CENTER FOR
TEACHING, LEARNING, AND TECHNOLOGY
Illinois State University

CTLT provides faculty support for ReggieNet by e-mail, phone, and in person. Please email CTLT@ilstu.edu or call (309) 438-2542 if you have questions.

ReggieNet: Forums

Video - Using the ReggieNet Forums Tool

The **Forums** tool is primarily designed for asynchronous, online discussions. Discussions can be set up for many different purposes. They can be anonymous, moderated, or restricted to particular groups. Forums posts can also be graded.

Before you start

FORUM: A Forum is a collection of topics that the instructor has created. In each Forum, you can have a number of topics. Access to the entire Forum can be controlled through the forum settings. Users do not post directly in a Forum.

TOPIC: A topic is a collection of one or more threads that users have created because they have questions, want to make comments, need to reply, etc. Inside a Topic, you click on an individual *Conversation* to see what people have posted. Access to the topic can be controlled through the topic settings.

CONVERSATION: Conversations are threads made up of posts between individual users.

POST: Posts are comments uploaded by users. A group of linked Posts is called a Conversation (or thread).
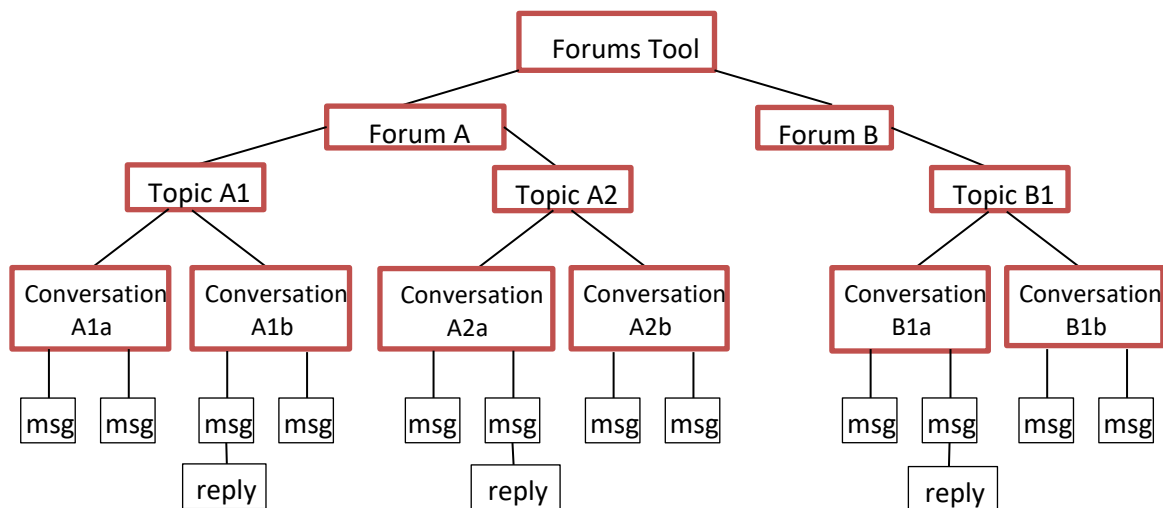
Creating a New Forum

1. If the Forums home page is not displayed, click FORUMS in the breadcrumb bar.
2. Click the **New Forum** tab near the top of the screen. The Forum Settings screen will be displayed.
3. In the **Forum Title** box, enter a name for the new forum. This box is required. The entry may be up to 250 characters long.
4. (OPTIONAL) To provide a short description of the forum under the forum title on the Discussions tool home page, enter that description (up to 255 characters) in the **Short Description** box.
5. To provide more information about the forum that site participants can access from the Discussions tool home page, enter that information in the **Description** box. Use the icons and boxes in the WYSIWYG editor to format the text as needed.
6. To add an attachment for participants to read, click **Add Attachment** and follow the instructions in the Adding an Attachment screen.
7. In the **Forum Posting** section, make selections for the following settings:

   - **Lock forum** (disable forum postings) - check this box if you want this setting selected by default for all topics added to the forum. Note that you may uncheck the setting for any topic. If the setting is selected for a topic, users will not be able to post messages.

   - **Moderate topics in forum** – check this box if you want this setting selected by default for all topics added to the forum. In the Permissions section, you may then specify which site roles have permission to moderate messages (the permission will be inactive if you do not select this setting). Note that you may uncheck the setting for any topic.

