Faculty Tutorial:
Create a Discussion Forum and Discussion Thread

Purpose: To show faculty how to create a “Discussion Forum,” a “Discussion Thread,” and add a “Discussion Forum Link” to a learning unit.

Note: The “Discussion Board” is an area in a MyHills course in which one or more “Discussion Forums” live. There is one “Discussion Board” per course. A “Discussion Forum” is an area where users discuss a single topic or several topics related to the course. There may be one or more “Discussion Forums” on the “Discussion Board.” A “Discussion Thread” is an actual conversation taking place in a “Discussion Forum.”

First, let’s create a “Discussion Forum.”

From within your course, click “Discussions,” which is located in the blue “Course Menu.”

Note: You may also access “Discussions” by clicking “Course Tools,” and then clicking “Discussion Board.”
On the “Discussion Board” page, select “Create Forum.”

The “Create Forum” page will open.

Under “Forum Information,” type the title of the discussion forum in the “Name” box.

**Note:** The orange asterisk indicates that this is a required field.
Type a description for the forum in the “Description” text box.

**Note:** The “Description” text box is optional and not required.

Under “Forum Availability” keep “Yes” selected for “Available.” This ensures that the forum is available to students.

**Note:** If you do not want the forum to be available to students immediately, set a “Display After” date and time restriction.
If you would like the forum to only be available for a particular time frame, you may set time and date restrictions. Check the box next to “Display After” and/or “Display Until.” Then, click the calendar icon to select a date and the clock icon to select a time.

3. Forum Settings

Under “Forum Settings,” “Standard View” will be selected by default.

The option “Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum” requires students to post to the forum before they can view what others have posted.

If you choose the post first option and the description field is empty, you will be prompted to enter instructions in that area.
For “Grade,” select “Grade Discussion Forum” and enter the number of points possible in the box provided.

**Note:** Only keep the default setting “No Grading in Forum” if you do not want to grade the discussion forum. This is not recommended, as students are much more likely to post to the forum if points are awarded. However, open forums, created only for students to ask general question, need not be graded.

If you would like users to appear in the “needs grading” area of the course after they have posted to the forum the required number of times, keep the box next to “Show participants in needs grading status...” checked. Then, select the number of required posts from the drop-down menu by clicking the arrow.

**Note:** To view students who are in “needs grading” status, click “Grade Center,” which is located in the gray “Course Management” menu. Then, in the sub-menu that opens, click “Needs Grading.” For more information on the “Grade Center,” see the appropriate tutorial.
When “Grade Discussion Forum” is selected, you have the option to enter a “Due Date” for the forum. Click the check box to select this option. Then, click the calendar icon to select a date and the clock icon to select a time.

Note: It is recommended that you enter a “Due Date” for the forum, as then it will appear for students in their “To Do” module on the “Course Home” page. However, students may still post to the forum after the “Due Date” has passed. If you do not want students to post to the forum after a certain date and time, limit the availability of the forum, which is shown earlier in this tutorial.

Choose “Grade Threads” if you want to grade student responses to threads you create. Students will not be allowed to create new threads when “Grade Threads” is selected.

Note: “Grade Threads” may only be selected for a “Standard View” discussion forum.
When “Grade Threads” is selected, specific options will be selected in the forum automatically.

**Note:** You will choose the points possible for the thread when the thread is created.

When students subscribe to the discussion forum, they will receive an email to their Indian Hill email account every time there is a new post or reply. If you would like to give students the option to subscribe to the forum, keep the default setting, “Allow members to subscribe to forum” selected.

**Note:** Since an email is sent every time there is a new post or reply in the forum, this can overwhelm a person’s email account very quickly. Therefore, allowing subscriptions is not recommended. The recommended setting is “Do not allow subscriptions.”
The email notification that students receive when they subscribe to a discussion forum will include either a link to the post or the post itself will be included in the body of the text, depending on the option selected by the instructor.

Note: “Include link to post” will be selected by default and is the recommended setting if you would like to allow subscriptions because only a link to the forum, as opposed to the entire post, will be sent to students via email. Remember “Do not allow subscriptions” is the recommended setting.

“Allow Anonymous Posts” will not be checked by default. It is recommended that you keep this option unchecked, because students should be held accountable for what they post. This is particularly important if something inappropriate were to be posted to your course.
It is not recommended to “Allow Author to Delete Own Posts,” as this option would allow students to delete posts that have already been published.

**Note:** If you do decide to allow students to delete their published posts, you have the option to allow them to delete “All posts” or “Only posts with no replies.”

It is recommended that the box next to “Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts” not be checked as this option would allow students to change what they have already posted. This can create confusion if posts are graded.

