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Forums

This chapter explains how to set up an instance of the Forums feature.

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Key concepts

The Forums feature lets students and other users engage in conversation. This feature is ideal for classroom discussions and other types of collaboration.

This section offers a short overview of the Forums feature. It may be useful to review this section before setting up the feature.

Categories and topics

Within a feature instance, all conversation is organized into **categories** and sub-categories, which are called **topics**. So, for example, a category might be “Hemingway,” and topics in that category might be “The Sun Also Rises,” “The Nick Adams Stories,” and “A Call to Arms.” Individual posts and replies are published within topics.

An instance of the Forums feature must contain at least one category and one topic before users can begin publishing posts. (By default, when you add the Forums feature to a page, it already has one category, called “General,” and one topic, called “Open Discussion.”)

Default view versus maximized view

The default view of the Forums feature shows a list of recent posts, with links to a few other features.



When a user maximizes the feature, the system displays a larger view, which is the **Forum Home**. In addition to showing recent posts, this view shows a summary of each category, with a list of each category's topics.

The following illustration shows how the Forum Home will look to a student. (The administrative view includes additional options.)

The screenshot shows the 'Forums' interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a 'Search' button and a 'Show Search Options' dropdown. Below this is a navigation menu with options: 'Edit Forum', 'Subscribe to Forum', 'Unread Posts and Replies', 'My Posts and Replies', and 'User List'. To the right, a 'Recent posts' section lists four posts, all titled 'Re: Let's talk about Material Science', with their authors and timestamps. Below the navigation and recent posts is a 'General' section with a 'Subscribe' button. The main content is a table with columns: 'Topic', 'Users', 'Approval', 'Unread', 'Posts (My)', 'Replies (My)', 'Latest Post or Reply', and 'Access'. The table shows one topic, 'Open Discussion', with 4 users, 0 approvals, 5 unread posts, 1(0) posts by me, and 5(0) replies by me. The latest post is 'Re: Let's talk about Material Science' by Belinda Li on Tue 8/31/2010 at 3:48 PM. At the bottom, there are icons for 'Unread', 'Read', 'Read Only', and 'Hidden'.

Note also that as the user clicks around to different areas, the view will change.

Icons used in the Forums feature

The Forums feature uses the following color scheme to classify posts and replies:

| Icon | Description |
|---|---|
|  | Yellow indicates that the currently logged-in user has already read the item. |
|  | Green with an asterisk indicates that the currently logged-in user has not yet read the item. |
|  | Grey with an eye indicates that the item is read-only. |
|  | Colorless with a dashed border indicates that the item is hidden to all non-administrative users. |

(For details of how an item behaves when it is read-only or hidden, see [“About visible, read-only and hidden items”](#) on page 466.)

The same color scheme applies to topic icons, though these icons are shaped like folders.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|
|  role of women in the church by George Jackson on Wed 8/4/2010 at 12:43 PM | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
|  Some thoughts on Father Divine by Laura Martin on Wed 8/4/2010 at 12:38 PM | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
|  Describe the role of Peoples Temple in municipal affairs. by Lisa Sato on Wed 8/4/2010 at 12:30 PM | 3 | 0 | 0 | 20 |

| Weeks 10-14: Aftermath | | |
|--|-------|-----|
| <i>This category is for discussing all aspects of the impact of Jones</i> | | |
| Topic | Users | App |
|  Survivors Use this topic to discuss the lives of survivors and their experience integ... Moderators: Isabelle Thomas | 4 | |
|  Immediate aftermath Use this topic to discuss the immediate aftermath of the murder-suicides, i... | 0 | |
|  Jonestown in modern American culture Use this topic to discuss what Jonestown represents in modern American cult... | 0 | |
|  The effect of Jonestown on churches | 0 | |
| Totals: | | 4 |

At the topic level, the classifications work with the following caveats:

