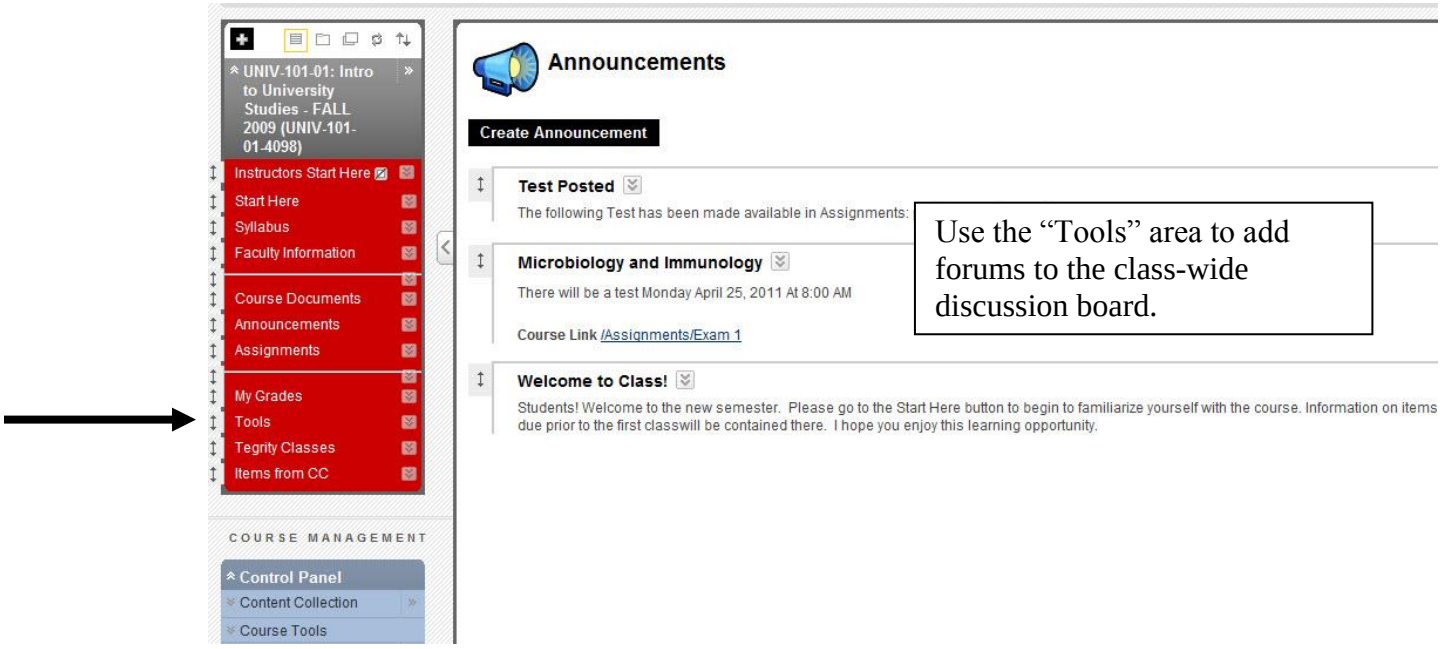
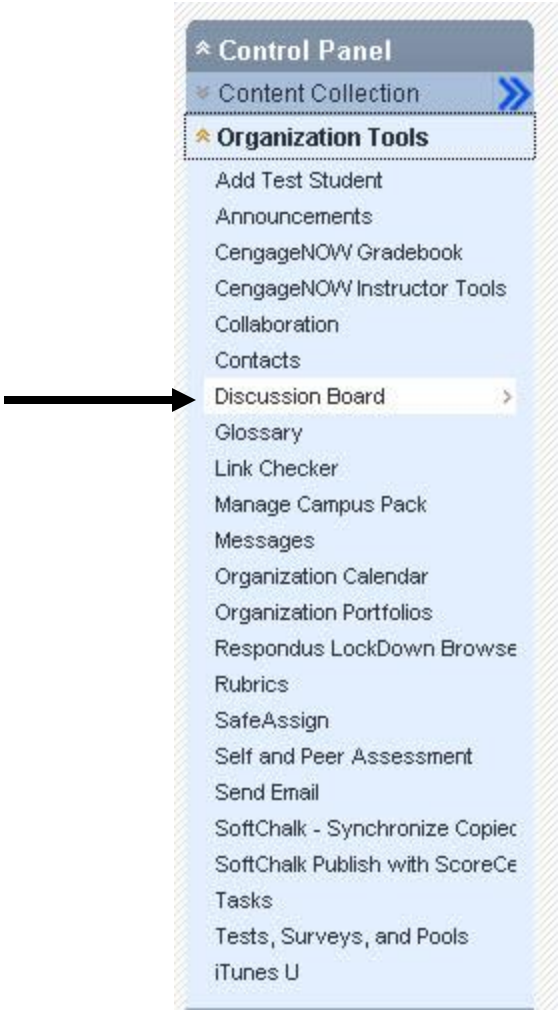
Using the Discussion Boards Feature in Blackboard

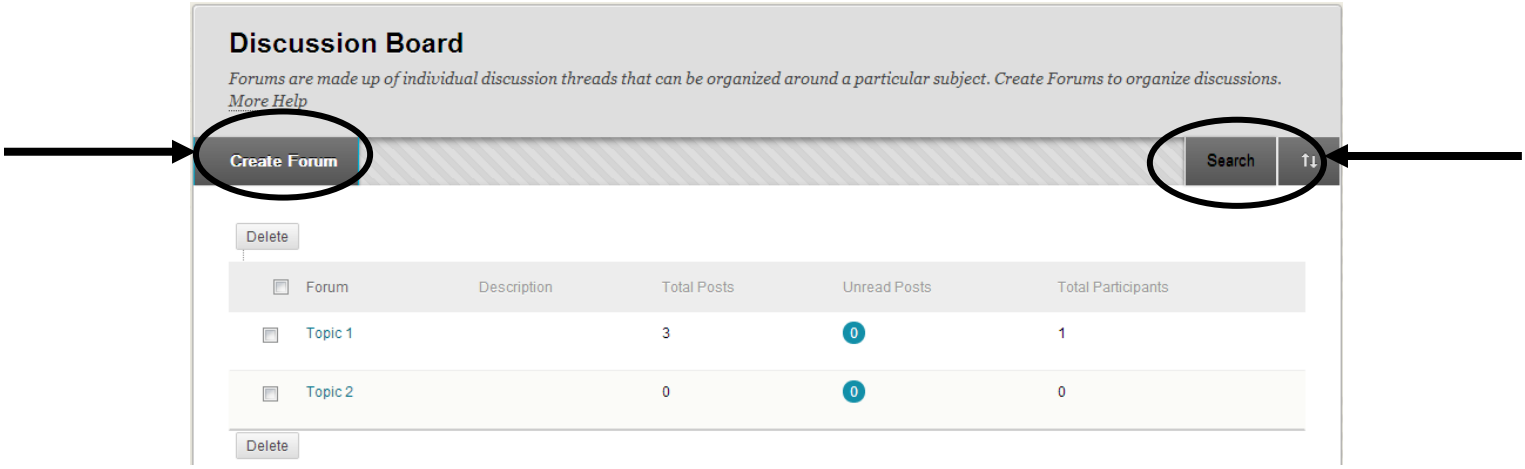
The Discussion Boards feature in Blackboard will allow for asynchronous posting and responding to forum messages. A forum is any main topic to be discussed in the course. An advantage of the Discussion Board is that conversations are logged and organized by forums. Conversations are grouped in threads that contain a main posting and all related replies. To begin working in the Discussion Board click on "Tools" (in the red panel) to add a forum to the class-wide discussion or "Course Tools" (in the blue panel) and then "Discussion Board" to look at both the class-wide and group discussion boards on the left.





