

WHAT'S NEW IN THE DISCUSSION BOARD

You will find that working with the Discussion Board has become easier in 7.1. The Discussion Board search tools are more powerful and easier to use. Capabilities that were previously spread out among different pages have been arranged on single pages. Enterprise License System users can Rate individual posts and Grade selected threads. There are more options available when creating a new Forum. The 7.1 Discussion Board represents a major step forward.

The following pages provide an overview of some of the capabilities in the Discussion Board beginning with release 7.1. Some comparisons are made to the Discussion Board in prior releases to illustrate the evolution of the Discussion Board.

Forums

Working with Forums has become easier; more functions have been added to the Forum List Page of the Discussion Board.

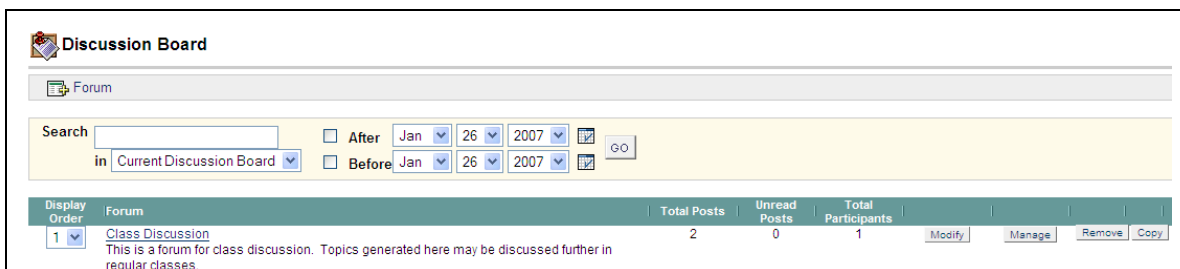


Figure 1: The 7.1 Forum List Page

The Forum List page includes several new functions and streamlines several existing features:

- Any user can identify forums that contain unread posts, number of participants, and total number of posts by using the Forum List Page headers.
- Any user can search for specific messages in all of the forums listed on the Forum List page, other Discussion Boards, or Group forums created within courses by using the **Search** tools.
- Instructors can manage users within a particular forum by clicking the **Manage** button.
- Instructors can change the display order of the forums by using the **Display Order** fields.
- Instructors can copy whole forums from this page by clicking the **Copy** button.

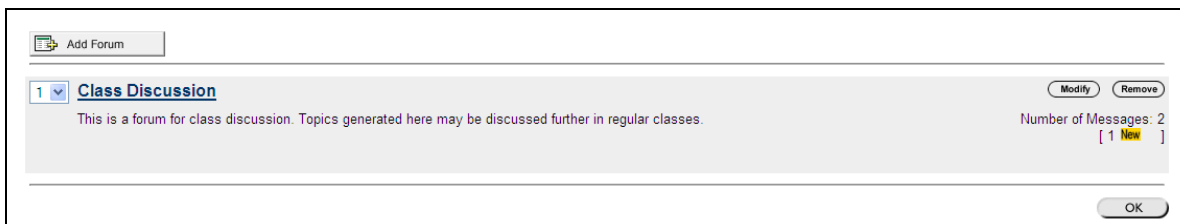


Figure 2: The 7.0 Forum List Page

Creating a Forum has become more powerful and flexible. Forum options that are located in several locations in prior versions are united under Forum Settings on the Create Forum page.

Figure 3: Options in 7.1 Forum Creation

Managing Users

Managing Users has become more flexible. There are now six roles available:

- **Managers** can create and modify forums.
- **Moderators** can review messages before they are posted on the forum.
- **Graders** can grade message threads.
- **Participants** can initiate threads, post messages and reply to existing messages.
- **Readers** can only read messages.
- **Blocked** users cannot participate in the Discussion Board.

Previous versions only had three roles (Permanent Moderator, Moderator, and Blocked). These roles can be automatically assigned based on course roles. This feature can be customized for each forum.

Last Name	First Name	Username	Forum Role
Administrator	Blackboard	administrator	Manager
Baker	Betty	bbaker	Participant
Bobeldyk	Rob	rbobeldy	Moderator
Collins	Kyle	collinsk	Reader
Foland	Mike	mfoland	Manager
Friedrichsen	Jed	jfriedrichsen	Grader
			Participant
			Blocked

Figure 4: Managing Users in 7.1

Threads

Date	Thread	Author	Status	Unread Posts	Total Posts	Grade
1/24/07 4:36 PM	Greek Theater Construction	Administrator, Blackboard	Published	0	2	

Figure 5: The 7.1 Thread List Page

The Thread List page contains functions that are spread across several locations in prior versions:

- Managers can delete existing threads by selecting them and clicking **Remove**.
- Managers can **Lock** or **Unlock** existing threads by selecting them and clicking the appropriate button.
- Any user can search for messages in the current forum, other Discussion Boards, or Group forums created within courses by using the **Search** tools.
- Any user can collect selected threads to display the messages on one page by clicking **Collect**.
- **For Enterprise License Systems:** Graders can grade threads by clicking **Grade**. This option is available when thread grading has been enabled.