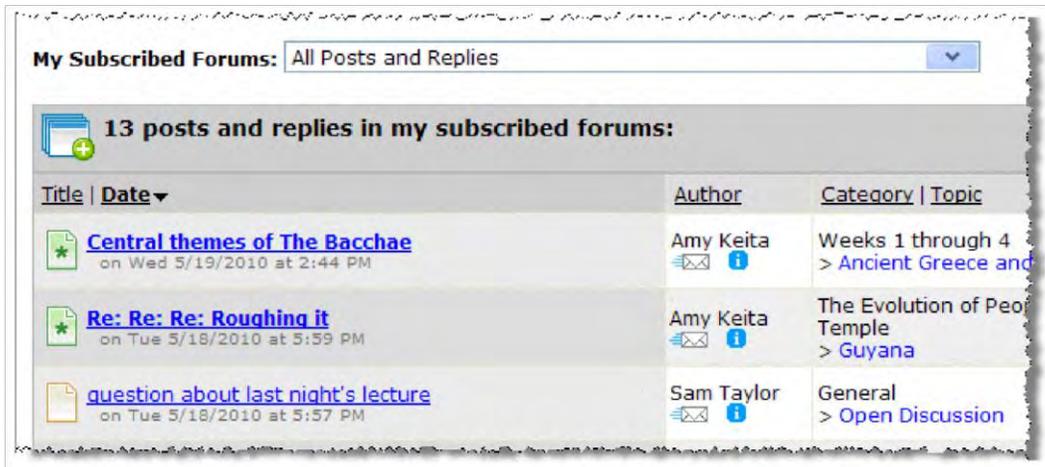
- If the currently logged-in user has read *all* of the items in the category, the folder icon is yellow.
- If the topic contains *any* posts or replies that have not been read, the folder icon is green. • If the topic is inactive and in a read-only state, the eye icon is used. If the topic is active but simply includes one or more posts that are read-only, the eye icon is *not* used—either the green or yellow icon is displayed.
- If the topic is inactive and in a hidden state, the invisible icon is used. If the topic is active but simply includes one or more posts that are hidden, the invisible icon is *not* used—either the green or yellow icon is displayed.

Subscription options

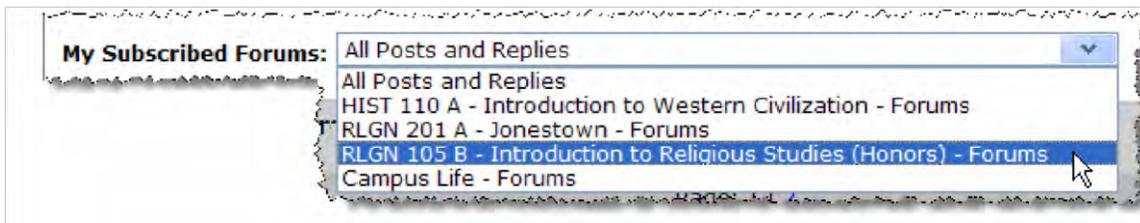
Users who want to subscribe to some posts or parts of a Forum, you have the following options:

- Content options – Users can subscribe to all activity in an instance of the Forums feature, or to a specific category, topic, or post.
- Delivery options – Users can have posts delivered via e-mail or via the “My Subscribed Forums” view.

When users subscribe with the latter option, the system adds a **View My Subscribed Forums** link within the **Forum Home**. Users who click this link can see a list of all activity in areas to which they are subscribed—regardless of what feature instance the activity is from. This view includes links to the relevant topic and feature instance.



This view includes a dropdown list that lets the user filter to display activity from one feature instance only.



Permissions overview

Within your course context, by default, members of the Students role will have the ability to add posts and reply to posts. However, you may want to add or change the permissions setup.

Most permissions in the Forums feature are specific to a single instance of the feature. So a user could have broad permissions in one feature instance, but in another instance the user might have permission to read posts and nothing more.

Permissions are managed through at a variety of levels and are discussed throughout this chapter. The following list offers an overview.

Viewing the feature

As with all other features, a role's ability to display an instance of the Forums feature is determined by whether the role is allowed to display the page. (For details on managing page permissions, see ["Letting a role view pages and context links" on page 668.](#)) Put another way, as long as the user can display the page, he or she can display the feature instance—though the user may or may not have permission to display any categories, topics, or posts.

Users with permission to display the feature instance also have the ability to subscribe to it (though the subscription will show only those posts and replies that the user is allowed to see, as determined by category and topic permissions, as well as other settings).

