This Quick Guide gives the eLearning team’s recommendations for grading 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. The Grade Centre

When you create a graded discussion forum or graded threads, corresponding columns are created in the Blackboard Grade Centre (Module Management -> Grade Centre -> Full Grade Centre).

Ensuring the grades are not visible until you are ready to release them: locate the column/columns for the discussion activity in the Full Grade Centre. Click the down arrow next to the column heading and select **Edit Column Information**. Scroll down to **Options** and ensure ‘Include this Column in Grade Centre Calculations’ & ‘Show this Column to Students’ are both set to **NO**. Click **Submit**.

### 2. Needs Marking

When you create an assignment in a discussion board you are given the option to ‘Show participants in “Needs Grading” status after every [X] post’ (where X is a number of posts).

Once a student reaches the required number of posts, you can grade these posts and give feedback under **Grade Centre -> Needs Marking**.

You will also find discussion assessments for marking in the **Full Grade Centre**. Submitted assessments show a 📝 icon. Click to the right of this icon in a cell to open a drop-down menu and select **Grade User Activity**.

### 3. Grading & Providing Feedback

When you open a student submission to a discussion forum for grading, you will see a blue grading panel to the right.

**GRADE:** Enter the overall grade here

**GRADE RUBRIC:** If you are using a rubric you can use it to provide detailed feedback under the rubric categories and to calculate an overall grade automatically.

**FEEDBACK TO LEARNER:** Enter your overall feedback in this area. You can use the paperclip to attach a file.

**ADD NOTES:** you can use this area to add grading notes. These are not available to the student.

You can save your feedback as a draft and come back and finish it later or you can click on **Submit** if you are finished. Students won’t be able to see the grade or feedback until you make the column visible again in the **Grade Centre**.

### 4. Student Preview

Before students begin using the discussion board you can test that it is working okay by switching to **Student Preview** mode (top right of the page next to **Edit Mode**).

In **Student Preview** mode you can try creating a discussion post. You can then exit the preview and choose option 2. **Keep the preview user and all data**. You can then find this submission in the **Grade Centre** and practice correcting it. When you are finished return to **Student Preview** and select **Delete the Preview Data** when exiting **Student Preview** this time.

### 5. The Next Step – Releasing Results and Downloading Discussion Assessments in Blackboard