Collaboration in Moodle

A Guide for Staff
# Collaboration in Moodle

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The forum activity allows students and teachers to exchange ideas by posting comments. Forums can be used for many purposes including; facilitating discussions around a research paper, offering a place for student to ask questions about the course, offering a place for student workgroups to collaborate on an assignment, etc. A forum contributes significantly to successful communication and community building in online environments. There are five basic forum types available in Moodle, these are detailed below.

**Note:** in your Moodle course you have an activity called ‘Announcements’ this is a special type of forum used to send messages to all students enrolled on the course. Students cannot reply to any messages you add to this forum.

**A Single Simple Discussion Forum**

A single topic of discussion is developed on one page, this type of forum is useful for short focused discussions about a specific topic. In cases where a forum should support more than one topic you should use another type of forum.

**Note:** this type of forum cannot be used with separate groups.
STANDARD FORUM FOR GENERAL USE

An open forum where anyone can start a new topic at any time; this is the best general-purpose forum as it can include discussion around many different topics. This forum will also work with groups and grouping i.e. you can use one forum but make distinct areas within it to separate discussions between different seminar groups.

Each person can post exactly one new discussion topic which everyone can reply to; this is useful when you want each student to start an individual discussion. For example each student could post their reflections on the week’s topic, and everyone else responds to these.
Q AND A FORUM

Instead of initiating discussions, you pose a question in the initial post of a discussion. Students may reply with an answer, but they will not see the replies of others until they have themselves replied to the same discussion. This is useful to encourage people to develop and post their own opinions and avoid situations where one student posts an answer and everyone else ‘agrees’ with it.

STANDARD FORUM DISPLAYED IN A BLOG-LIKE FORMAT

This functions the same as a ‘Standard Forum for General Use’ but is displayed in a different format.

If a student has not provided an answer themselves then they can’t see what anybody else has written. The entire comment is hidden along with all details about who wrote it.

Note: this applies to students only. Staff members will be able to see this comment.

Each discussion topic is displayed on the same page. This can greatly increase the length of a page and time required scrolling to find a post. Use this setting sparingly and only when you have few topics and expect few replies.
CREATING A FORUM ACTIVITY

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Ensure you have editing turned on
3. Click the ‘Add an Activity or Resource’ button
4. Select the option and click the ‘Add’ button

General Settings:

5. Give the forum a ‘Forum Name’
6. Give the forum a ‘Description’ i.e. describe what the forum is for, what do you expect people to do. If you only have one topic for discussion detail it here.
7. Decide whether to ‘Display description on course page’ tick the box if required
8. Choose a ‘Forum type’
   a. ‘Standard forum for general use’
   b. ‘A single simple discussion’
   c. ‘Each person posts one discussion’
   d. ‘Q and A forum’
   e. ‘Standard forum displayed in a blog like format’

Note: for details about the types of forum please see the previous section where you will find a full description and screenshots of each.

Attachments and Word Count Settings

9. (If required) choose a ‘Maximum attachment size’ i.e. what is the maximum size for a file that a user adds to their discussion post
10. (If required) choose the ‘Maximum number of attachments’ allowed for a forum post
11. Choose whether to ‘Display word count’ on each forum post

Subscription and Tracking Settings

12. Choose a ‘Subscription mode’ to apply to the forum
   a. ‘Optional subscription’ – people are not subscribed to the forum but may choose to it they wish.
b. ‘Forced subscription’ – people are subscribed to the forum and they may not unsubscribe themselves.

c. ‘Auto subscription’ – people are subscribed to the forum but may unsubscribe themselves if they wish.

d. ‘Subscription disabled’ – people are not subscribed to the forum and they may not subscribe themselves to it.

**Note:** by subscribing to a forum a user will receive an email notification when there is activity in the forum. There are a number of configuration options for this at the user profile level. Please refer to the Moodle Basics guide for information about configuring your profile.

13. Choose whether to enable ‘Read tracking’ i.e. whether people see an extra column of information detailing if there are any posts they haven’t yet read within a discussion forum.

**RSS Settings**

**Note:** an RSS feed allows users to keep track of discussions and posts from a discussion program in RSS software. This can be classed as an advanced feature and will not be needed for the majority of discussion forums.

14. (If required) Choose whether to enable an ‘RSS feed for this activity’.

15. (If required) Choose the ‘Number of RSS recent articles’ i.e. how many posts should be included in the RSS feed.