Viewing a category

Permission to display a category's heading and its description is determined at the category level, by the category's **Access** setting. You set this when you create or edit the category. (For details on this setting, see [“Access” on page 468.](#))

This same setting allows a role to display the topics contained within the category, though the topic's own settings could be more restrictive than the category setting and hide it from a user's view. Users with permission to display the category also have the ability to subscribe to it (though the subscription will show only those posts that the user is allowed to see, as determined by topic permissions, as well as other settings).

Viewing a topic and its posts

Permission to see a topic's heading, its description and its posts is determined at the topic level, by the topic's **Access** setting. You set this when you create or edit the topic. However, note that if the category's **Access** setting is more restrictive than the topic's, the topic will not be displayed. Note also that some posts could be hidden from general view, and some replies could be hidden from people who have not yet submitted their own replies (for details, see [“Editing a user's post or reply” on page 479.](#)) For details on a topic's **Access** setting, see [“Access” on page 468.](#)

Submitting posts, responses, and modifying them

You give a user permission to submit and edit posts and replies through the wrench settings for the feature. These include the following:

- Can Add Posts
- Can Edit and Delete Own Posts
- Can Reply to Posts

When you give a role any of these permissions, the role has the corresponding privileges only in those topics that they have permission to display (as determined by the **Access** settings for the topic and category.)

Note that these three permissions are handled discretely, so a role could have permission to do one thing but not the other. (For details, see [“Working with the permissions tab” on page 492.](#))

Acting as a moderator

The ability to act as a moderator—which may include the ability to approve posts prior to their being published and the ability to edit and delete posts within a specific topic—is handled on a topic-by-topic basis. For details, see [“Moderation” on page 476.](#)

Administering the feature instance

You give a role permission to help manage the feature instance through the wrench settings for the feature (this is the **Can Administer Feature** permission). When you give a role this permission, the role has access to the Edit Forum menu, which gives the role most of permissions listed above, as well as others. For details, see [“Working with the permissions tab” on page 492.](#) Within a course context, the Faculty role automatically has this permission.

Though this permission is called **Can Administer Feature**, it does *not* give users access to the

wrench-icon menu. If you want to give a role permission to the wrench-icon menu, this can only be done by giving the role the **Can Admin** privilege for the context, which is a much bigger privilege overall (as described in [“Letting a role administer a context” on page 669](#)).

About visible, read-only and hidden items

There are several procedures in this guide that give you the ability to make a topic or post visible, read-only or hidden. If the state of a topic and a post conflict, the more restrictive label applies.

Note that whatever setting applies to a post also applies to that post’s replies.

These states are defined as follows:

- **Visible** – The topic or post can be displayed by anyone who is not specifically restricted in some other way. People can take whatever actions they are have permission to take on these posts, including responding, editing, and so forth.
- **Read only** – The topic or post can be displayed, but posts cannot be responded to. Further, read-only posts cannot be edited or deleted except by moderators for the topic, or by people with the **Can Administer Feature** operation. People with the **Can Administer Feature** operation can also move the post while it is in this state.
- **Hidden** – The topic or post can be displayed and managed only by people with the **Can Administer Feature** permission. Note that moderators cannot display or work with these items.

Default location

The default layout for course contexts includes an instance of the Forums feature on the Collaboration page. If desired, you may be able to create additional instances in your course context, in a Campus Groups context that you lead, or in other contexts that you might manage. If you need help with adding a feature to a page, see [“Adding a feature instance to a page” on page 638](#).

Working with categories

All instances of the Forums feature must have at least one category defined (as well as one topic) before discussion can commence.

By default, the Forums feature instance in your course context contains a category called “General.” You can delete or rename this category as appropriate, as well as create new categories.

After you add an instance of the Forums feature to a page, by default it contain a category called “General.” You can delete or rename this category as appropriate, as well as create new categories.

Note that if the intended purpose of your forum is just to cover a few topics that do not have many hierarchal layers, you might want to stick with one category and within it just create a few topics.

To complete the steps described in this section, the user should have the **Can Administer Feature** permission.

