, all receive what's being posted in here through their emails. So even if they haven't logged into your course yet, you can send them instructions on how to do so, through this news forum.

You can find your news forum here in topic 0.

It is up to you if you would like to rename this forum. To do this, turn your editing on and click on the news forum's update button. Most people just leave these settings as is and go straight to save and display so they can add their announcements.

To add your announcements, just click on add a new topic and populate the required fields.

This information will automatically be emailed to all of the course participants if you tick the mail now button down here, OR after thirty minutes – which is the default editing window time you have before the announcement is mailed out to your students.

Another good feature about using this forum for your announcements is its ability to be displayed on your course home page.

You can add a latest news block to your course's home page just like I did here. Turn editing on, add a block and select latest news. Having this block here lets the students easily see important and current announcements for your course. You can also add new announcements from this block, by adding a new topic.

Using messages

We use messages in moodle to send out private messages to students or groups of students. The messages you send them through here will land in their email inboxes and as a pop-up block within moodle.

To start using it, go to Navigation and click on Participants. You will then land on this page where you can choose to send a message

- to everyone
- to students belonging to a certain group – if you have groups already set up
- to a certain student
- to students who have been inactive for a certain amount of days
- even to students in your other courses

Once you've selected your recipients, select send a message.

NOT notes, because a new note or common note is what you use to add a note to yourself or to your TA's about certain participants. Notes are not shared with students.

To send a message, select send a message, type in your message, preview it and then press send when you're ready. This message will open up in the student's inbox if they are not logged in to Moodle, and as a pop up message when they do log in to moodle.

You may choose to add a messages block on the side for easy access to all of their course messages, but bear in mind that if there are too many blocks on the side, students tend to just ignore them, defeating your purpose, so use blocks sparingly and remember that they receive the same messages in their emails anyway.

Conducting effective online discussions

<http://online.cofa.unsw.edu.au/learning-to-teach-online/ltto-episodes?view=video&video=235>

Using forums for discussions

Forums are very commonly used in Moodle, it is a perfect place for building, understandings and challenging ideas between participants.

To add a forum to your course, turn editing on and from the add an activity menu, select forum.

Name it and choose the **Forum type**:

- a single simple discussion keeps conversations focused on one particular topic

- a forum where each person posts one discussion can have multiple topics from all participants
- a question and answer forum requires students to post their own views or questions before replying to others
- a standard forum for general use has no limit on the number of discussions – we use this type most often

Then provide some **Forum introduction**.

For best practice, it should include at least:

- The spark- which could be video, activity, reading, exercise, questions/scenario that would start the conversation rolling unnecessary
- The task
- Its purpose – what's in it for them
- The instructions, and the
- Approximate amount of time they'd need to spend on it per week.

Next you need to set the general options.

If you set everyone to be subscribed, users will automatically receive all posts via email. It can be set to

- optional – where students can choose to receive emails from this forum or not
- forced – where everyone receives all posts throughout the course
- auto – where students receive posts at first but they can unsubscribe to it whenever they want OR
- disabled – no emails will be sent to them, all posts will only be recorded in moodle.

With read tracking on, unread posts are highlighted for each user.

And you have the option of choosing the upload size of files.

If you plan to grade the student contributions, you need to select from the following options : the grading scale and whether to restrict ratings for certain dates.

We will talk about releasing forums to certain groups in another video.

For now, you can click on Save and display so you can start adding new topics to your forum.

How to release a group forum

Forums are very commonly used in Moodle, it is a perfect place for building, understanding and challenging ideas between participants.

You can make the most out of it by making it easily manageable and releasing it to groups.

To add a forum for a certain group or grouping, add a forum in a certain week or topic first. Or update one that you've already set up earlier.

Make sure to choose separate groups under its common module settings IF you'd only like to show each group their own discussions.

BUT if you'd like them to see how others are talking about a certain issue, choose visible groups instead.

With visible groups they can see posts but cannot reply to them.

If you'd like them to interact across groups. choose - no groups instead.

I am setting this discussion up only for my Tuesday class, which has 5 groups in it.

This discussion is for creating a group proposal, so I'll choose separate groups so they can work among themselves.

I will also show advanced, and add my grouping here – Tuesday 4-6 and make it available ONLY to them.

To learn how to create a grouping, watch the “how to create a grouping” video in this series.

I can leave the rest of the settings for now and add my questions to the forum.

Add a new discussion topic here. If you don't want your students to add new posts, make sure you indicate it in your instructions up here.

If you need to edit these instructions, you can do it from here by clicking on – edit settings.

OR

From the home page, by clicking on its update icon. For adding a new topic, just click on its title and – Add a new discussion topic.

How to create groupings

I think of groupings as a group of groups. I personally use it to release certain activities to my Wednesday class and my Tuesday class.

So if you have any activities or resources that you may want to only release, for example to your undergraduate group in your mixed class, you can put all of the undergrad groups together in a single grouping.

You can create groupings in two ways.

You can do it while you're creating your groups.

Here's an auto created group of 5 that I'm assigning to my Tuesday grouping.

To do this, go back to your settings block and under Users, choose groups.

On the groups page, click Auto create groups.

Specify whether you'd like a certain number of groups

OR

The number of members PER group

I'd like to create 5 groups divided among my 5 tutors.

Now, to create a naming scheme, I'll name mine -Tuesday Group a or b and so on.

All of these students belong to my Tuesday class, so I'll put them in a grouping.

I'll select – New grouping and name it as my Tuesday 4-6 grouping.

You can preview it before submission.

Here's a manually created group that I am adding to my "wiki groups" grouping.

To do this, go back to the groups page, select the groupings tab and Create a grouping.

I'm going to call this the wiki groups.

Now, still under the groupings tab, select the groups and add. You can select a number of groups at once by holding down the Shift key as you click.

Teaching with web 2.0 technologies: Twitter, wikis & blogs - Case study

Link to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5tSSgBlq2s> - uploaded by COFA online.

Link from unswtv

<http://tv.unsw.edu.au/video/teaching-with-web-2-0-technologies-twitter-wikis-and-blogs-case-study>

Embed code

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Additional integrations:

SOCIAL

- twitter - <http://online.cofa.unsw.edu.au/learning-to-teach-online/lto-episodes?view=video&video=257>
- facebook
- wordpress blog
- flickr

RESOURCE

- audio recordings
- slide share
- database links
- RSS feeds