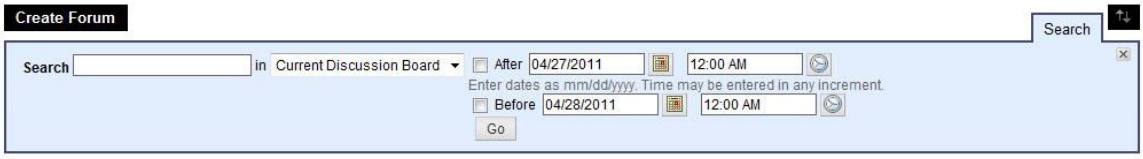
Use the "Course Tools" area to add forums to the class-wide discussion board and to view the Group Discussion Boards and entries.

On this screen you will now see a link for the class title. To add forums to that link (this is the main public discussion board for the class) click on that link and you will be able to add forums for the class to use.



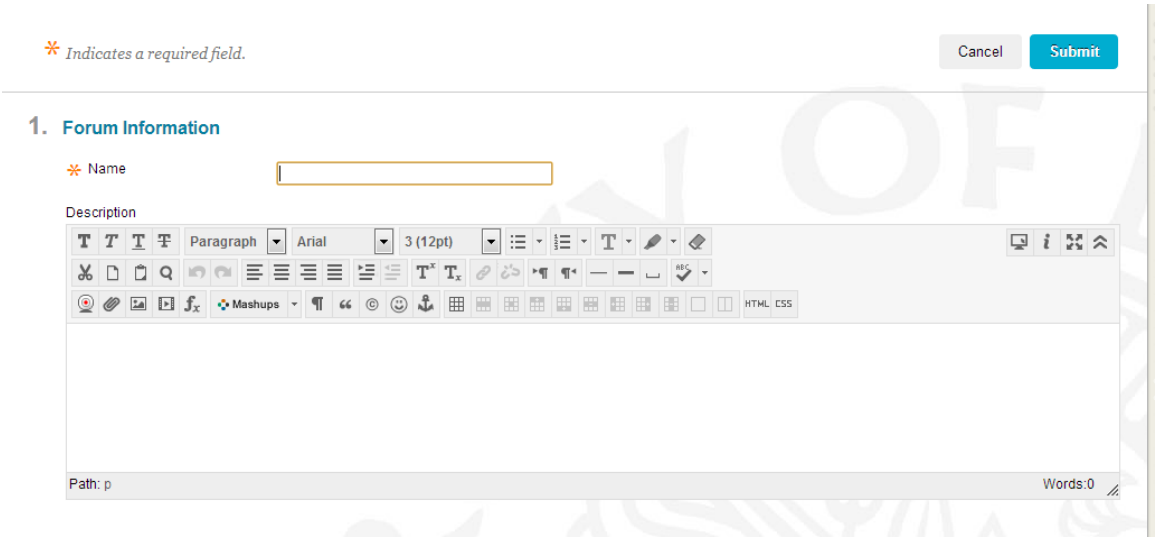
You now see the Button labeled "Create Forum" in the top left corner and that is the button used to add a forum to the discussion board.

The "Search" Function allows you to do keyword searches and date related searches in the current forum or in all forums on the board for your class. The search tools are minimized and to expand them you must click on the "Search" button listed in the right corner (shown above).



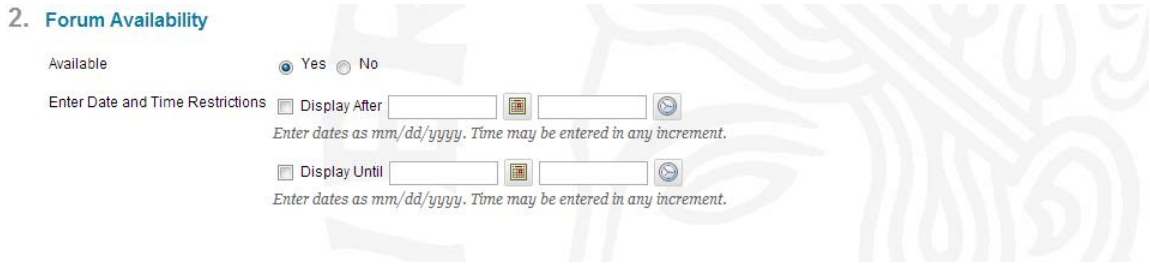
To use this Search Function you will set your options in the area above and then click the "Go" button under the dates. You do not need to use both options at one time but it is possible to further restrict your search if you use the keyword and date functions together.

To add a forum click on the button above labeled "Create Forum" and you will get a form to create the different forum topics that the students will use in your class.

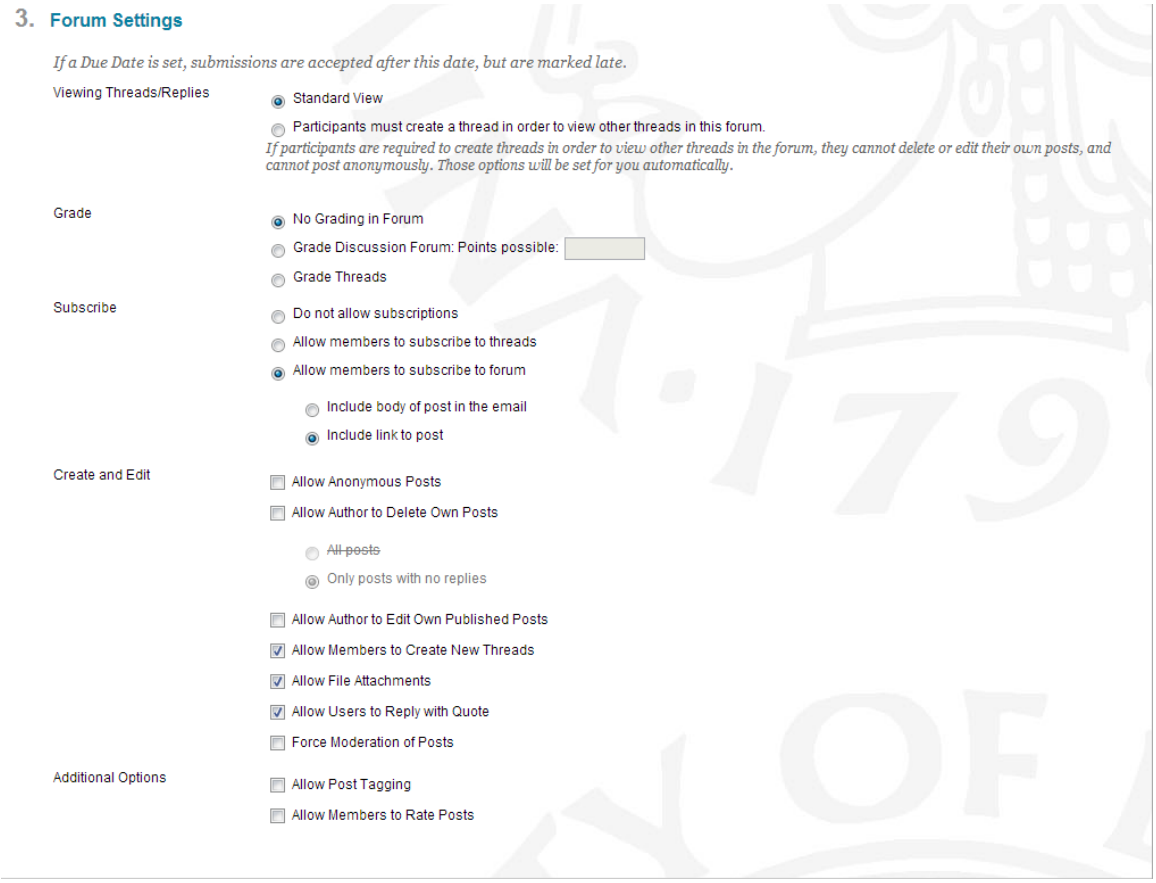


In section one, you will add the Name (required) and a description of what is to be placed in this forum. A description can contain questions that you want the students to respond and reply to inside the forum for all to see in the class.