   - **Require users to post before reading** – check this box if you want this setting selected by default for all topics added to the forum. If this setting is selected for a topic, users must post a message to view other posts for the topic. When users initially access the topic, they will see the following message:

     Note that you may uncheck the setting for any topic.

8. In the **Availability** section of the screen, select when the forum will be displayed to site participants:

   - If you want the forum to be displayed immediately and not be hidden at a later date, click **Show immediately** with no time restriction.

   - If you want to set a date for when the forum is displayed and hidden, click Specify Dates. Then, enter the appropriate dates in the Open Date and Close Date fields that are displayed. **Note**: students will not be able to read posts either before the Open Date and/or after the Close Date.

9. In the **Mark All Messages in Conversations Read** section, check the box for "Automatically mark all messages in a conversation as read" if you want this setting selected by default for all topics added to the forum

10. If desired, associate this forum with a specific pre-existing item in the Gradebook tool by selecting from the "Select a Gradebook Item" pull-down list. (This pull-down list is located in the **Grading** section of the screen.)
    Note: You first have to create a gradebook item in order to associate the grades in a forum.

11. In the **Permissions** section, make any necessary changes to the default permissions for the forum. Typically, you don't need to make any changes.

12. Click **Save** or another appropriate choice.

Warning: *Site participants cannot view or access a forum until it has at least one topic in it. Even so, you do not necessarily have to add the first topic when you create the forum. You may add a topic when you create the forum or at any future time.*

Changing a Forum

1. Find the appropriate forum and click the **Forum Settings** link for it.

2. Change entries as desired and exit from the screen as appropriate.

Deleting a Forum

Warning: *When you delete a forum, you also delete all topics and messages in it.*

1. Find the appropriate forum and click the **More** link for it.

2. Click the **Delete Forum** link from the menu.

3. To proceed to delete the forum and its contents, click the **Delete Forum** button; to abandon this action, click **Cancel**.

Adding a Topic

1. Find the forum to which you want to add the topic and click the **New Topic** link.

2. In the **Topic Title** box, enter a name for the new topic. This box is required.

3. (OPTIONAL)To provide a short description of the topic under the topic title on the Discussions tool home page, enter that description (up to 100 characters) in the **Short Description** box.

4. To provide more information about the topic that site participants can access from the Discussions tool home page, enter that information in the **Description** box. Use the icons and boxes in the WYSIWYG editor to format the text as needed.

5. To add an attachment for participants to read, click **Add Attachment** and follow the instructions in the Adding an Attachment screen.

6. In the **Topic Posting** section, make selections for the following settings:

   • **Lock topic** (disable topic postings) – select this option to prevent students from posting in the topic.

- **Moderate topic** – select this option to require student posts to be approved before they become visible. Permission as to who can moderate can be adjusted once the topic has been saved.
- **Require users to post before reading** – users must post a message to view other posts for the topic. When users initially access the topic, they will see the following message:

  🛇 You must post to this topic before you can view any messages

- **Posts are anonymous** – users will not see author information. If this option is selected, another option will be shown which allows permissions to be adjusted for who can see author information.

7. In the **Availability** section of the screen, select when the forum will be displayed to site participants:

   - If you want the forum to be displayed immediately and not be hidden at a later date, click **Show immediately** with no time restriction.

   - If you want to set dates for when the forum is displayed and/or hidden, click Specify Dates. Then, enter the appropriate dates in the Open Date and Close Date fields that are displayed. **Note**: students will not be able to read posts either before the Open Date and / or after the Close Date.

8. In the **Mark All Messages in Conversations Read** section, check the box for "Automatically mark all messages in a conversation as read". This means users don't have to mark individual messages as read.

9. If desired, associate this topic with a specific pre-existing assignment in the Gradebook tool by selecting from the **Gradebook Item** pull-down list. (This pull-down list is located in the Grading section of the screen.)
   Note: You first have to create a gradebook item in order to associate the grades in a topic.

10. In the **Automatically Create Topics** section, you can create one topic or create topics for groups (you'd have to create groups from Site Info > Manage Groups, before you can see the option to create group topics. (See *Creating Group Discussions* below.)

11. In the **Permissions** section, make any necessary changes to the default permissions for the topic. Typically, you don't need to make any changes.