**Post Threshold for Blocking Settings**

**Note:** you can use these settings to prevent students from making excessive posts in the discussion forum. For example no student is allowed to post more than 20 posts per day. This feature could be used to prevent a single student from ‘doing all of the work’ or to prevent a student from ‘spamming’ the forum.

16. (If required) Choose a ‘Time period for blocking’ i.e. the time duration used to determine whether somebody should be blocked.
17. (If required) Choose a ‘Post threshold for blocking’ i.e. the number of posts within the time period that would cause a student to become blocked.

18. (If required) Choose a ‘Post threshold for warning’ i.e. the number of posts within the time period that would cause a warning message to be sent to the user.

**Posting in a Forum**

Now that you have a discussion forum you are in a position where you can add discussion topics and reply to posts from other people.

**Adding a new Discussion Topic**

1. Click the ‘Add a new discussion topic’ button
2. Enter a ‘Subject’ for the discussion topic i.e. a heading that will represent the discussion thread
3. Enter a ‘Message’ i.e. the content of the post
4. (If required) Choose a ‘Subscription’ setting i.e. decide whether you should be emailed copies of posts in the forum
5. (If required) Add an ‘Attachment’ to the discussion topic
6. (If required) Tick the ‘Mail now’ tick box

**Note:** even if you tick the ‘Mail now’ box students may not necessarily receive an email copy of the post. If they have unsubscribed from the forum they will not receive it. If they have changed the forum settings in their profile they may receive the email at 17:00 and not immediately. If you are using an announcement forum and the message you send is time sensitive it would be more appropriate to use the ‘Email Wizard’ which is accessible from the ‘Student Portal’ or via this link:  [https://lusionline.lancs.ac.uk/EmailWizard/Email/Create](https://lusionline.lancs.ac.uk/EmailWizard/Email/Create)
Replying to Posts

1. Locate the post you wish to reply to
2. Click the ‘Reply’ link

3. Enter a ‘Message’ i.e. the content of the reply
4. (If required) Choose a ‘Subscription’ setting i.e. decide whether you should be emailed copies of posts in the forum
5. (If required) Add an ‘Attachment’ to the reply
6. (If required) Tick the ‘Mail now’ tick box

Note: students cannot reply to posts made in the ‘Announcements’ forum. This functionality is only available for staff members. Students may reply to posts in other forums.

Note: if you don’t tick the ‘Mail now’ box you will have 30 minutes in which you can go back and edit the post before any email messages are sent out. You can still edit a post after this time but a potentially ‘incorrect’ email message will have already been sent.
**THE CHAT ACTIVITY**

The chat activity module allows users to have a real-time synchronous discussion in a Moodle course. Chat has an advantage over a Forum in that it takes place in Real Time. It is especially beneficial when the group aren’t available to meet face to face. Examples might be:

- Regular meetings of students doing online courses to enable them to share experiences with others on the same course but potentially in a different city (or country).
- A teacher working with his students even though he is out of school.
- A student temporarily unable to attend in person chatting with their tutor to catch up with work.
- Students out on work experience getting together to discuss their experiences with each other and their tutor.

**Note:** the chat activity is used for text-based chat. If you want to use face-to-face chat then consider using the ‘BigBlueButton’ activity or ‘WebEx’.

**CREATING A CHAT ACTIVITY**

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Ensure you have editing turned on
3. Click the ‘Add an Activity or Resource’ button
4. Select the 🌐Chat option and click the ‘Add’ button

**General Settings:**

5. Enter the ‘Name of this chat room’
6. Enter a ‘Description’ about the chat room i.e. what should the chat be used for
7. Choose whether to ‘Display description on course page’. Tick the box if required

**Chat Sessions Settings:**

8. Enter the ‘Next chat time’ i.e. when will the chat take place
9. Choose whether to ‘Repeat/publish session times’ i.e. is the chat a one-off, will it be available daily or weekly
10. Choose whether to ‘Save past sessions’ i.e. do you want to store the text from the chat room
11. (If required) Choose whether ‘Everyone can view past sessions’ i.e. can students see the past sessions
12. Click the ‘Save and return to course’ button

USING THE CHAT ACTIVITY

1. Access the chat room you have created
2. Enter the chat room by clicking the ‘Click here to enter the chat now’ link or clicking the ‘Use more accessible interface’ link if you require a simpler interface that will work with screen reader software.