Best Practice: Always include a description. When descriptions are provided it appears in the Create Thread form.



In section two, you now have the option of making this forum visible or "Available" to students or to keep it hidden and controlling when the forum is visible by using date and time restrictions. Making a forum available or visible to students, means that the students will be able to see and post to the forum when they enter the discussion board. If a forum is hidden, students do not see it when they enter the discussion board. This can also be used to turn off a forum when you have finished using it, which will help keep your forum list current especially if you have a good deal of topics you wish to have the class discuss.



In section three, you can decide the settings for your forum and what you want the students to be able to do while in each of the forums.

Your options are:
Viewing Threads/Replies: Standard View: This option checked (by default), gives the students the ability to review thread postings before submitting their thread.

Viewing Threads/Replies: Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum: This option checked, gives the student the opportunity to post a thread before reviewing thread postings by their classmates. Note: This type of forum requires the delete posts, edit posts, and post anonymously options be disabled. These options are set for you by default.

Grade: No Grading in Forum: This option checked (by default), has no grading of the forum in your class.

Grade: Grade Discussion Forum: This option checked, allows you to put a set of total points possible to be earned for posting and replying on this forum and places a column in the grade book for each forum you wish to grade. Note: This type of forum requires the allow anonymous posts option be disabled. By selecting this type of forum the due

date, needs grading, and associated rubric options become available. These options are set and displayed for you by default.

Grade: Grade Threads: This option checked, allows you to put a set of total points possible to be earned for posting and replying on each thread and places a column in the grade book for each thread in each forum you wish to grade. Note: This type of forum requires the post anonymously and create new threads options to be disabled. These options are set for you by default.

Subscribe: Do not allow subscriptions: This option checked, does not allow users to subscribe to threads or forums nor receive emails when new postings are created.

Subscribe: Allow members to subscribe to threads: This option checked, creates an additional button labeled "subscribe" on each post that is added to each thread so that users can click it and then be notified by e-mail if additional postings to this thread are added.

Subscribe: Allow members to subscribe to forums: This option checked (by default), creates an additional button labeled "subscribe" on each post that is added to the forum so that users can click it and then be notified by e-mail if additional postings to this forum are added.

Create and Edit: Allow Anonymous Posts: This option checked, gives the students a checkbox to allow for their post to be published without their name associated with it.

Create and Edit: Allow Author to Delete Own Posts: This option checked, allows the student to remove their own posts after they have been published on the forum. You may also set the option to remove all posts or only those with no replies.

Create and Edit: Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts: This option checked, allows the student to modify or make changes to their own published posts in the forum.

Create and Edit: Allow Members to Create New Threads: This option checked (by default), allows the students to post their own subtopics in the forum. If you want to control the number of threads in the class you must uncheck this option. That will only allow students to reply to posts already contained in the forum.

Create and Edit: Allow File Attachments: This option checked (by default), allows the student to attach files such as articles or PowerPoint files to be shared with the entire class.

Create and Edit: Allow Users to Reply with Quote: This option checked (by default), allows users to automatically include the message that is being responded to along with the response in a new posting.

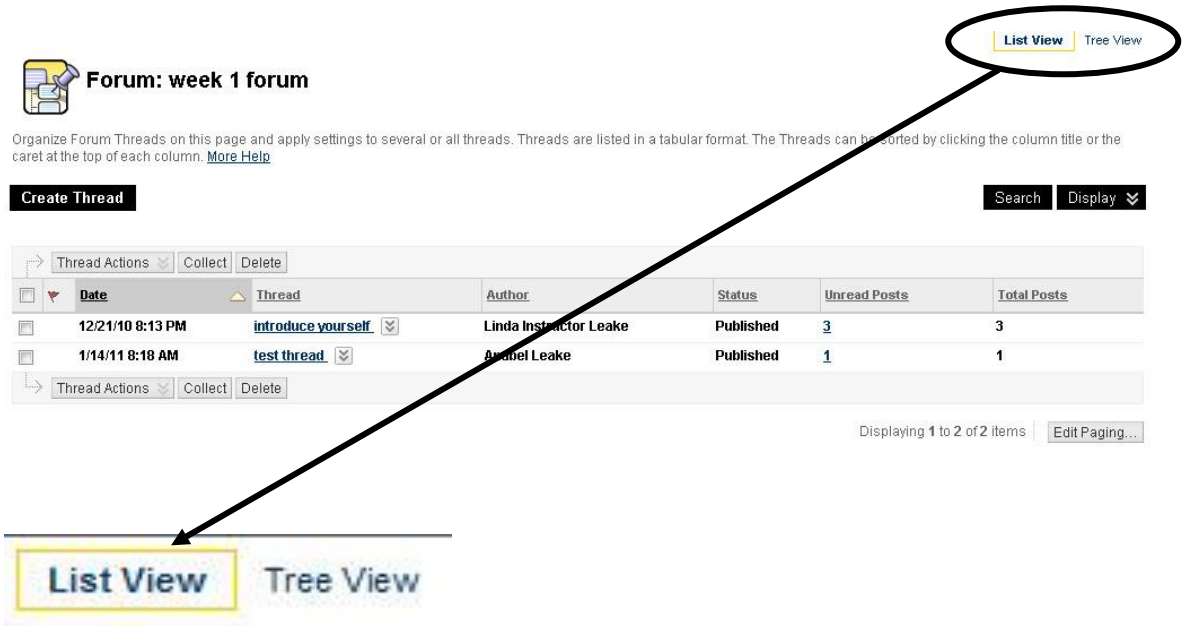
Create and Edit: Force Moderation of Posts: This option checked, allows a moderator (you or your choice of any student in the class) to have to look at each post and determine if it is appropriate to be published on the forum for the entire class to be able to read and respond.

Additional Options: Allow Post Tagging: This option will allow the instructor to create tags in the collection mode of threads in the forum. Tagging when used can create groupings based on the tag name which then can be used by all users to sort by a tag to see/read on the posts that are grouped by that tag label.

Additional Options: Allow Members to Rate Posts: This option checked, sets a zero to five star peer rating system in each post. Each student can rate postings only once and then are shown the average rating for that post.

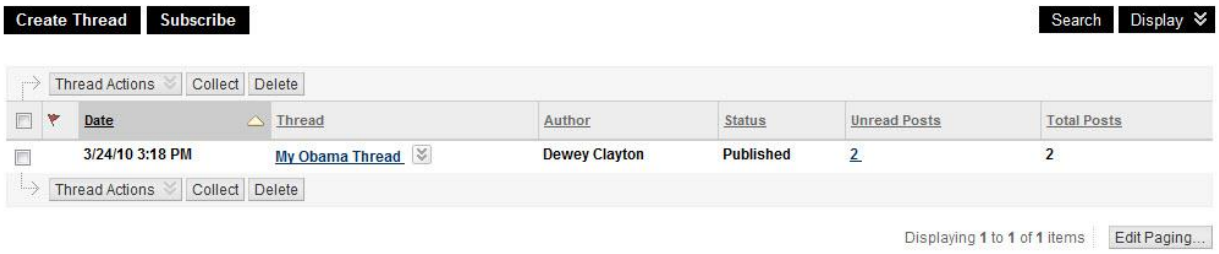
In section four, is the submit button. After you have filled in the title and description and selected all of your options you can press the "Submit" button to create the forum for your students to use.

You will now see a link to each forum you create in the list on the screen below. To enter the discussion area just click on one of the titles in the list to make postings for everyone to read and respond.



Once you have chosen a forum from the list and clicked on the tile of that forum you will enter the forum to be able to post. A new option when inside a forum is the capability to choose how you want to view the threads. **The next section will discuss options seen while using the "List View" in the discussion board.**

List View: This is the collapsed view of the threads, in which you will need to click on the main (top) thread to see any replies within that grouping.

