

# LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM USER GUIDE: DISCUSSION BOARD

The Discussion Board tool in the LMS allows online communication with other members of the subject or community. Groups within a subject or community can also have their own private discussion board. The Discussion Board is an asynchronous communication tool, allowing messages to be posted and read at any time.

Multiple forums (discussion topics) can be added to a subject or community's Discussion Board, and various settings can be applied to control how messages will be posted and managed in each forum.

A discussion forum is organised into threads (conversations within a topic). Messages are posted by adding a new thread or replying to an existing post. Participation can be controlled by locking or unlocking threads. Threads can also be hidden or made unavailable to participants.

Note: If you plan to use the Discussion Board tool, you must create a link to the tool in your subject menu or within a content area of your subject.

## Create a link to a discussion board

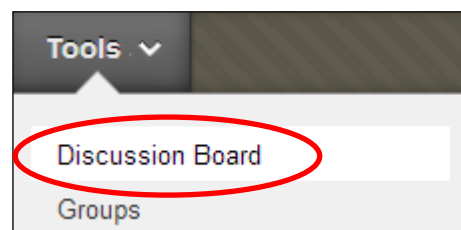
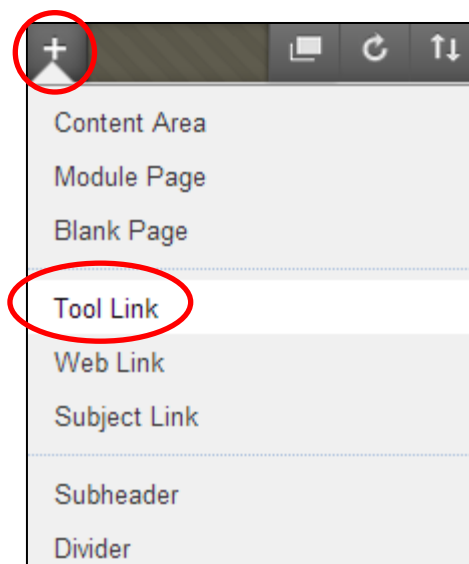
### In the subject menu

1. Ensure *Edit Mode* is **ON**.
2. Click the plus sign + above the subject name in the menu.
3. Select **Tool Link**.
4. Enter a **Name**.
5. From the *Type* drop down menu select **Discussion Board**.
6. Click the check box to make this **Available to Users**.
7. **Submit**.

Note: When you click on the discussion board page you will need to create a forum, see below.

### In a content page

1. Ensure *Edit Mode* is **ON**.
2. From the subject menu, click the desired content area.
3. Click the **Tools** drop down menu and select **Discussion Board**.
4. Select the desired option:
  - **Link to Discussion Board Page**: to see all discussion forums (**Next>>Submit**).
  - **Select a Discussion Board Forum**: to view just the one forum from the list (**Next>>Submit**).
  - **Create New Forum** (follow instructions below to *Create a discussion forum* from step 4).



## Create a discussion forum

1. Ensure *Edit Mode* is **ON**.
2. Navigate to the page where you created a link to the Discussion Board and open it.
3. Click **Create Forum**.
4. On the *Create Forum* page, enter the **Name** and **Description** of the forum.

Note: It is recommended that you use the description section to inform students of their rights and obligations in regards to the discussions forum. Some standard text has been created that you may use for this purpose. See Rights & Obligations on page 12.

5. The default is to make the forum available **Yes**.



Notes: You can restrict access via the **Display After** and **Display Until** dates. If you use these display options, *Available* should be set to **Yes**.



Select **No** and this forum will remain unavailable until you edit and change this setting.

**2. Forum Availability**

Available  Yes  No

Enter Date and Time Restrictions

Display After      
*Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.*

Display Until      
*Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.*

6. Select from the forum settings as desired (briefly discussed below).
7. Click **Submit**.

### Forum settings

Note: Available options may vary according to the criteria you select. Select some options and others may be automatically switched off (if they were already selected) or made unavailable for future use (~~strikethrough~~ appears through these options). For example, if you select **Grade Threads** the options to **Allow Members to Create New Thread** and **Allow Anonymous Posts** are no longer available and would be turned off if already selected. Turn off **Grade Threads** and these options would once more become available.

**Viewing Threads/Replies** – Participants may either view all threads, else will need to create a thread before they will be able to view threads created by others. This is useful if you want students to write independently, but be able to view other student contributions after making their own. This viewing restriction only applies until they write their first post.