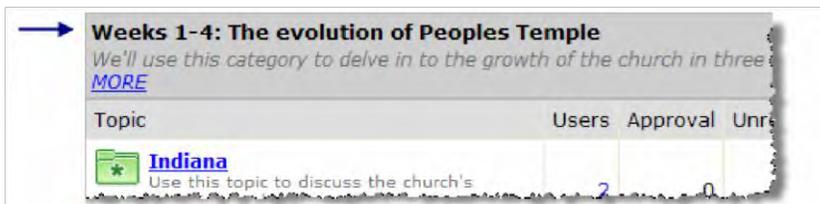
Attributes of a category

When you create a category, you can make choices about any of the following:

- Category name
- Category description
- Topic ordering method
- Pruning
- Access

Category name

The name of the category is essentially its label in the feature instance, so you should pick a name that is meaningful. For example, if the feature instance is part of a course, the name might reference a unit of coursework.



Category description

The category description is an optional field. If you enter a description, it will be displayed under the category name in the Forum Home. If the description is more than a sentence or so, each user will be able to expand or minimize it by clicking links labeled **MORE** and **LESS**.



Topic ordering method

Within each category, you can select a method for ordering topics. You have the following options:

- Alphabetically
- Manually (this is the default choice)
- Newest to Oldest • Oldest to Newest

With the manual choice, the feature instance lets you drag and drop topics into different arrangements, as described in [“Manually arranging topics” on page 471](#).

Pruning

Within each category, you can set a preference for how long posts (and their replies) are displayed before being automatically removed. You make this choice once for the category, and this setting applies to all topics in the category. The choices are to remove posts after any of the following time periods:

- 1 week
- 30 days
- 60 days
- 90 days
- **DO NOT REMOVE** (This is the default choice)

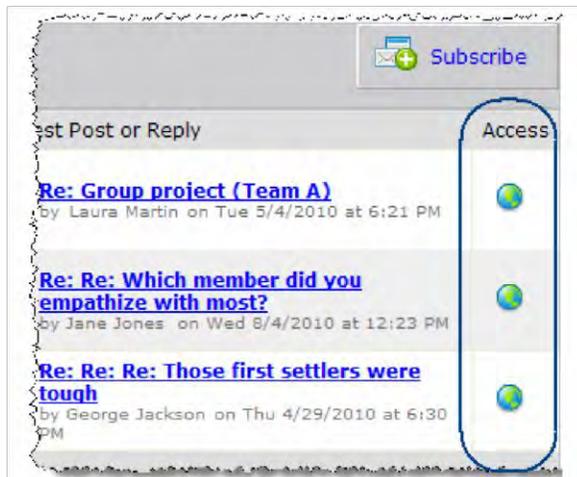
With **DO NOT REMOVE**, posts are never automatically removed, though they can be manually deleted or hidden by an administrator.

Access

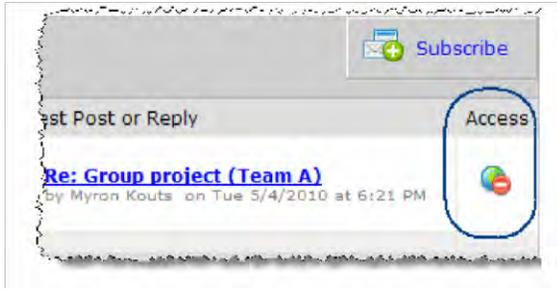
The **Access** setting for a category determines whether or not users can display the topics within a category, and the posts within those topics. However, even if this setting allows access, each topic has its own **Access** setting, which may be more restrictive than whatever you choose at the category level.

The default setting is that access is open to all users and all guests (but note that the user first must permission to display your Collaboration page). To restrict access, you click the **Restricted access** radio button, then specify who should be allowed access (if anyone).

The administrative view of the feature includes icons that indicate what type of access the category has. That is, if all users and guests have access to the category, and if that access is not superseded by restrictions at the topic level, in the administrative view all topics in the category are marked with a globe icon.



If access to the category is restricted, a red “do not enter” icon is displayed over the globe.