Standard Chat Interface
**Accessible Chat Interface:**

All of the people who have joined the Chat room are listed here. Type your messages into this textbox. If you include a URL it will be converted to a link automatically. If you include an emoticon it will be converted automatically. You can paste some HTML code into this box and it will display when the message is sent. Click the ‘Send’ button or press the enter key to send your message.

**Accessing Chat Session Logs**

The configuration options you set when creating the chat activity will determine whether or not you can access records of chat sessions.

1. Access your ‘Chat’ activity
2. Click the ‘View past chat sessions’ link
3. Locate the appropriate ‘Chat session’ from the list provided
4. Click the ‘See this session’ link
THE OU WIKI ACTIVITY

Wikis are a simple, flexible tool for collaboration. They can be used for everything from simple lists of web links to building entire encyclopedias. A Wiki is a web-based system that lets users create and edit a set of linked pages. You would normally use a wiki when you want your students to work together to create some course content.

A Wiki could be used for:

- Group lecture notes
- Group project management
- Brainstorming ideas

CREATING AN OU WIKI ACTIVITY

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Ensure you have editing turned on
3. Click the ‘Add an Activity or Resource’ button
4. Select the option and click the ‘Add’ button

General Settings

5. Give the Wiki a ‘Name’
6. Enter a ‘Description’ for the Wiki
7. Decide whether to ‘Display description on course page’ tick the box if required

Wiki Settings

8. Choose whether to have any ‘Sub-wikis’
   a. ‘Single wiki for course’ – this is the default option, there is one wiki created that everyone can access.
   b. ‘One wiki per group’ – one wiki is shown on the course page but it is subdivided based on your course’s groups
   c. ‘Separate wiki for every user’ – every user of your course has a wiki. (Only one wiki is displayed on the course page).
9. Choose whether to enable the ‘Annotation system’ i.e. can staff members annotate a wiki in order to give feedback
10. Choose the ‘Time allowed for edit’ i.e. when a user edits a wiki page that page becomes locked preventing any other users from editing it at the same time. By setting a ‘Time allowed for edit’ you can unlock that page automatically after a set time period.

11. (If required) Choose a time to ‘Allow editing from’ i.e. the date at which students can change the Wiki

12. (If required) Choose a time to ‘Prevent editing from’ i.e. the time at which students stop being able to edit the Wiki

13. (If required) Upload a template for the Wiki by clicking the ‘Choose a file’ button

14. Choose whether to ‘Show word counts’

Grade Settings:

15. (If required) choose a ‘Grade’ scale i.e. how will this Wiki be graded, will it use percentage points, LU letter grades or Pass/Fail.

16. (If required) choose a ‘Grade category’ i.e. which category will the grades be placed in the gradebook.

17. Click the ‘Save and display’ button

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Use this link to access an index of all pages created in the Wiki.

Use this link to access details about changes made to the Wiki including the time of the change and person who made the change.

Use this link to view the people who have participated in the Wiki along with what changes they made.
CREATING A START PAGE

1. Click the ‘Create page’ button
2. Use the ‘Content’ text box to add content to your page i.e. create an initial structure to help the students create the Wiki. A structured page is less intimidating than a blank page and may encourage more user participation.
3. (If required) add any ‘Attachments’ to the page by clicking the ‘Add’ button
4. Click the ‘Save changes’ button

Note: to create or link to another page in the Wiki type the page name in double square brackets: [[page name]]. The link will become active once you save changes, if a new page is needed it will be created.

THE WIKI INDEX

The ‘Wiki Index’ allows you to see a list of all the pages within your Wiki activity including a word count for the page and details about who/when it was last changed.
**Wiki Changes**

Wiki changes is a page that summarises all of the changes that have been made to a page in your Wiki activity including the effect on the page word count, a date and time of the change and a link to view a side-by-side comparison of the page before and after changes.

**Changes Screen:**

The original page is shown on the left and the new (updated) page is shown on the right. In this example you can see that some additional text has been added (marked in green).
PARTICIPATION BY USER

The participation by user page allows you to see a summary of how each member of your course has contributed to the Wiki activity. This includes a summary of the number of pages created and edited, the number of words added and the number of words removed. You can also grade people’s contributions from this screen.

Use this button to download the data from this page in a CSV format, you can use this data within programs such as Microsoft Excel to conduct further analysis.

Expand this dropdown menu to assign a grade to the user. These grading options will depend on the settings you configured when setting up the Wiki activity.

Click the ‘detail’ link to view details about all of the changes that were made by this user.