**Grade** – Will create a grade centre column for this discussion forum/thread. The number of points, due date and rubric may be selected. If a due date is entered a subject calendar entry is automatically created.

**Subscribe** – Allows participants to subscribe so they are notified via email when there is activity in the forum/thread. This option may be useful for high-importance, but low-use forums.

**Create and Edit** – Options for anonymous posts, plus delete, create, attachment and moderation options.

**Additional Options** – Adds widgets so that posts may be tagged and / or rated by students.

## Manage a discussion forum

There are seven roles available in each forum.

Manager	Can create forums, modify settings and change the role of others.
Builder	Can create forums and modify settings.
Moderator	Reviews messages before they are posted on the forum.
Marker	Can grade threads.
Participant	Can reply to existing posts, create threads and modify or remove posts (if forum settings set to allow this).
Reader	Is only able to read posts.
Blocked	People who are blocked are not able to view the forum.

By default all staff with a subject coordinator or tutor role in a subject are managers of the forums in that subject. There may be instances where you want to give additional privileges to a person. For example, a student could be given moderator privileges for a particular forum.

1. Ensure *Edit Mode* is **ON**.
2. Navigate to the page where you created a link to the Discussion Board and open it.
3. Put your cursor on the name of the forum you want to manage.
4. Click the downward pointing arrow that appears and select **Manage**.

The screenshot shows the 'Discussion Board' interface. At the top, there is a header with the title 'Discussion Board' and a subtitle: 'Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organised around a particular subject. Create Forums to organise discussions. [More Help](#)'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Create Forum' and 'Search' buttons. The main content area displays a table of forums. The first forum is 'Grampians field trip' with a description: 'We know that not everyone will be able to make it to the field trip, so this is one way we can stay connected. Post here any memorable experiences related to the trip (both high and low points) and illustrate where ever possible.' The table columns are 'Forum', 'Description', 'Total Posts', 'Unread Posts', and 'Total Participants'. The 'Unread Posts' column for this forum shows '10' in a blue circle. A context menu is open over the forum, listing options: 'Open', 'Edit', 'Grade', 'Manage' (circled in red), 'Copy', and 'Delete'. At the bottom of the forum list, it says 'Displaying 1 to 1 of 1 items' and 'Show All Edit Paging...'.

A full list of staff and students associated with the forum will appear.

5. Click the check box to the left of the person whose role you want to change.  
Note: Multiple individuals may be selected if they are all going to be changed to the same role.
6. Click the **Edit Role** button and select the desired role (listed at the top of this section).
7. The page will reload and the desired role is allocated to the user(s).

**Success: Forum Roles have been updated.**

## Create a discussion thread

You have successfully created a forum, but it is empty. To encourage use of this forum by others you should ensure it contains at least one thread (message) that they can read and reply to.

Note: if you did not choose the option of *Allow members to create new threads* when creating the forum, then having a thread present is essential as people will not be able to create it themselves.

1. Navigate to the page where you created a link to the Discussion Board and open it.
2. Click on the name of the forum to open.
3. Click **Create Thread**.
4. Enter the **Subject** (title) of the thread and the **Message** (description) of your thread.
5. Attach a file if desired (and the option has been allowed for this forum).
6. If this thread is to be graded click the **Grade Thread** check box and enter the **Points possible**. You also have the option to choose when the Needs Grading reminder should appear (number of posts).
7. Click **Submit** to post your thread to the forum.
8. Click the title of your thread to view the original post, plus any replies to that post.

## Read discussion posts

1. Navigate to the page where you created a link to the Discussion Board tool and open it.
2. A list of forums will be presented showing title, description, number of posts and unread posts.

### Option 1

1. Click the name of the forum you wish to read.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Forum	Description	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
<input type="checkbox"/>	The sands of time...	This is where you can talk about the changing perspectives you have about the desert and desert life for the people who survive there. <small>You will need to provide an initial view before you will be able to view other posts.</small>	5	3	3

2. A list of all threads within the forum will be presented. Click the name of a thread to open it.

Thread Actions		Date	Thread	Author	Status	Tags	Unread Posts	Total Posts
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/05/13 3:41 PM	Where can you find water?	SP11 Demo	Published		1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7/05/13 8:24 AM	Which way is north?	SP11 Demo	Published		1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7/05/13 8:20 AM	Camels wear desert boots	Debbie Emerson	Published		1	3

3. A listing of all posts within the thread will be presented. By default they will be expanded to show all text in each post.