Note that when you allow a role to **Access** a category, they do not necessarily have permission to submit posts. Permission to submit posts is managed separately, by clicking the wrench icon and making choices on the **Permissions** tab.

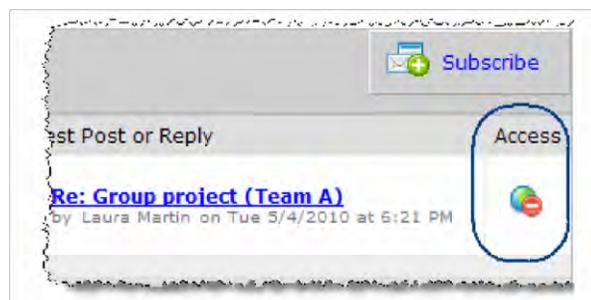
Further, note that regardless of how access is restricted, the category and its contents are always viewable by any role that has permission to administer the feature instance. (For details on selecting who can administer the feature, see [“Working with the permissions tab” on page 492.](#))

Creating a category

Use this procedure to create a category. If you need help with any particular setting, see [“Attributes of a category” on page 467.](#)

To create a category:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.



3. Click **Add a Category**.
The system displays the **Adding a Category** screen.
4. In the **Category Name** field, enter a name for the category.
5. If appropriate, enter a description in the **Category Description** field.
6. As appropriate, adjust the settings for any of the following:
 - Topic Ordering Method
 - Pruning
 - Access
7. Click **Save Category**.

Modifying a category

Use this procedure to change any of the following:

- Category name
- Category description
- Topic ordering method
- Pruning
- Access

To modify a category:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the category you want to modify and click the **Edit Category** button.



The system displays the **Edit Category** screen.

4. Adjust any of the fields as appropriate. If you need help understanding any of these fields, see [“Attributes of a category”](#) on page 467.
5. Click Save Category.

Manually arranging categories

Within any instance of the Forums feature, you can manually arrange categories.

To manually move a category:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the category you want to move. Note that, on its right-hand border, the category has an icon made up of an upward and a downward arrow.



4. Click this icon. Note that the category becomes translucent when you do this. Drag the category to the desired location and release the mouse.

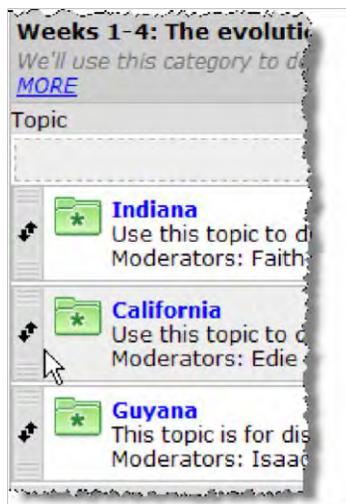
The system automatically saves your change.

Manually arranging topics

If the category has been set up so that you arrange topics manually (this is described in [“Topic ordering method” on page 467](#)), then you can manually drag and arrange topics within categories.

To manually move a topic:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the category whose topics you want to rearrange. Note that each topic, on its left-hand borders, has an icon made up of an upward and a downward arrow.



4. Locate the topic you want to move and click this corresponding icon. Note that the topic becomes translucent when you do this. Drag the topic to the desired location and release the mouse.

The system automatically saves the change.



If you try to move a topic, but the topic won't stay in its desired location—it just snaps back to its original location—this is probably because the category is not set up for manual ordering. Double-check that the category is configured for manual ordering and try again.

Deleting a category

Note that when you delete a category, you also delete all of its topics, posts, and replies.

If you want to take a less drastic action, you simply restrict access to the category (as described in [“Modifying a category” on page 470](#)). You can also choose to delete a single topic or post, or to hide a post.

To delete a category:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the category that you want to delete and click the corresponding **Delete Category** button.



The system displays a dialog asking if you're sure you want to delete the category.

4. Click **OK**.

Working with topics

At least one topic must be defined before discussion can commence.

By default, the Forums feature instance in your course context contains a topic called “Open Discussion” (within the “General” category). You can delete or rename this topic as appropriate, as well as create new topics.

After you add an instance of the Forums feature to a page, by default it contains a topic called “Open Discussion” (within the “General” category). You can delete or rename this topic as appropriate, as well as create new topics.