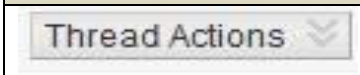


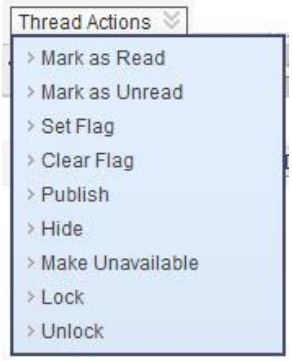
The buttons you see on the screen will be described below.

Button	Description
Create Thread	A thread is an initial posting to the forum and any replies to that post contained within the discussion board. Many threads can be contained within a discussion board.
Subscribe	This tool when selected allows the user to subscribe to either the forum or threads, depending on which choice is selected when setting up or modifying the forum properties.
Search	This tool allows the user search through the threads in a forum or search through the entire discussion board for specific items by author or by date.

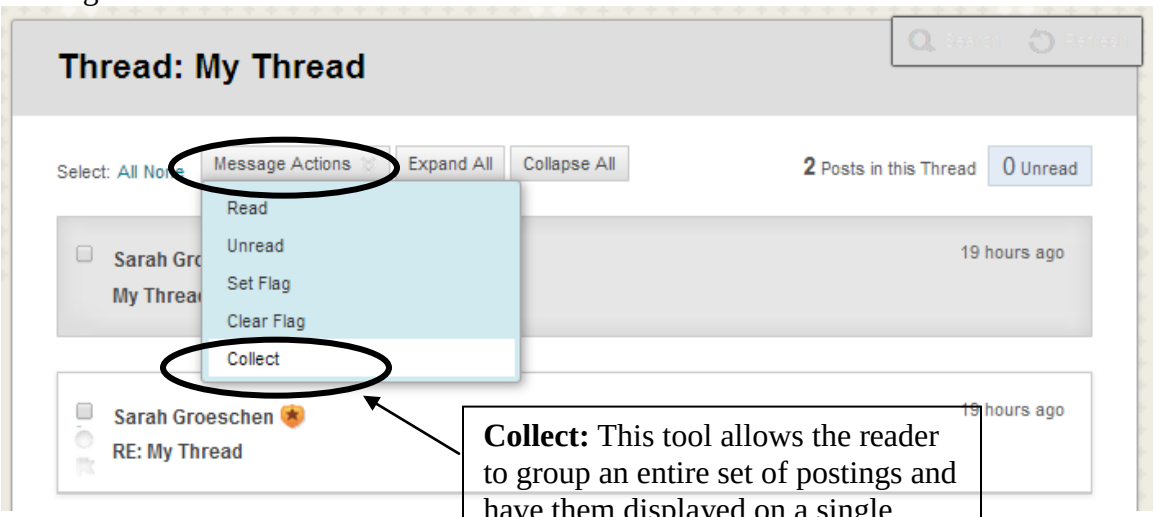
	Once you have created the forum and you enter it, you will see the screen above. The Display is located to the far right on the screen as seen above. It allows the user to show a subset of messages depending on the message status.
	This is the menu of items listed under display. **Show All:** Displays all messages regardless of status. **Published Only:** A post that has been submitted and, if necessary, approved by a moderator. It is also able to be responded to by anyone with access to the forum. This is the default setting for any new forum. **Hidden Only:** This is a post that has been hidden from view and is therefore unable to be seen or posted to by anyone in the forum. You can click on the checkbox to the left of a thread and change its status to Hidden and it will be removed from the published list but not deleted. You can use this feature to keep long threads only showing the most current postings. **Locked Only:** A thread that is visible for reading but cannot be modified. Users may not post to a locked thread. **Unavailable Only:** A thread that is hidden and inaccessible to all users except forum Managers. **Drafts Only:** A thread saved by any user that is not published to the forum but can be edited and then published for everyone to see. Posts in draft mode are only visible to the person who wrote them.

Next we will be describing the buttons for Thread Actions, and Delete (located on the screen before you click on one of the main threads). Shown below.

Button	Description
	Allows the user (instructor) to change the status of a thread. The menu will be listed next.

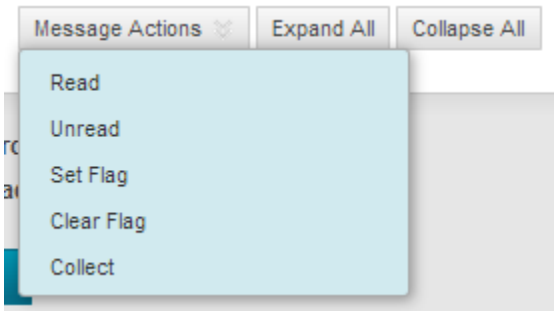
	The options for any thread that is in a forum. This also affects any replies that are posted with this main thread. **Read:** You can use this tool to denote that an all postings in a thread have been read. **Unread:** You can use this tool to mark all posts in a thread as not read. **Set Flag:** This tool allows the reader to mark with a red flag thread (including all replies) to make it easier to find and review later. **Clear Flag:** This tool clears a red flag from a thread (including all replies).
	Allows the instructor to be able to remove any thread or posting in a forum. If the instructor sets up the option for students to delete their own threads this button will appear to them as well.

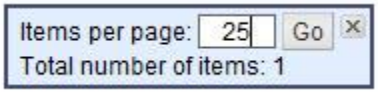
Once you click on one of the main thread titles, you will see three buttons at the top left of the posting that will allow you to work with a posting. Below will be a description of Message Actions button.



Collect: This tool allows the reader to group an entire set of postings and have them displayed on a single page that you can scroll on to see the whole group.

Message Actions has a menu (shown below) with many items available. Each will be described below.

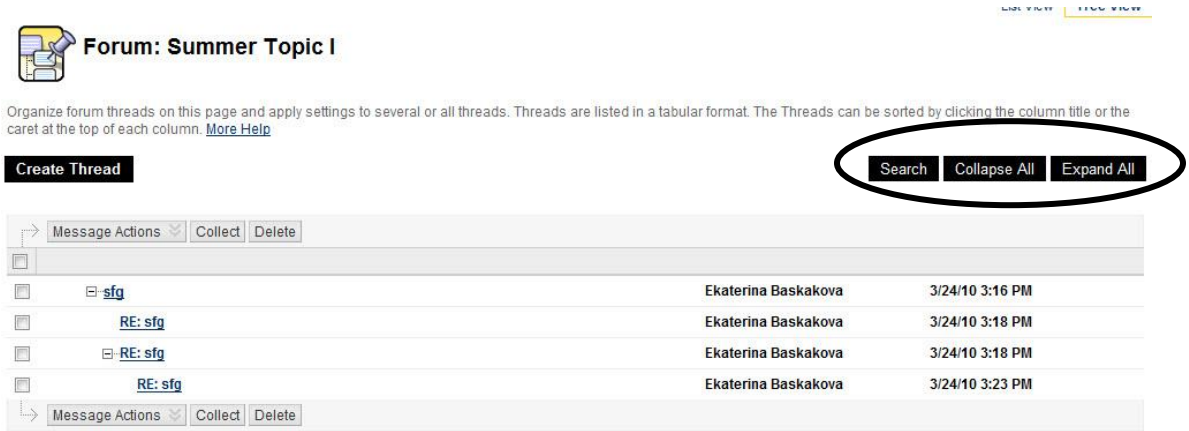
	The options listed for any individual posting that is in a forum. **Read:** You can use this tool to denote that an individual posting in a thread has been read. **Unread:** You can use this tool to mark each individual post as not read. **Set Flag:** This tool allows the reader to mark with a red flag any message to make it easier to find and review later. **Clear Flag:** This tool clears a red flag from a posting.

	Click this button to see the menu below.
	You can set the number of threads that will be displayed on a single page (range is 25 to all messages) when you are viewing the postings in a forum.