**Thread: Camels wear desert boots**

Search Refresh

Select: All None Message Actions Expand All Collapse All 3 Posts in this Thread 1 Unread

**Debbie Emerson** COORDINATOR MANAGER Email Author 21 days ago

**Camels wear desert boots**

Seriously, I am not quite that naive, but I had not met a camel before doing this subject and the prospect made me a little anxious. They are large animals, with big feet and not known for their placid natures. Plus I had heard that they spit. Overall Rating: ★★★★★

I also have not ridden anything other than the bus, since I was very young. Then it was just a donkey ride at the beach AND I didn't enjoy that terribly much either.

I was delighted to discover that Dory the camel was delightful and didn't spit once. She was the perfect lady and her young calf Jimmy followed along at her heels.

[Here is where we stopped for the night](#), but we had to be very careful of the crocodiles!

Reply

**SP11 Demo** 21 days ago

**RE: Camels wear desert boots**

Wow! I had never thought of it in that way before! Overall Rating: ★★★★★

**Author:** Debbie Emerson **Date:** Tuesday, 7 May 2013 8:20:00 AM EST  
**Subject:** Camels wear desert boots  
 Seriously, I am not quite that naive, but I had not met a camel before doing this subject

- If this is too large, you can click **Collapse All** to display post titles. Unread posts have a coloured circle to the left of the title.

**Thread: Camels wear desert boots**

Search Refresh

Select: All None Message Actions Expand All Collapse All 3 Posts in this Thread 1 Unread

**Debbie Emerson** COORDINATOR MANAGER 21 days ago

**Camels wear desert boots**

**SP11 Demo** 21 days ago

**RE: Camels wear desert boots**

**SP11 Demo** 11 days ago

**RE: Camels wear desert boots**

## Option 2

- Click the *Unread Posts* link (circled number on the right).

<input type="checkbox"/> Forum	Description	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
<input type="checkbox"/> The sands of time...	This is where you can talk about the changing perspectives you have about the desert and desert life for the people who survive there.  You will need to provide an initial view before you will be able to view other posts.	5	<span style="border: 2px solid red; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px 5px;">3</span>	3

- A collection of all unread posts is displayed.

### Collection

Users can Collect posts into a printable, sortable format. Collections are a good way to organise posts for quick reading. A Collection must be created to tag posts. [More Help](#)

Print Preview
Filter

Select: [All](#) [None](#) [Mark](#)  [Add](#) Sort by [Date of Last Post](#) Order [Descending](#)

Thread:	Camels wear desert boots	Posted Date:	16 May 2013 4:01 PM
Post:	RE: Camels wear desert boots	Status:	Published
Author:	SP11 Demo	Overall Rating:	☆☆☆☆

That is such an optimistic thought! I hope that we get to meet on the field trip.

**Author:** Debbie Emerson **Date:** Tuesday, 7 May 2013 8:20:00 AM EST **Subject:** Camels wear desert boots  
 Seriously, I am not quite that naive, but I had not met a camel before doing this subject and the prospect made me a little anxious. They are large animals, with big feet and not known for their placid natures. Plus I had heard that they spit.

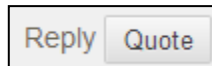
I also have not ridden anything other than the bus, since I was very young. Then it was just a donkey ride at the beach AND I didn't enjoy that terribly much either.

I was delighted to discover that Dory the camel was delightful and didn't spit once. She was the perfect lady and her young calf Jimmy followed along at her heels.

[Here is where we stopped for the night](#), but we had to be very careful of the crocodiles!

Note: The posts displayed will continue to be marked as unread, until you either read them with *Option 1*, click the **Mark as Read** button next to the post, or click the check box to the left of each and select Mark >> Read from the top/bottom of the page.

## Reply to discussion posts

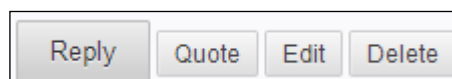


1. Click **Reply** or **Quote** (to include the original text) from within the post.  
 Note: **Quote** is only visible when your cursor is on the post.
2. Enter a message and attach a file as desired.
3. Click **Submit**.