To complete the steps described in this section, the user should have the **Can Administer Feature** permission.

Attributes of a topic

When you create or modify a topic, you can make any of the following choices.

Topic Name

The name of the topic is essentially its label in the feature instance, so you should pick a name that is meaningful.

The name shows up in the Forum Home.



| Topic | Users | Approval | Unread | Pos |
|--|-------|----------|--------|-----|
| Indiana Use this topic to discuss the church's founding and the period when it was ... Moderators: Isabelle Thomas | 8 | 0 | 5 | |
| California Use this topic to discuss the period when Peoples Temple was based in ... Moderators: Steve He | 8 | 1 | 11 | |
| Guyana This topic is for discussion of all aspects of the mission in Guyana except ... | 5 | 0 | 7 | |

The name also shows up when the user clicks through to maximize the topic.

Topic Description

The topic description is an optional field. If you enter a topic description, it will be displayed under the topic name in the Forum Home. If the description is more than a sentence or so, the description is truncated.

When the topic is maximized, the full description shows up if your site uses JICS 7.5.3 or later. Otherwise, a long description might be truncated (with a link that lets the user expand it).

Activation

When a topic is **active**, users can read it and add posts to it. By default, topics are active immediately and indefinitely. However, you can use the activation field to make the topic active for a specific time period only. For example, you can choose to have the topic launch at a specific time in the future. You can also choose for the topic to become inactive after a certain date.

When the “activation” period ends, or before it begins, you can configure the system to take either of the following actions:

- Hide the topic and its posts (and replies).
- Make the topic and its posts (and replies) read only.

When the activation period ends, you have the additional option of deleting the topic and all its content.

For details on how a post behaves when it has been marked read-only or hidden, see [“About visible, read-only, and hidden items”](#) on page 466.

When you change the activation, first you set the dates for when the topic to be active. When you set a specific start time or end time, the system updates the screen to include a dropdown list that lets you specify what happens to the topic when it becomes inactive.

The screenshot shows a configuration window for a forum topic. On the left, under 'Start:', there are three radio buttons: 'Display now' (selected), 'Display later manually', and 'Display on:'. Below 'Display on:' is a date field set to '5/21/2010', a calendar icon, and time dropdowns for '11', ': 10', and 'AM'. On the right, under 'End:', there are three radio buttons: 'No end date', 'End now', and 'End on:' (selected). Below 'End on:' is a date field set to '9/21/2010', a calendar icon, and time dropdowns for '12', ': 00', and 'PM'. Below the end time is a dropdown menu labeled 'after:' with three options: 'Read Only', 'Hidden' (highlighted), and 'Delete'.

If you choose **Display later manually**, the system adds a dropdown lists that lets you choose whether the item will be read only or hidden until you manually activate it.

Similarly, if you choose **End now**, the system adds a dropdown lists that let you choose whether the item will be read only or hidden.

Note that as an alternative, you can have the system automatically remove the topic’s older posts.

To do this, you adjust the pruning setting for the category, as described in [“Pruning”](#) on page 468.

New Content

The **New Content** area displays only if your JICS version is 7.5.3 or later.

This choice lets you restrict the type of activity that can happen in this topic. Your choices are:

- Posts only
- Posts and replies
- Replies only

At the time of this writing, the feature doesn’t include messaging explaining which configuration it uses—so if you think users might be confused about why they cannot post or reply, you might want to communicate that to them in the topic description or by some other means.

Note that users who have the **Can Administer Feature** permission are exempted from these restrictions.

If you have JICS 7.5.2 or earlier, posts and replies are always allowed in any topic (assuming the user has permission to do both things).

Access

The **Access** setting for a topic determines whether or not users can display the topic and its posts. By default, topics are accessible to all users and guests. To restrict access, you click the **Restricted access** radio button, then specify who should be allowed access.