If this option is chosen in the forum setup, using the "Tags" option allows users to sort the postings based on a list of tags that are created and assigned to postings in the forums by the instructor/manager.

The next section will discuss options seen while using the "Tree View" in the discussion board.

Tree View: This view lists all the messages in thread order with all replies visible.

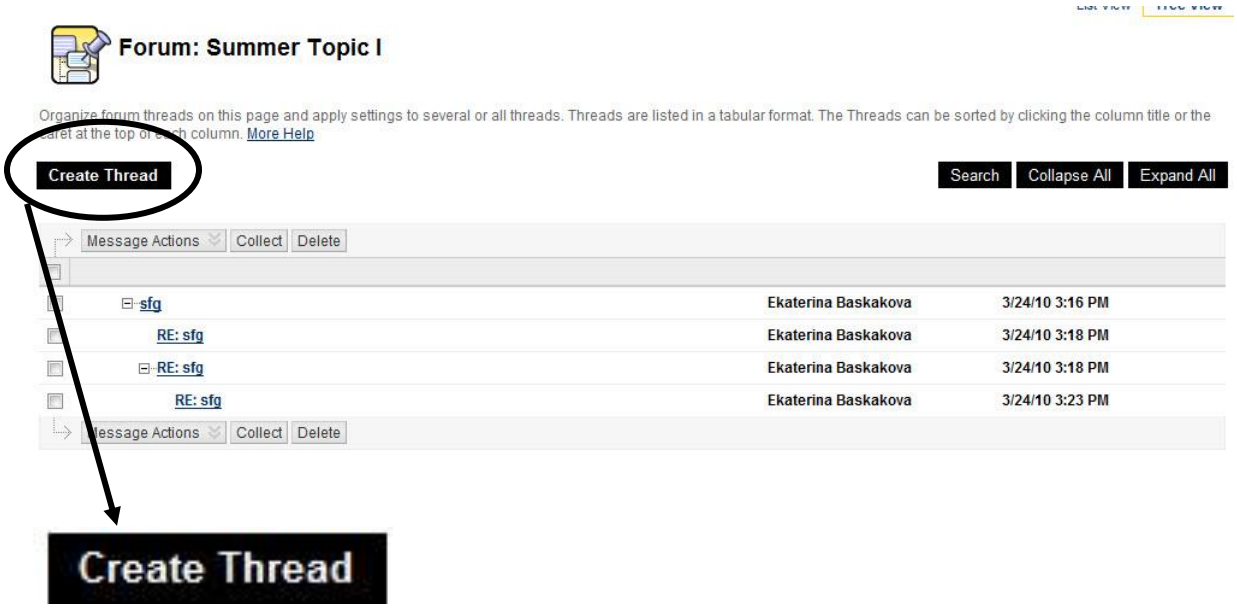


The row of buttons seen at the top of the "Tree View" allows for a user to collapse or expand all messages in the forum (messages in image above shown in "Expand All" view).

The "Expand All" and "Collapse All" buttons are located to the right of the "Search" button at the top of the Tree View.

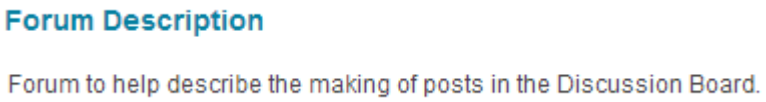
How to add a thread to a forum:

When you create a thread to begin a discussion the following form will be displayed once you click the "Create Thread" button.

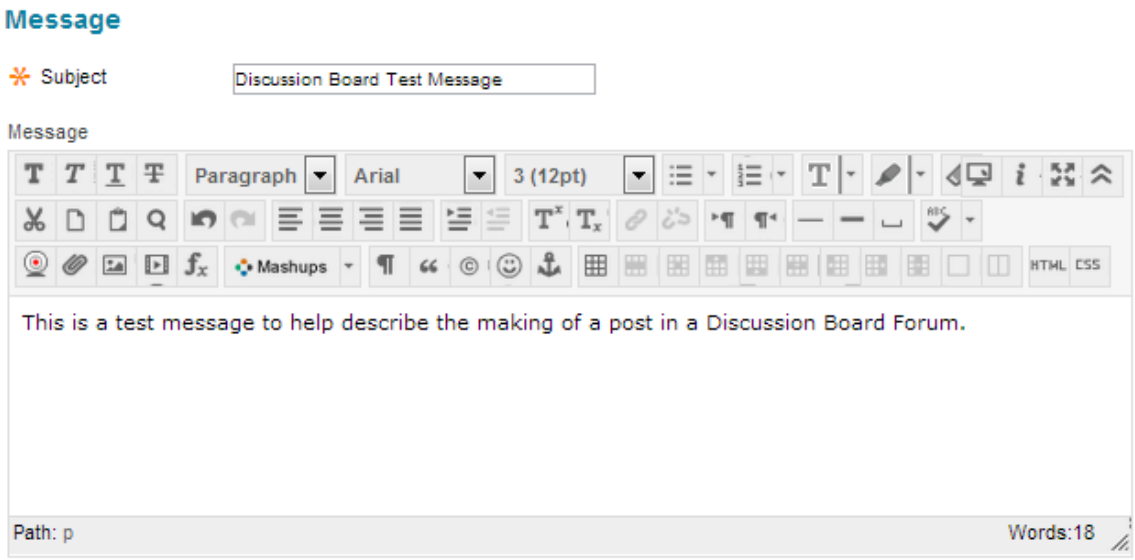


Below will be the description of the form used to enter a post into the discussion board. Each section will be discussed.

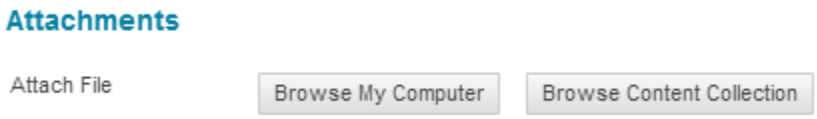
The Forum Description section of this form displays the instructor's description of the forum.



The Message section of this form will be the subject of the message which is required for the form to be successfully submitted, as well as the box for the message text. As you can see when using any web browser, you have access to all the functionality of the Content Editor. This functionality allows the use of most font, color and multimedia tools inside the forum message.