## Modify discussion posts

Threads or individual posts may be modified if this option has been allowed in the forum settings.

1. Navigate to the post that you wish to modify.
2. Put your cursor on the post to see options appear next to the **Reply** link.
3. Click **Edit**.
4. Make your changes to the post.
5. Click **Submit**.



## Remove a discussion thread or post

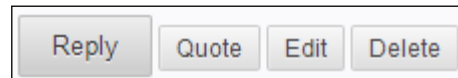
Threads or individual posts may be removed if this option has been allowed in the forum settings. You will only be able to remove your own posts, unless you are a Forum Manager.

### Remove an entire thread

1. Navigate to the forum containing the thread.
2. Position your cursor on the thread title. A downward pointing arrow appears.
3. Click the downward pointing arrow to display options.
4. Select **Delete**.
5. To confirm deletion, click **OK**.

## Remove an individual post

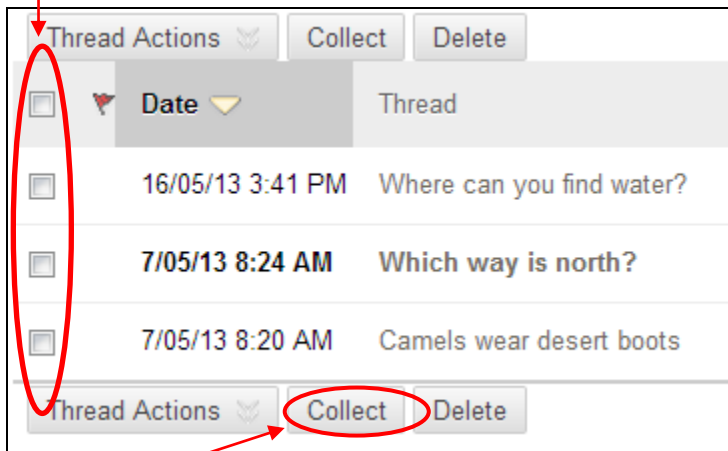
1. Navigate to the post that you wish to delete.
2. Put your cursor on the post to see options appear next to the **Reply** link.
3. Click **Delete**.
4. To confirm deletion click **OK**.



## Collect discussion posts

The collect tool is used within a forum. It allows you to display all the collected posts on the one page for easy reading.

1. Open the forum that has threads you wish to collect.
2. Click the check box to the left of individual threads to be collected, or the single check box at the top of the list to select all threads.

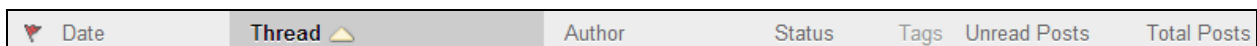


3. Click **Collect**. The posts will appear on one scrollable page.

## Order threads

Threads are displayed in a table, with headings above each column such as Date, Thread, Author, etc. The order of threads may be changed to be sorted by any column.

1. Click the title of the column to reorder the threads according to the information in that column.

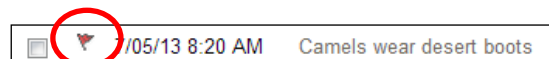


2. Click the title again to reverse the order.

## Flag threads or posts

Threads / posts can be marked for later attention with the Flag tool.

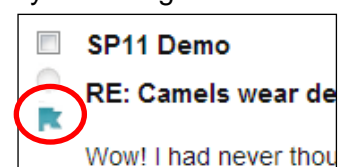
1. Click the check box to the left of the thread or post you wish to flag.
2. Click **Thread Actions / Message Actions**.
3. Select **Set Flag**.



4. A flagged thread, or thread with a flagged item within it, will be marked by a red flag.  
A flagged post will be marked with a blue flag under the title.  
Note: The blue post flags are not visible in Chrome.

### To clear a flag

1. Click the check box to the left of the thread or post.
2. Click **Thread Actions / Message Actions**.
3. Select **Clear Flag**.



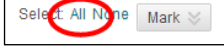

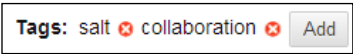


## Tag threads or posts

Forum managers can create their own text labels to tag messages if this has been enabled as a forum option. Users can then search and organise messages using the tags.

Once a collection has been gathered, tags can be created by using the **Tag** tool on the Action Bar or by clicking **Add** on an individual message. Tags can only be created and applied from the *Collection* page and must be created for each forum individually, and the option to allow tagging must be set on the forum.