Note that the category access might be more restrictive than the topic access. If so, it won't matter how you configure the topic access—the category settings will apply. (For details see [“Access” on page 468.](#))

In the administrative view, all unrestricted topics in the category are marked with a globe icon. If access to the category is restricted, a red “do not enter” icon is displayed over the globe.

| | Users | Posts | Replies | Access |
|--|-------|-------|---------|--------|
| | 8 | 4 | 11 | |
| | 8 | 2 | 9 | |

Note that the **Access** setting does not have any effect on whether or not users can submit posts. The ability to submit posts is managed separately, by clicking the gear icon and making choices on the **Permissions** screen.

Further, note that regardless of how access is restricted, the category and its contents are always viewable by any role that has permission to administer the feature instance. (For details on selecting who can administer the feature, see [“Working with the permissions tab” on page 492.](#))

Restrictions

The **Restrictions** area displays only if your JICS version is 7.5.3 or later. Otherwise, you will see an area labeled **Private Topic** (described in [“Private Topic.”](#))

The **Restrictions** area lets you control what individual users can see when they view the topic. You must choose one of the following three choices:

- No restrictions – All users can see all topic content
- Post-first – Each users can view the topic's content only after submitted a post and having it published (note that this might require moderator approval).
- Private – Each user can see only his or her own posts, and any responses submitted by feature administrators. With this setup, the topic functions like an e-mail system between an individual user and the administrators of the feature instance. Note that if you select this checkbox, the screen updates to hide the moderation options, since moderation is not relevant to private topics.

Regardless of which of option you select, you also have an option labeled **Don't allow changes**—If you select this option, users will not be allowed to edit or delete their own posts within this topic, even if they have the **Can Edit and Delete Own Posts** permission.

Note that moderator users who have the **Can Administer Feature** permission are exempted from these restrictions.

Private Topic

The **Private Topic** heading displays only if your JICS version is 7.5.2 or earlier. Otherwise you will see an area labeled **Restrictions** (described in “[Restrictions.](#)”)

The **Private Topic** area lets you designate a topic as being solely for private communication between individual users and administrative privileges. When you select this option, users who display the topic see only their own posts and any responses from administrators. With this setup, the topic functions like an e-mail system between an individual user and the administrators of the feature instance.

To make a topic private, you select the **Private Topic** checkbox. Note that if you select this checkbox, the screen updates to hide the moderation options, since moderation is not relevant to private topics.



Moderation

If appropriate, you can appoint moderators and enable one of the following types of moderation:

- You can give the moderator (or group of moderators) permission to edit and delete users' posts.
- You can require that all posts be approved by a moderator before they are displayed. With this level, the moderator can still edit or delete users' posts.

If you choose to require that all posts be approved before being displayed, note the following:

- If a post is approved and the author later edits the post, the post is removed from the feature until it is approved once again.
- Members of the Administrators role and people with the **Can Administer Feature** permission are allowed to approve posts even if not specifically named as moderators.
- For those people who have the ability to approve posts, their own posts automatically display as soon as they click **Submit** (that is, no approval is required).

By default, topics do not use moderation.

If you select one of the two levels of moderation, the system expands the screen to include a form that lets you choose moderators. If you are setting up a Forums feature instance within your course context, note that you are automatically considered a moderator.

Moderation:

Do not use moderation.
 Posts and replies in this Topic DO NOT require moderator approval before displaying but the s
 Posts and replies in this Topic must be approved by a moderator before displaying.

[Add Individual Users](#)

All Users

| | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators | <input type="checkbox"/> Constituents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions Administrators | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions Counselors | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aid Administrators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions Officers | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advancement Officers | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Administrators |

Creating a topic

Use this procedure to create a topic. If you need help with any particular setting, see “Attributes of a topic” on page 473.

To create a topic:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the category to which you want to add a topic. In that area, click **Add a Topic**.

The screenshot shows the 'Add a Category' screen. At the top, there is a button labeled 'Add a Category'. Below it, the category name 'Weeks 1 through 4' is displayed, along with 'Edit Category' and a trash icon. A table lists existing topics with columns for 'Topic', 'Users', and 'Posts'. A mouse cursor is pointing to the 'Add a Topic' button in the table header.

| Topic | Users | Posts |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Add a Topic | | |
| The Classical World | 0 | 0 |
| Ancient Greece and Rome | 1 | 1 |
| Late Antiquity | 0 | 0 |
| Totals: | 1 | 1 |

The system displays the **Adding a Topic** screen.