PARTICIPATION BY PAGE

The Wiki activity also allows you to view participation details on a page-by-page basis. When doing this you have the opportunity to review changes and revert a page back to its previous state if you don’t want the change, delete a change entirely and compare changes to each other.

1. Access the appropriate page of your Wiki
2. Click the ‘Full History’ link (at the top of the page)
Use the ‘Revert’ link to remove the changes from the Page and return it to its previous state.

Use the ‘Delete’ link to delete this set of changes from the Wiki page.

Select the changes you wish to compare by ticking the appropriate tick boxes and then click the ‘Compare selected’ button.
THE BIGBLUEBUTTON ACTIVITY

Big Blue Button is a tool within Moodle that allows online presentations and discussions between users. It has features that allow you to upload, navigate through and annotate presentations, use webcams and share your desktop.

Distance learning courses can benefit hugely from this tool, as it allows for an online interactive environment while alleviating issues such as location.

Staff can create several BBB tools for students to use in group sessions. This allows for students to collaborate on work using tools such as their microphones and webcams to ensure a truly interactive experience, as if they were actually face-to-face.

CREATING A BIGBLUEBUTTON ACTIVITY

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Ensure you have editing turned on
3. Click the ‘Add an Activity or Resource’ button
4. Select the BigBlueButton option and click the ‘Add’ button

General Settings

5. Enter a ‘Virtual classroom name’
6. Enter a ‘Welcome message’ e.g. perhaps give student’s some guidance of what they should use the BigBlueButton activity for
7. Choose whether to ‘Open BigBlueButton in a new window’
8. Choose whether ‘Students must wait until a moderator joins’ i.e. can the student enter the BigBlueButton interface before the teacher. It may be useful to allow students to enter early so they can configure their audio settings.

Schedule for Sessions Settings

9. Enter a ‘Join open’ date i.e. when (date and time) students can use the BigBlueButton activity. If you were operating online office hours you would set the available hours here.
10. Enter a ‘Join closed’ date i.e. when (date and time) can students no longer use the BigBlueButton activity

**Note:** you will need to tick the appropriate ‘Enable’ tick box in order to enter a date

**Record Settings**

**Note:** recording of BigBlueButton sessions is not currently available. If you would like to record a virtual classroom/web conference please contact ISS and ask for details about alternative solutions.
The BigBlueButton interface is made up of a number of different panels, ‘Users’ which displays details about who is currently accessing the activity. ‘Listeners’ which details who is sharing their audio/microphone. ‘Video dock’ which displays any webcam videos being shared. ‘Default’ which displays any shared documents and ‘Chat’ which displays any textual chat messages sent between users.

Users Panel

Listeners Panel

This icon represents the Moderator of the session. Moderators can control the BigBlueButton and switch presenters.

A presenter cannot make another user a presenter. Presenter status can only be granted by the Moderator by selecting the name of another user and clicking the ‘Switch Presenter’ button.

This icon represents the current presenter. Presenters have the ability to upload, navigate, annotate documents and share their desktop.

If a user wishes to gain the attention of the Moderator or Presenter they can click this button to ‘raise their hand’.

This icon is used to represent whether a user has muted audio or not. The symbol in this state means that the user is not muted.

This button can be used to lock/unlock the users audio status i.e. to lock their audio as muted.

This button is used to mute the audio of the selected person.

This icon is used to represent that the user is currently sharing their audio to other users.

This button is used to mute the audio of all users in the BigBlueButton activity. This button is only available to the Moderator.
Video Dock Panel

The video dock panel will display the webcam feeds of any users that are sharing their webcam video.

Chat Panel

These tabs can be used to switch who you are text chatting with. By default you will be chatting to ‘All’ people. If you’d like to chat with someone privately, click the ‘+’ button and select the name of a user. This new chat will appear as an additional tab.

Enter your text message here, when finished click the ‘Send’ button or hit the enter key to publish your message to the chat area.

Click here to change the colour of your text. If there are many participants in the chat room it is useful to change the colour to help distinguish your messages from other people’s messages.
**DOCUMENT SHARING**

There is a large panel in the centre of the BigBlueButton interface called the ‘default’ panel. You can use this area to upload a document to be shared with the other users of the activity. Once uploaded you can navigate through the document and annotate it. Any changes you make will be reflected on the screens of the other users.

**Uploading a Document**

1. Ensure you have access your BigBlueButton activity

2. Click the ‘Upload a document for presentation’ button located at the bottom of the default panel. A dialog box will open.