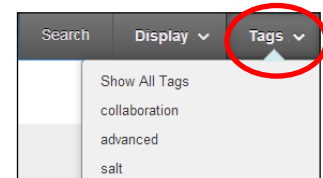
### Create and apply tags

1. Select all or some messages and click **Collect**. 
2. Click the check box to the left of each item to be tagged, OR click the ALL link on the top left to select all collected items. 
3. Enter a new tag name in the **Tag Text** field at the top of the collected items.
4. Click **Add** to apply the new tag to these messages. 
5. Alternatively, to tag an individual message click **Add** at the bottom of each post and enter a new tag word or choose a tag from the existing list.

### Display tagged posts

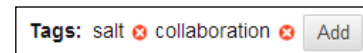
1. From the **Tags** button top right select the desired tag to display.

Note: If you display tagged posts, the default is to continue to display only these tagged posts. This means if you move to another forum, the forum may appear to be empty as there are no posts with those tags there.



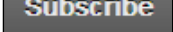
### To remove tags

1. Click the red cross next to any tag to remove from that post.



## Subscribe to forums or threads

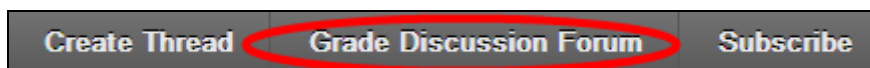
Users can elect to receive notification of postings in a forum or thread only if this has been enabled as a forum option.

1. Click the **Subscribe** button on the action bar to activate the subscription. 
2. If you are receiving reminders and want to stop them, open the forum and select **Unsubscribe**.

## Grade a forum

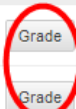
If the *Grade: Mark Forum* option was selected a **Grade Discussion Forum** button will be available in the action bar when you enter the forum.

1. Click **Grade Discussion Forum**.



2. A list of all students, the number of posts they have submitted to this forum and any grade already given will be displayed.
3. Click the **Grade** button to see details of the posts and comments created by this student.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Last Name ▲	First Name	Username	Posts	Grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cavator	Rex	ddstudent03	2	--
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gold	Iva	ddstudent10	0	--





4. All posts and comments created by the student for this forum will be displayed on the centre of the screen (you may need to scroll to see all of these).  
Forum statistics (expand to view) and a space to enter a grade and feedback for this student will appear on the right of the screen.

5. If a rubric was attached, you can click the rubric name to use it.  
6. Click **Submit**.  
7. Click **OK** to return to *Grade Discussion Forum Users* page (you may need to scroll to see this).

## Grade threads

If the *Grade: Mark Threads* option was selected a **Grade** button will be available for each thread when you enter a forum. Each thread may be marked individually, or not at all.

1. Click **Grade**.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Date	Thread	Author	Status	Tags	Unread Posts	Total Posts	Grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	14/05/13 2:46 PM	Mining for salt	Debbie Emerson	Published	advanced, collaboration, salt	1	4	Grade

2. You will be prompted to enter the **Points Possible** and are also able to add a rubric if desired.  
3. Click **Submit**. The **Grade** button has become **Grade Thread**.  
4. Click **Grade Thread**.  
5. A list of all students, the number of posts they have submitted to this thread and any grade already given will be displayed.  
6. You are now able to grade as for forums (information above).

## Lock, Hide & Make Unavailable

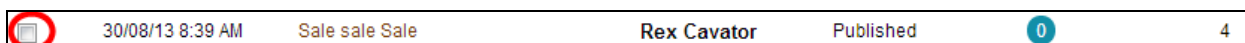
By default threads are visible and accessible to all forum users, but this can be changed by forum managers when a thread has gone off topic or for archiving purposes. The options used for this are Lock, Hidden or Unavailable – all available from the **Thread Actions menu** at the top and bottom of the forum.



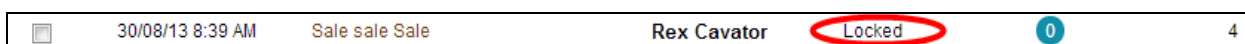
### Lock

A locked thread is visible for reading but cannot be modified. No one may post to a locked thread.