12. Click **Save** or another appropriate choice.

Changing a Discussion Topic

1. If the Forums home page is not displayed, click FORUMS in the breadcrumb bar.

2. Find the appropriate topic and click the **Topic Settings** link for it.

3. Change entries as desired and exit from the screen as appropriate.

Deleting a Discussion Topic

Warning: *When you delete a topic, you also delete all messages in it.*

1. If the Forums home page is not displayed, click FORUMS in the breadcrumb bar.
2. Find the appropriate topic and click the **More** link for it.
3. To delete this topic, click the **Delete Topic** link in the pop-up menu.
4. To proceed to delete the topic and its contents, click the **Delete** button near the bottom of the screen again. Or, to return to the Forums home page without deleting it, click **Cancel**.

Posting

1. To begin a thread in a Topic, click **Start a Conversation**.
   - Enter a title (required)
   - Format your message in the text editor
   - If you want to add an attachment, click the Add attachments button
   - Click Post
2. To reply to a post in a topic, click on **Reply** when you are viewing the post.

Organizing Forums and Topics

By default, new Forums and topics are displayed with the most recently created items at the top. Once you've created multiple Forums and / or Topics within them, you can change the order in which they are displayed on the Forums Home Page by selecting **Organize** on the menu bar. You will see a screen similar to the image below.

Adjust the numbers to re-order Forums (grey background boxes) and/or topics within forums.

Grading Student Work in the Forums Tool

The Forums tool allows you to choose whether or not to grade each forum or topic you create. When you want to grade a forum or topic, be sure that you have chosen a particular gradebook item from the

dropdown menu. You will need to create the item in the Gradebook tool before being able to select an option here (Refer to the Gradebook Help Documents for how to create Gradebook Items).

Once you have posted the forum, you can grade each student's forum post individually, giving both a grade (in number of points) and comments.

Statistics

Once you have all of your forums set up, you can track how much your students are reading and posting. Click the **Statistics and Grading** tab near the top to display statistics. You can view by user or topic. Note that the Read/Unread statistic is only accurate if students actually mark posts as read.

Grading a Forum

1. On the Forums home page, click the **More** link for the appropriate forum.
2. From the displayed menu, select **Grade**. ReggieNet displays a Statistics & Grading page for that forum.

3. On the Statistics & Grading page, you can view all messages a student has authored in the forum by clicking on the appropriate student's name.
2. Grade participation in the forum. You may only enter grades as points, and only to the maximum allowed for the associated gradebook item. Click on **Show Comments** if you'd like to give comments. Enter scores and comments in the appropriate fields. To apply one score to all students without a grade, enter the score in the displayed field and click **Apply Grade to all Ungraded**. Lastly, click **Submit Grades**.

Grading a Topic

1. From the Forums tool home page, access the Statistics & Grading page for that topic. You can do so in one of two ways:

   • Click the **More** link for the appropriate topic. From the displayed menu, select Grade.

   • In the tool menu bar, click **Statistics & Grading**. Then, click **Statistics & Grading by Topic**. From the list of topics in the topics column, click on the appropriate topic.

2. In either case, ReggieNet displays a Statistics & Grading page for that topic.

3. On the Statistics & Grading page, you can view all messages a student has authored in the forum to which the topic belongs, by clicking on the appropriate student's name.

4. Grade participation in the topic by clicking on the **Grade** link for each student. You may only enter grades as points, and only to the maximum allowed for the associated gradebook item. Enter scores and comments in the appropriate fields. To apply one score to all students without a grade, enter the score in the displayed field and click **Apply Grade to all Ungraded**. Lastly, click **Submit Grades**.

Creating Group Discussions

In order to create group discussions, you must first create groups using Manage Groups function in **Site Info**.

Creating Groups

1. Click **Manage Group**

2. Click **Create New Group**

3. Enter Group Title

4. Click student name(s) and click the > button to move the students to the Group Member List

5. Click **Add**

Creating Auto Group – randomly assign students to groups

1. Click **Manage Groups**

2. Click **Auto Groups**

3. Click on the check box labeled "Students"

4. Select **Create random groups from members with the selected role**.

5. Select **Split by number of groups needed** or **Split by number of users needed per group** and provide required information.

