Types of Discussion Forums

A standard forum for general use is probably most useful for large discussions that you intend to monitor/guide or for social forums that are student led. This does not mean that you need to make a new posting for each reply in each topic although, in order to ensure that discussion does not get ‘out of control’, you may need to be prepared to spend a significant amount of time finding the common threads amongst the various discussions and weaving them together. Providing overall remarks for particular topics can also be a key aspect of your responsibilities in the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask students to summarize discussion topics at agreed points, once a week or when a thread comes to an agreed conclusion. Such a learner-centred approach may be particularly useful once the online community has been established and, perhaps, when you have modeled the summarizing process.

A single simple discussion is most useful for short/time-limited discussion on a single subject or topic. This kind of forum is very productive if you are interested in keeping students focused on a particular issue.

Each person posts one discussion is most useful when you want to achieve a happy medium between a large discussion and a short and focused discussion. A single discussion topic per person allows students a little more freedom than a single discussion forum, but not as much as a standard forum where each student can create as many topics as they wish. Successful forums of this selection can be active, yet focused, as students are not limited in the number of times they can respond to others within threads.

A Q and A forum is best used when you have a particular question that you wish to have answered. In a Q and A forum, tutors post the question and students respond with possible answers. By default a Q and A forum requires students to post once before viewing other students’ postings. After the initial posting, students can view and respond to others’ postings. This feature allows equal initial posting opportunity among all students, thus encouraging original and independent thinking.

If you do not want students to read other responses at all, then use the Journal Module.