If you would like to allow students to create new threads, then keep “Allow Members to Create New Threads” checked. If you would only like students to respond to threads that you post, then uncheck this option.

**Note:** “Allow Members to Create New Threads” will be unchecked automatically when “Grade Threads” is selected and will be checked automatically when “Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum” is selected.
“Allow File Attachments” permits students to upload files to the Discussion Forum. Then, every other member of the forum must download the file in order to view it. Overall, this can be very inconvenient and time consuming, so it is not a recommended setting. However, if you wish to have students create posts using audio and video, this setting MUST be checked.

“Allow Users to Reply with Quote” gives users the option to quote the post in which they are replying. This is not recommended, as it can make posts very lengthy.

“Force Moderation of Posts” requires the instructor to approve each post before it is published. This setting is only recommended if there are issues in a discussion forum, and the instructor feels it is necessary to check each post before it is published.
Users can “tag” posts with words or phrases when “Allow Post Tagging” is checked. This can make searching for posts on a particular topic easier.

“Allow Members to Rate Posts” adds an additional social element to discussions, but can also create unintended challenges, as students rate posts made by one another and the professor.

Once you have made your selections, click “Submit.”
A success message will appear at the top of the “Discussion Board” page, and the forum you created will appear under “Create Forum.”

Now, let's create a “Discussion Thread.”

From the Discussion Board page, click the name of the Discussion Forum in which you would like to start a thread.
On the “Forum” page, select “Create Thread.”

The “Create Thread” page will open.
The “Forum Description” will appear at the top of the page.

Under “Message,” type the title of your thread in the “Subject” box.

Next, type what you would like to say in the “Message” box.
You can edit your post using the WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor, above the text box. You may change the font, add images, create a bulleted or numbered list, use spell check, etc. Hover your cursor over a button to view its function.

Once you are ready to post your initial Discussion Thread message, click “Submit.”

Note: If you are not yet ready to post, you may select “Save Draft” instead of “Submit.” Then, you may edit and post at a later time.
A green “Success” message will appear on the “Forum” page, along with the “Discussion Thread” you created.

Now, let’s add a link to the “Discussion Forum” we created in a learning unit of the course. In the blue Course Menu, select “Learning Units.”
Select the learning unit to which you would like to add the link.

Once you are in the learning unit in which you would like to add the link, hover over “Tools.”
In the sub-menu that opens, select “Discussion Board.”

The “Create Link: Discussion Board” page will open.
Under “Create Link: Discussion Board,” click the radio button to the left of “Select a Discussion Board Forum.”

1. **Create Link: Discussion Board**

   Link to the Discussion Board page, link to a specific Discussion Board forum, or create one and making it hidden will make the forum hidden as well.

   - [ ] Link to Discussion Board Page
   - [ ] Select a Discussion Board Forum
   - [ ] Create New Forum

Then, select the discussion forum you created in the “Select a Discussion Board Forum” box.
Click “Next.”

On the next page, the “Link Name” field will automatically be populated with the “Name” of the Discussion Forum (shown earlier in this tutorial).

**Note:** It is recommended that you do not change this.
If you would like the “Link Name” color to be consistent with the color palette set for Indian Hills Community College, you may change the color by clicking the drop-down arrow next to “Black.”

**Note:** Please use the Indian Hills color palette or leave the color black.

In the window that opens, type “741213” in the “Color value” box. Then, click “Apply.”

The color should now be maroon.
You may add additional information about the link in the “Text” box. If added, this information will appear in the learning unit, under the “Link Name.”

1. Link Information
   - Link Name: Introduce Yourself
   - Color of Name: Red
   - Link: Discussion Board: Introduce Yourself
   - Text:

   Keep “Yes” selected next to “Available,” so that the discussion forum link is available to students.
Choose the option you prefer for “Track Number of Views.”

Note: “No” will be selected by default.

If you selected time and date restrictions for the discussion forum (shown earlier in the tutorial) you may want to set the same time and date restrictions for the discussion forum link. Check the box next to “Display After” and/or “Display Until.” Then, click the calendar icon to select a date and the clock icon to select a time.

Note: The “Date Restrictions” set here only apply to the discussion forum link. They do not apply to the discussion forum itself.

Once you have selected your options, click “Submit.”
You will be taken back to the selected learning unit. A green “Success...” message will appear at the top of the page.

The discussion forum link will be the last item listed on this page. Both students and the instructor may access the discussion forum by clicking the discussion forum link.

Note: You may change the order of the discussion forum link by clicking and dragging it up to the appropriate point on this page.

Congratulations! You now know how to create a discussion forum, a discussion thread, and add a discussion forum link to a learning unit!

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