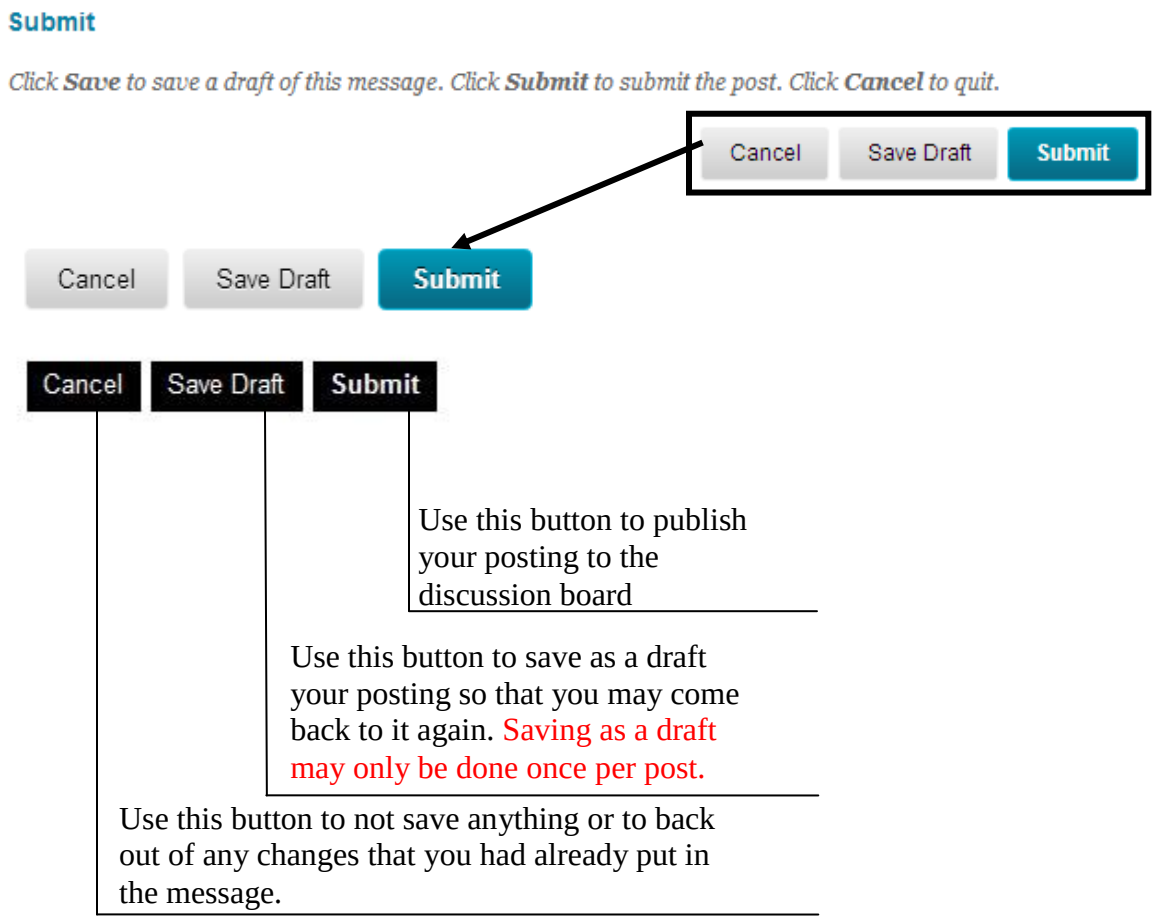


The Attachments section of this form you can attach a file.



Click on the button, “Browse My Computer” and then the area will expand to allow you to browse for any file on the computer you are currently using or click on the “Browse Content Collection” button to access files from the your personal content collection or the course files area.

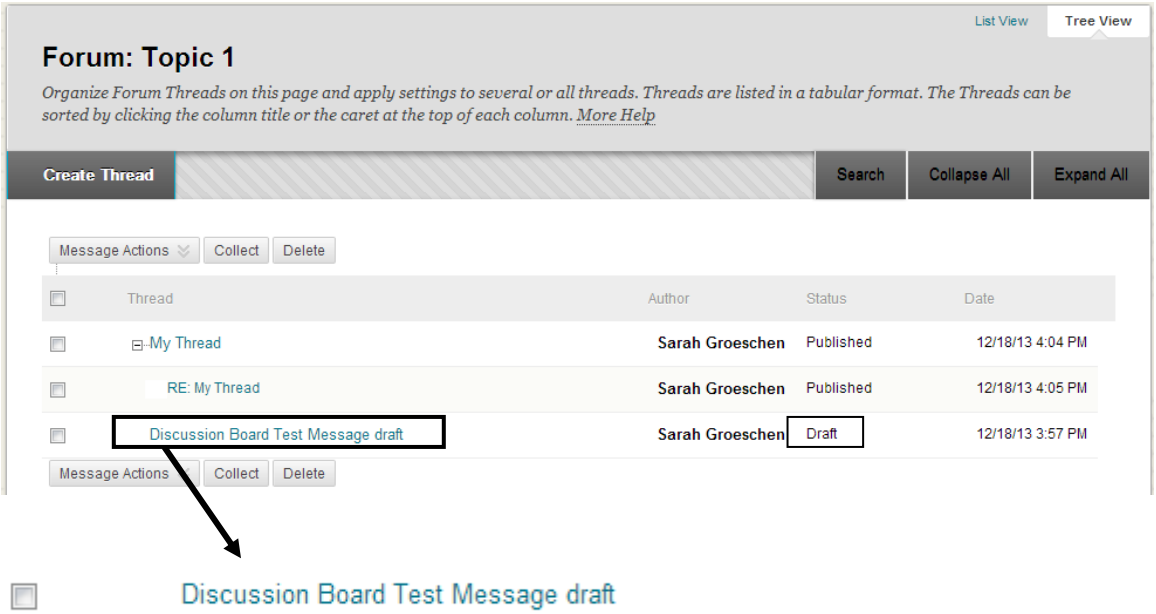
The Submit section of this form allows you to Cancel, Save Draft, and Submit your thread.



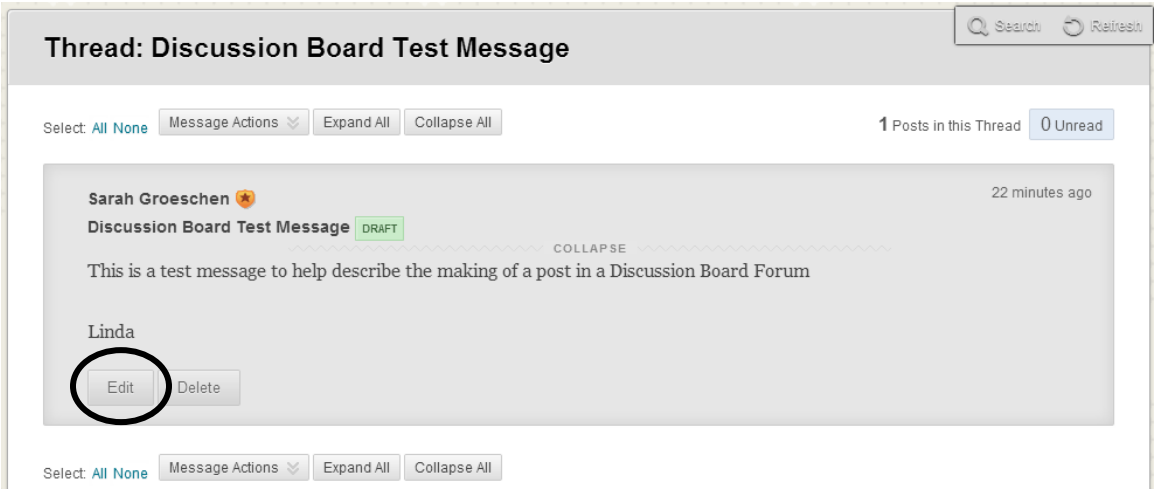
If you click “Save Draft”, you will return to the Main discussion Forum Screen.

As you can see draft messages are now displayed on the main discussion to the person who saved this with the status of draft so it is easily accessible to modify and finally publish.

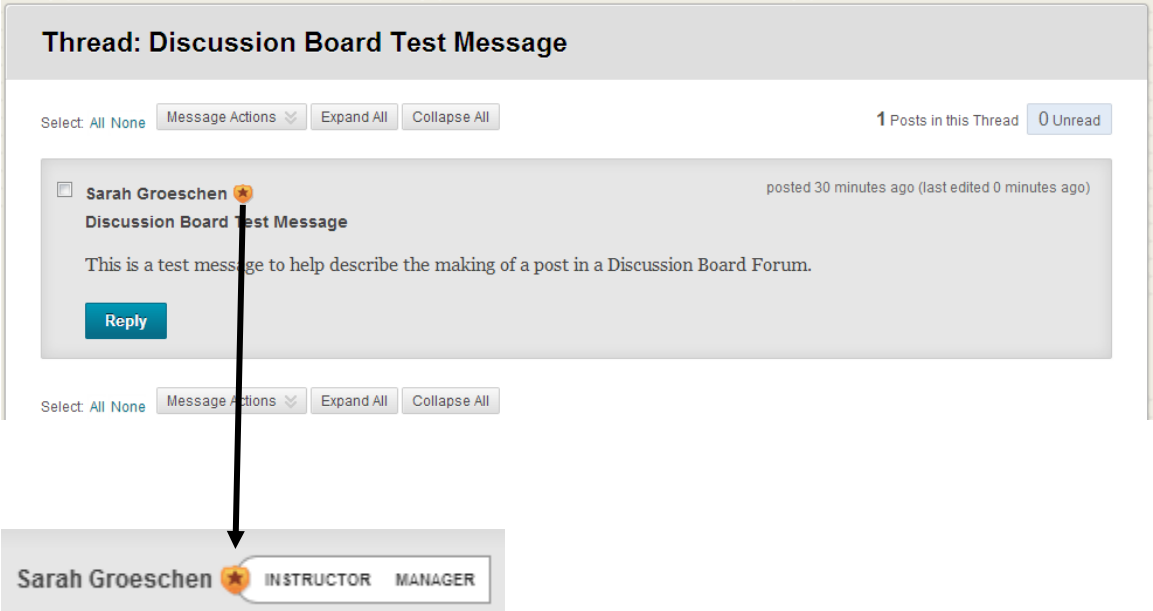
To view your draft posting, you must click on the title of the message.