3. Click the ‘Browse file’ button

4. Locate the file on your computer

5. Click the ‘Upload file’ button

**Note:** BigBlueButton will try and convert your file into a format that it can use. It is recommended that you convert your document to a PDF before uploading it into BigBlueButton.

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**Note:**
- The Moodle assignment will inherit its title and due date from LUSI. If you selected the 'Turnitin' option the post date will be 4 weeks after the due date, in line with university regulations. By default assignments will be hidden.
- When a student submits their work via Moodle their record will be marked in LUSI to represent this. If a submission is late then this will also be highlighted in LUSI.
- Only students enrolled on your Moodle course via LUSI will be able to submit to a linked assignment. Any students you have manually enrolled will not see the assignment on the course. It is recommended wherever possible to enrol student on a Moodle course via LUSI.

**Modifying an Assignment in Moodle**

After you create an assignment in LUSI you will need to wait overnight for it to become available on Moodle. Once available you should review the settings of the Moodle assignment to make sure it meets your requirements.

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Locate your assignment at the top of your page
3. Ensure you have clicked the 'Turn Editing On' button
4. Click the ‘Update’ button (coag/gear icon)
Navigating Through the Document

- Use this button to upload a document into the panel.
- Use this slider to zoom in and out of the document. You can also click the '100%' and '400%' links to zoom in that amount.
- Use these buttons to navigate backwards and forwards, one page at a time, through the document.
- Use this slider to zoom the document so that it 'Fits to Width' or 'Fits to page'.
- Use this button to open the document annotation toolbar.

Annotating the Document

1. Click the 'Show Whiteboard' button. The annotation toolbar will appear at the right hand side of the default panel.

   - Highlight tool, use this to highlight content in the document.
   - Circle tool, use this to draw circles on the document.
   - Undo tool, use this to undo the last draw you made to the document.
   - Thickness tool, use this slider to change the thickness of the drawing tools. Move to the top to make thicker.
   - Rectangle tool, use this to draw rectangles on the document.
   - Clear tool, use this to clear all annotations from the document
**WEBCAM SHARING**

If your computer has a webcam you can use it with BigBlueButton for video chat. Sharing video over the internet requires a broadband connection, any connection less than 1mb/s will not be suitable to transmit video.

1. Click on the ‘Share my Camera’ button ( ). A dialog box will open.
2. Choose a resolution for the video.
3. (If required) choose a webcam to use.
4. Click the ‘Start Sharing’ button ( ).

**Note:** you may be asked to allow BigBlueButton to access your computer’s webcam and microphone. You will need to allow access in order to use the Webcam sharing function.

**AUDIO SHARING**

If your computer or webcam has a microphone you can share your audio with other users of the BigBlueButton activity.

**Note:** you may be asked to allow BigBlueButton to access your computer’s webcam and microphone. You will need to allow access in order to use the audio sharing function.

1. Click the ‘Share my Microphone’ button ( ). A dialog box will appear
2. Talk into your microphone and ensure that the level is set correctly. You should see a blue bar moving as you talk. This represents your audio level.
Note: if you do not see the blue bar moving or it’s only filling up a small portion of the box you can click on the ‘Change Microphone’ button and increase the volume level. You can also click this button to change which microphone BigBlueButton is using.

3. Click the ‘Join Audio’ button

**DESKTOP SHARING**

BigBlueButton allows you to share the contents of your computer screen (referred to as ‘desktop’) with other members of the activity. You can either share your full screen or a region of it.

1. Click the ‘Share my Desktop’ button 📲. A Dialog box will appear.

![Desktop Sharing: Presenter's Preview](image)

Sharing your Full Screen

1. To share your entire screen click the ‘Full Screen’ button
2. (If required) allow the Java plugin to run in your browser

Sharing a Region of your Screen

1. To share a region of your screen click the ‘Region’ button
2. (If required) allow the Java plugin to run in your browser
3. Drag and resize the red windows onto the appropriate region of your screen
4. Click the ‘Start Sharing’ button (the red box will turn blue)

**Note:** to stop sharing your screen click the ‘Close’ button on the dialog window.
USEFUL LINKS

Lancaster Answers

Lancaster Answers contains a large number of step-by-step guides, which explain many features of Moodle and more ......

http://lancasteranswers.lancs.ac.uk

ISS Service Desk

For further help and support, please contact the ISS Service Desk on:

Phone: 01524-510987

Email: iss-service-desk@lancaster.ac.uk

In person: Learning Zone in Alexandra Square