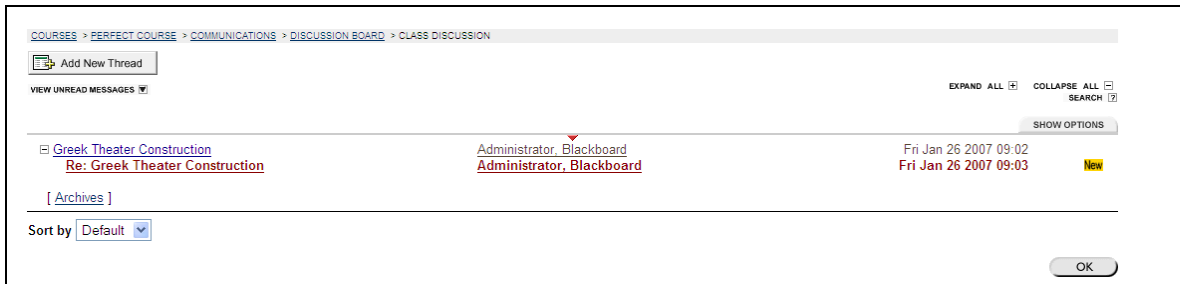


Figure 6: The 7.0 Thread List Page

Messages

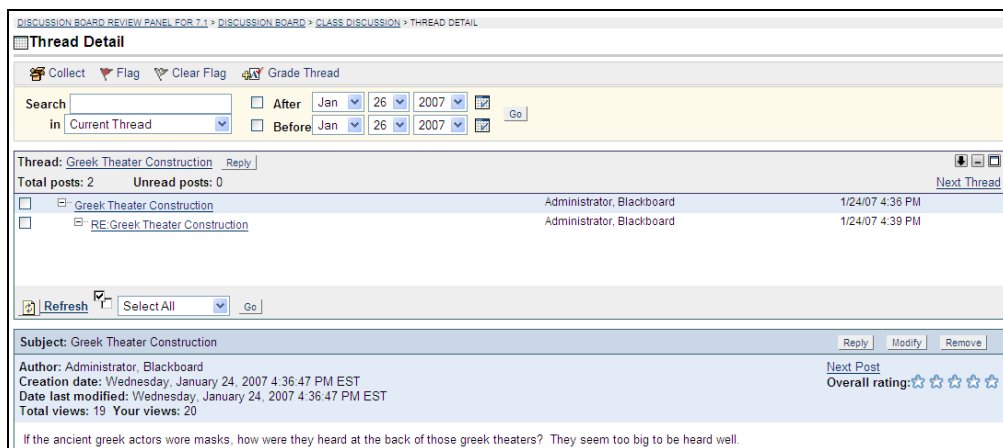


Figure 7: The 7.1 Thread Detail Page

The majority of the changes to the Discussion Board are represented on the Thread Detail page:

- Any user can navigate between posts and threads by clicking **Previous/Next Thread** and **Previous/Next Post**.
- Participants can reply to individual posts by clicking **Reply**.
- Any user can flag selected posts for later reference and remove flags from selected posts by clicking **Flag**.
- Any user can collect specific posts in the thread to be displayed on a single page by selecting them and clicking **Collect**.

- Any user can search for messages in the current thread, the current forum, other Discussion Boards, or Group forums created within courses by using the **Search** tools.
- **For Enterprise License Systems:** participants can rate individual posts by using the **Overall rating** stars.

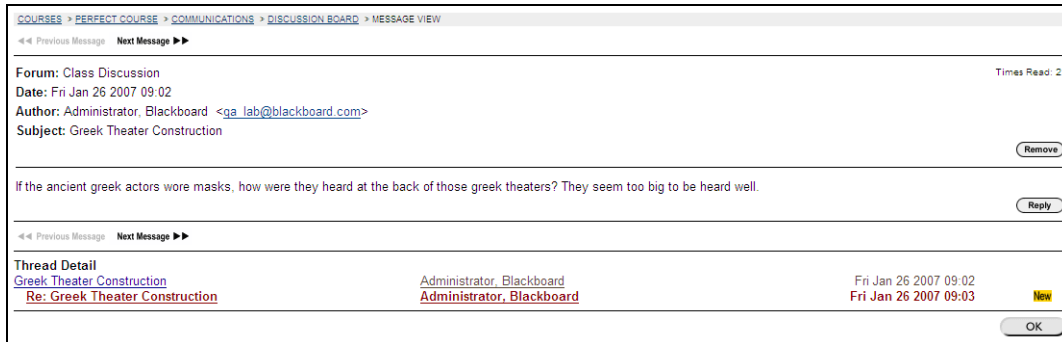


Figure 8: The 7.0 Thread Detail Page

Archiving Messages

One of the major changes to the Discussion Board was a new way of archiving messages. In prior versions, this was a long process that involved many steps:

1. Add the archive to the forum.
2. Name the archive.
3. Make the archive available.
4. Select the threads in the forum to move into the archive.
5. Add the threads to the archive.

The concept of archiving messages has changed. Now you can move threads in and out of the thread view by using the Hidden or Unavailable options on the **Change Status to:** field. The process is as follows:

1. Select the thread of messages you want to remove from view.
2. Select **Hidden** or **Unavailable** from the **Change Status to:** drop-down list.

Choose **Hidden** to make these messages available but hidden from the main view. Choose **Unavailable** to make these messages unavailable to everyone but you.

The difference between hidden and unavailable is as follows:

- **Hidden** messages may be managed (deleted or modified) by moderators. Use this status to hide outdated threads and make relevant content easier to find. This is also useful when a thread has gone off-topic.
- **Unavailable** message threads are only visible to forum managers. Even then, forum managers must choose to view these message threads. Making threads unavailable means non-managers can no longer view the thread.