To edit your draft posting, hover your mouse over the posting then click the edit button, make your changes and press Submit at the bottom of the page. Once you have pressed the "Submit" button your posting is published for everyone to see.

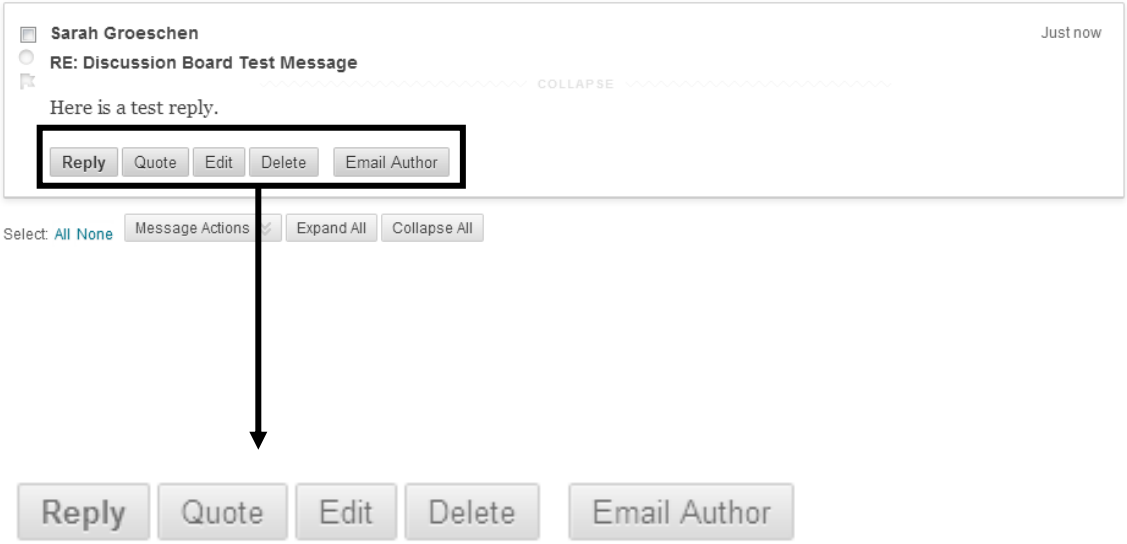


Now that your message is published and everyone in the class can see it, each person has the chance to Reply to your message. As the manager of the discussion board you will have the opportunity to modify postings and remove any postings (your own as well as any posted by a student) in the class.



The icon next to the submitter's name indicates the Instructor or/and Manager of the course. If you scroll over the icon, it will expand to indicate the submitter's role. Students will not have this icon next to their name in any thread.

The Thread Detail page displays all of the messages including the original post and any replies that have been published. When hovering your mouse over the thread, several buttons will appear next to "Reply". You can also expand and collapse any message or reply in the thread by hovering over the message and clicking "Collapse".



Allows readers to send a message to the author of the post. On the form, you can change the subject and include what you wish to say in the text box and then submit it in section two.

Instructor can remove any posting

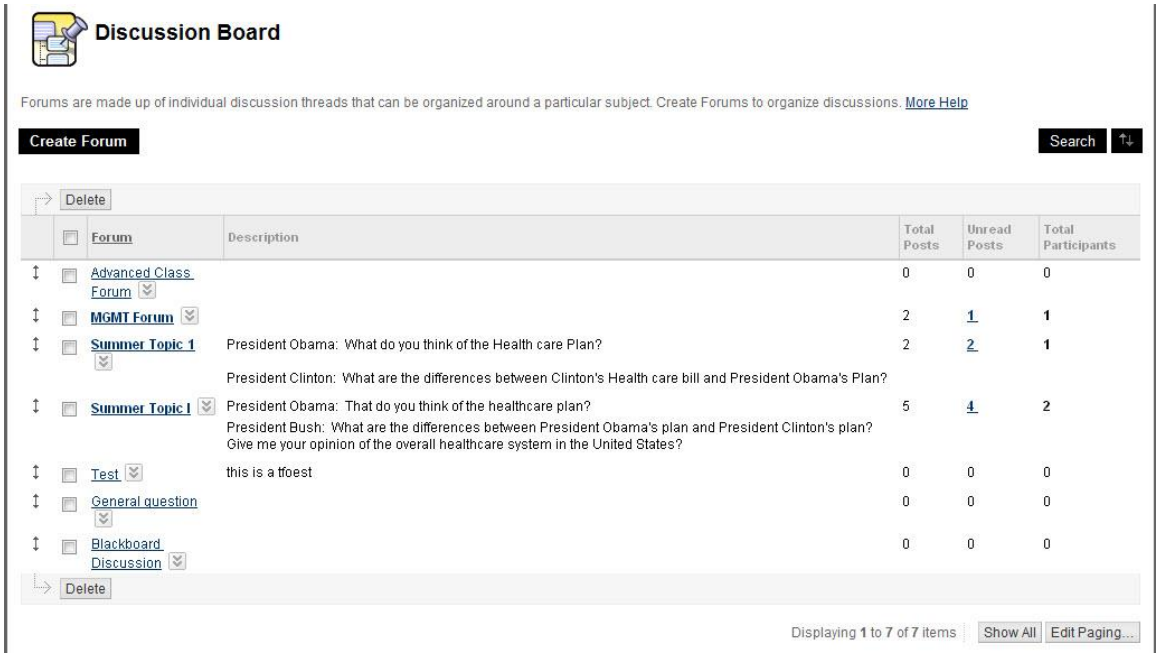
Instructor can modify any posting in the discussion

This is a reply that includes the message that is being replied to in the body of the new posting.

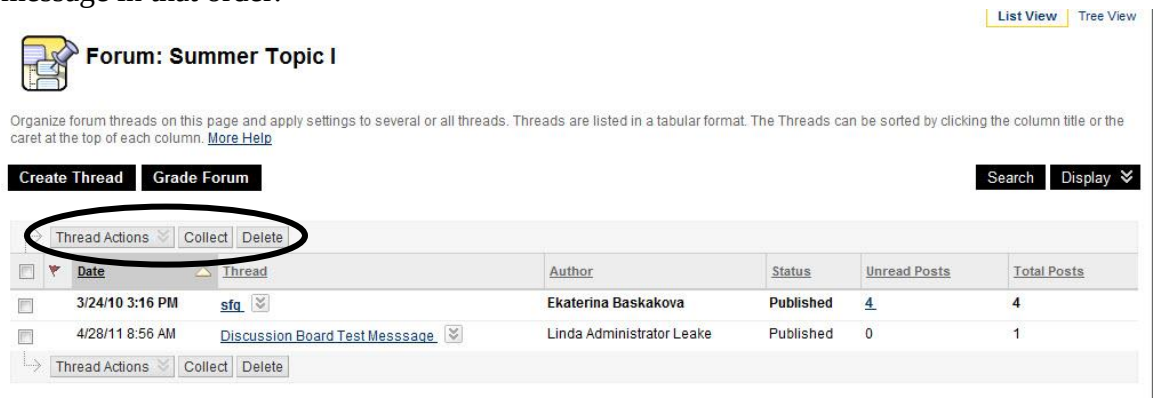
Everyone in the course can reply to a posting in the discussion board.

