This Quick Guide gives the eLearning team’s recommendations for moderating an online discussion activity in Blackboard. Guides on other aspects of creating and moderating online discussion activities are available at [www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/resources/](http://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/resources/).

1. Getting Started

Creating a forum and posting an activity does not guarantee a successful discussion. You must ensure the activity you set is not too simplistic or too difficult for the target student group. Students need to see value in participating in the activity if they are to become engaged. Threads and activities must be well designed and managed and the content must be accurate, focused and relevant.

Following a methodology such as the 5-stage model designed by Gilly Salmon will help you address these issues and design successful activities. Students will be supported at each stage as they become experienced online learners. [https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html](https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html).

2. Forum Management

1. You can have several forums in one Blackboard Discussion Board. New forums are added to the bottom of the list. If you wish you can move the most recent forum to the top of the list by clicking on it and dragging it upwards.
2. Click on the drop-down arrow beside a forum to open the forum menu. There are several options here including the option to Edit the forum.
3. Under Manage you can allocate different roles to different users. This might be useful particularly for group work or in large classes where there is more than one Moderator or Grader – select the user and allocate the new role.

3. Reading Posts

Once the activity has begun you will need to open the discussion board and check for new posts.

1. In the example shown here, there are a total of 3 posts and 2 of these are new since you last viewed the discussion. Click on the green button under new post to view only what is new since the last time you checked. You can print off new posts from this view also.
2. If you open a thread using the thread name, in this example ‘First Question’ you will see all posts. Unread posts will be highlighted with a green dot.
3. You can also subscribe to a forum to receive email alerts – click on the button at the top of the forum when viewing the list of threads.

4. Moderating Posts

As the moderator of the discussion, there may be times when you will need to delete or edit a post. For a full range of options click on the thread name to open all posts. Move the mouse over the particular post to reveal these options.

- **Reply** – post a public reply to a post. Everyone who has access to the discussion forum can see this reply.
- **Quote** – will copy the original post into your post in quotation marks so you can add to it or comment on it.
- **Edit** – allows you to edit the original post.
- **Delete** – when you delete a post all replies to this thread will also be deleted.
- **Email Author** – Sends a personal message to the author of the post. The sender will also get a copy of the email.

**NOTE:** For further help designing discussion activities please check out our guides on the Five-Stage Model, Twelve eModerating Tips and Weaving & Summarising at [https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/resources/onlineassessment/forums.php](https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/resources/onlineassessment/forums.php)

5. The Next Step - Grading a Discussion Activity in Blackboard