1. Click the check box to the left of the thread or threads you wish to lock.



2. Click **Thread Actions**.
3. Select **Lock**.
4. The status of the thread is now locked.

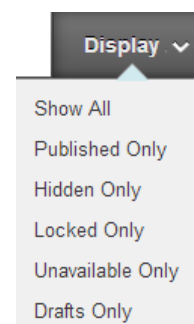


5. Reply, Modify and Remove options will not be available when reading posts in this thread.
6. To unlock a thread, click the check box to the left of the thread, click **Thread Actions** and select **Unlock**.

### Hide

A hidden thread remains available, but is hidden from default view. If you hide a thread it is automatically locked.

1. Click the check box to the left of the thread or threads you wish to hide.
2. Click **Thread Actions**.
3. Select **Hide**.
4. The status of the thread is now locked and students will not see the thread.
5. Any forum participant may view a hidden thread. Click **Display**. Select which threads you wish to see.



### Make Unavailable

An *Unavailable* thread is invisible and inaccessible to all users except forum *managers*.

1. Click the check box to the left of the thread or threads you wish to make unavailable.
2. Click **Thread Actions**.
3. Select **Make Unavailable**.
4. The status of the thread is now locked and no one but forum managers will see the thread. Forum managers may view an unavailable thread or use **Thread Actions** to publish the thread once again.

## Change Author

At thread level only, there is an option to change individual anonymous threads so that the original author of the thread is then visible to all discussion board users.

1. Click the check box to the left of the anonymous thread to be changed.
2. From **Thread Actions** select **Change Author**.

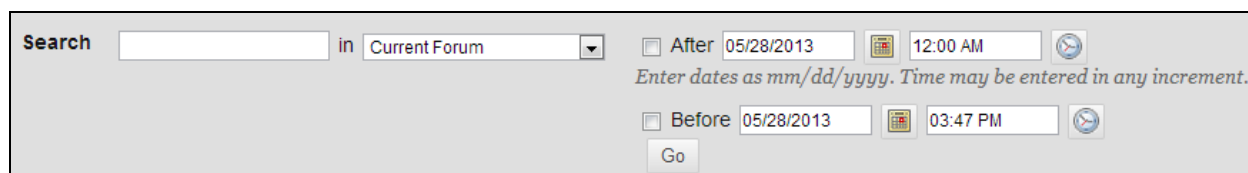
Notes: This option only works to display the original author of an anonymous thread. There is no way to attribute a second party as the author of the thread. Replies that are anonymous cannot be changed to reveal the author.

You must be a subject coordinator and inside the forum, viewing the list of threads, to use this option.

## Search within the discussion board

The *Search* option is available at all levels of the discussion board. Users have the option to search on relevant text in the current thread, current forum, and current discussion board, or within all forums in the current subject between nominated dates.

1. Click on the **Search** button on the top right of screen.
2. Enter text in the *Search* box.



Search  in Current Forum  After    Before

*Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.*

3. Select the area to be searched from the drop-down list.
4. Select the date range for the search.
5. Click the **Go** button.
6. Posts containing the search term are displayed in the one page.

## Rights & Obligations

Under both the Copyright Act and the University's Intellectual Property Statute students will own copyright in all their own entries on any of the LMS collaboration or communication tools. It is recommended that there should be information made available to students about their rights regarding their entries and how they may be used.

There may also be privacy issues when using these tools, i.e. the use of images of people, names and other personal information. It is important that you discuss what is appropriate content for the tool with students prior to asking them to participate.

Please note that there are limited provisions for students to communicate 3rd party material in such tools. These include, Fair Dealing for Criticism & Review, Fair Dealing for Parody & Satire, using material that is out of copyright, using an insubstantial portion or linking to material. For details on these provisions, please look at the Copyright Office website: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/copyright>.

Academics can make material available under the statutory licences for educational purposes but limits and restrictions apply. See the Copyright teaching and support page: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/copyright/teaching.html>

It is strongly recommended that the following text is made available in the description of your collaboration tool to inform your students of their rights & responsibilities whilst they participate in these activities:

Note: For instructions on where to place this, see

Create a discussion forum on page 2.

*This discussion board is open to the class and I will be monitoring comments on a regular basis.*

*Additionally, you are responsible for making sure you don't post illegal or inappropriate content such as material that:*

- *infringes copyright*
- *is pornographic or defamatory*
- *is racially vilifying, cruel, violent, abusive, or harassing*
- *invades or interferes with the anyone's privacy*
- *is personal information such as telephone numbers, addresses or photographs of individuals without their express permission*

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