Each of the buttons on the Thread Detail screen has been described previously in this document. This gives the user some flexibility in using the discussion and marking posts as they are read.

Now that a posting is available in the forum when you click on Discussion Board you will see a list of forums with postings. On the right, you will see the number of unread posts in that forum and the total number of posts in that forum. To see the postings within a forum, just click on the forum title as shown below.

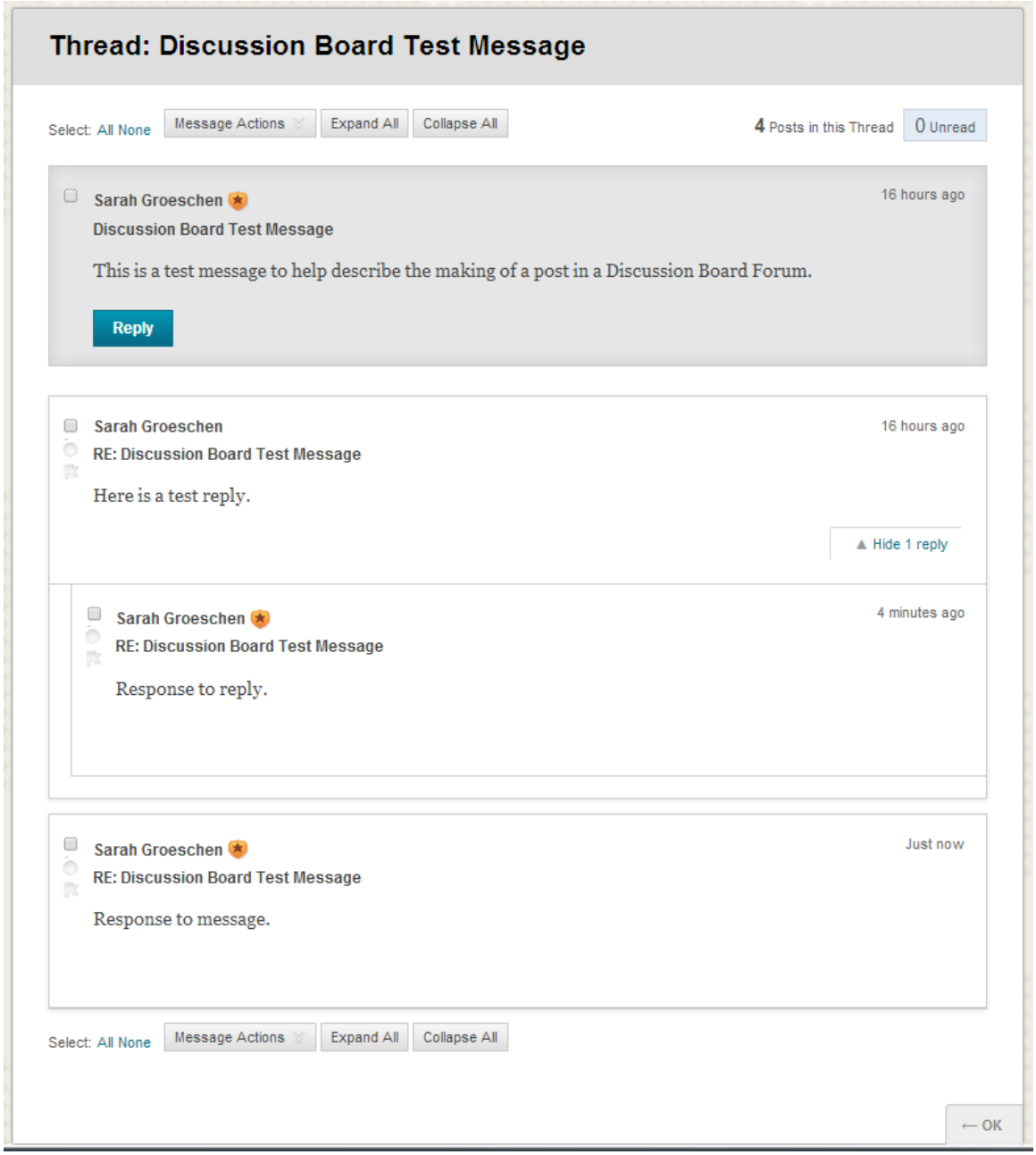


When you come in to the discussion the initial thread will be visible as the default view in "List View". You can then choose to leave it a "List View" or choose "Tree View." Once you choose a forum to enter, you will see the date and time on the left in "List View" and right in "Tree View". Then you will see title, the author, and the status of the message in that order.

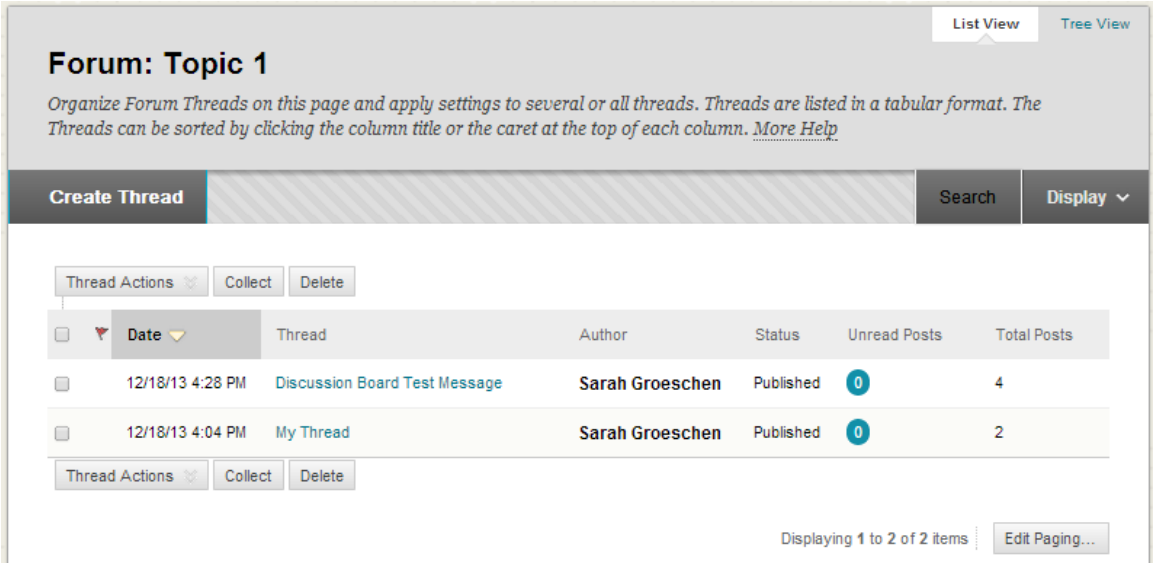


The check box to the left of each message or thread group allows you to select it (as the manager/instructor) and use the buttons at the top (under "Thread Actions" to choose a function such as lock, unlock, hide, or publish). You can also see a collect and delete button as well.

To read the thread and any replies that are associated with it just click on the title of the thread to enter the thread. From the Thread screen you will see a list of messages and/or replies if any are available. Any message or reply will appear under the original message as shown below.



When you are finished, you can click “OK” to return to the main screen of the discussion board. Then just choose any other button to work in another area when you have finished with the discussion board.


List View
Tree View
Forum: Topic 1
Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the caret at the top of each column. More Help
Create Thread
Search
Display
Thread Actions
Collect
Delete
Date
Thread
Author
Status
Unread Posts
Total Posts
12/18/13 4:28 PM
Discussion Board Test Message
Sarah Groeschen
Published
0
4
12/18/13 4:04 PM
My Thread
Sarah Groeschen
Published
0
2
Thread Actions
Collect
Delete
Displaying 1 to 2 of 2 items
Edit Paging...