6. Click **Add**

Creating Group Discussion

1. Before you start a new topic, please create a new forum for the group discussions. In the **Forum Setting**, under **Permissions**, make sure that the Permission Level dropdown for **Student** role is set to **None.**

2. Create a topic by clicking **New Topic**

3. All the options are the same as you'd create a new topic for the whole class, but if you have created groups in the site, there will be a section labeled **Automatically Create Topics** just before the **Permissions** section. Select the option "Automatically create multiple topics for groups"

4. Select the boxes for groups.

5. Click **Save**. This will automatically create the same topic for each group. Permissions will be automatically set so that only the members of the group will have access.
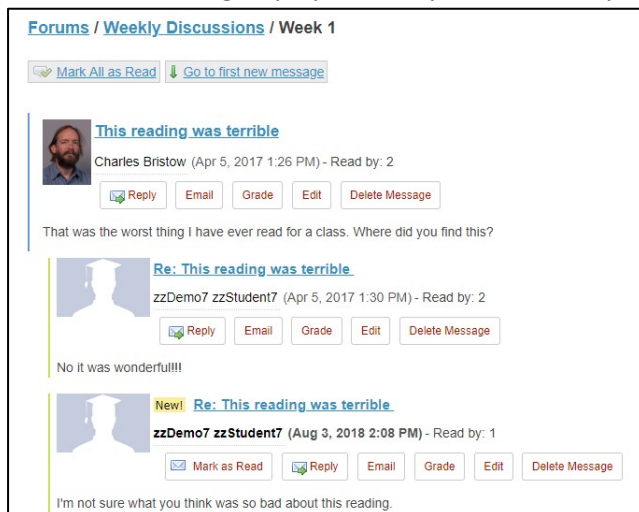
If you have selected a Gradebook item when the group topics are created, all topics will send to that same gradebook item.

Participating in a Discussion

Reading Messages
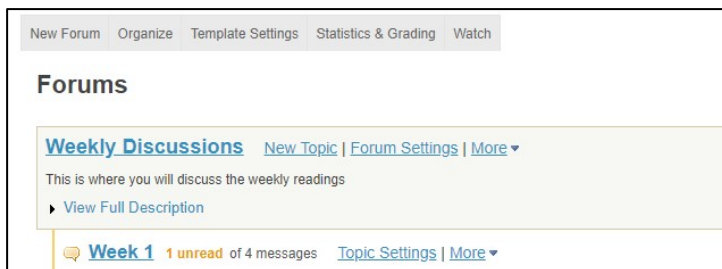
1. Display the desired Forum by clicking its name in the forums list on the home page; then click the name of the desired Topic in the resulting display. You may sort the list by subject, author, or date.

2. Next to the subject, the display indicates the number of messages in the thread. Threads that contain replies show the replies indented. Messages that are new and any that have not yet been approved by the moderator are flagged as "New" and "Pending," respectively. An envelope icon also displays next to the name of the person who has posted a new message.

Posting a Reply

1. Click the link for it.
2. The **Reply Title** box contains a default title for your reply. This title is in the format Re: [subject of thread or message to which you are replying].
3. If desired, change **Reply Title** entry. This box is required.
4. If desired, insert the text of the message to which you are replying by clicking the **Insert Original Text** button. ReggieNet copies the text of that message and the name of its creator and creation date and time into the **Message** box.
5. In the **Message** box, enter your reply. Use the icons and boxes to format the text as appropriate.
6. If desired, display the number of words in the message by clicking the **Count words** link.
7. To add one or more attachments to this message, click the **Add attachments** button.
8. To post the message, click the **Post** button near the bottom of the screen.

Changing a Message

As the instructor, by default, you have an option to edit any messages.

1. Beneath the poster's name, click the **Edit** link for the message you want to change.
2. Edit as desired.
3. Click on **Post Edited Message**,

Deleting a Message

As the instructor, by default, you have an option to delete any messages.

1. Beneath the poster's name, click the **Delete** link for the message you want to remove.
2. ReggieNet asks you to confirm that you want to delete the message, click the **Delete** button.

Watching Forums

1. If the Forums home page is not displayed, click FORUMS in the breadcrumb bar.
2. Click the **Watch** tab near the top.

3. The system displays this screen:

Watch Forums Options

Use the settings below to change what notifications **you** receive when activity in the forums of **this** site take place. Some topics may not allow email notifications.

○ Send me an email whenever a new message is posted (to topics that allow notifications)

● Send me an email when a conversation that I have contributed to receives a new message (within topics that allow notifications)

○ No notification

[Save] [Cancel]

4. Choose one of the following options:

- To receive an email each time a new message is posted, click **Send me an email whenever a new message is posted**.

- To receive an email only when a new message has been posted to a thread you have contributed to, click **Send me an email when a conversation that I have contributed to receives a new message**.

- To stop receiving notifications via email, click **No notification**.

- To save your changes, click the **Save** button.