4. In the **Topic Name** field, enter a name for the category.
5. If appropriate, enter a description in the **Topic Description** field.
6. As appropriate, adjust settings for any of the following:
 - Access
 - Private Topic
 - Moderation

7. Click **Save** or **Save Topic**. (The exact label will vary depending on your version of JICS.)

Modifying a topic

Use this procedure to change any of the following:

- Topic Name
- Topic Description
- Activation
- Access
- Private Topic
- Moderation

To modify a topic:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the topic you want to modify and click corresponding pencil icon.



The system displays the **Edit Topic** screen.

4. Adjust any of the fields as appropriate. If you need help understanding any of the fields, see [“Attributes of a category” on page 467](#).
5. Click **Save** or **Save Topic**. (The exact label will vary depending on your version of JICS.)

Deleting a topic

Note that when you delete a topic, you also delete all of its posts and replies.

If you want to take a less drastic action, you can simply restrict access to the topic (as described in [“Access” on page 468](#)). You can also choose to delete a single post, or to hide a post.

To delete a topic:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.
3. Locate the topic that you want to delete and click the corresponding trash-barrel icon.



The system displays a dialog asking if you're sure you want to delete the topic.

4. Click **OK**.

Working with posts

In a feature instance where you have administrative privileges—such as Forums feature instance in your course context—you can take any of the following actions with posts:

A member of the Administrators role, or anyone with the **Can Administer Feature** permission, can take any of the following actions with posts:

- Edit any post or reply.
- Delete any post or reply.
- Move a post, and all of its replies, to another topic within the feature instance.
- Make a post, and all of its replies, read only or hidden.

Note that a moderator can also edit and delete posts and replies, but cannot take the other actions mentioned.

Note that users with the **Can Administer Feature** permission can do any of the above as well. A moderator also has the ability to edit and delete posts and replies.

If you are looking for details on adding a private comment to a post or a reply, see [“Working with private comments” on page 488](#).

For details on approving a post, see [“Working with an approval queue” on page 485](#).

Editing a user's post or reply

If a forum participant has submitted a post that you need modify for any reason, use the steps below. For any post or reply, you can modify the items listed under **“Content,”** below. If you are working with an original post (not a reply) and you have the Can Administer Feature permission, you can also edit the items listed under **“Options.”**

Content

The primary category of changes are considered “content” changes. Anyone with permission to edit the post or reply can work with content, which means doing any of the following:

- Changing the item's subject line.
- Changing the text of the post or reply.
- Working with images that have been uploaded and upload additional images.
- Working with files that have been attached and upload additional files.
- Making the post anonymous (if anonymous posting is enabled, and if the post is not already

anonymous). Once a post is made anonymous, that change cannot be reversed except by the author.

- Changing whether or not the user's photo is displayed. This change is possible only if the post is not anonymous.

Options

When you are editing an original post (not a reply), the system displays an **Options** tab, which allows you to do any of the following:

If the person editing the post has administrative privileges (as opposed to just being an author or a moderator), the system displays an **Options** tab, which allows the user to make any of the following changes:

- Set the post to display later, and make it either read only or hidden until then. The default setting is that posts are displayed immediately.
- Set an end date for the post. After the post's end date, you can make it read-only or hidden, or you can have the system delete it. The default setting is that posts are displayed indefinitely.
- Specify that an individual who wants to reply to the post can do either of the following:
 - Reply as many times as they like.
 - Reply only once. In this case, if the user has replied and then displays the post again, the system hides the **Reply** button, both on the original post and on all the replies, unless the user has the **Can Administer Feature** permission.

The default setting is that users can reply as many times as they like.

- Specify that after a user submits a reply, the reply is displayed:
 - Immediately (this is the default).
 - Only after each user has responded.
 - After a specified time.

The **Options** tab also contains a link that lets you edit the topic, which might be necessary if you want to change the moderation settings for the topic.

For details on how a post behaves when has been marked read only or hidden, see [“About visible, read-only, and hidden items” on page 466](#).

Making your edits

Use this procedure to edit a post or reply. For help understanding the available choices, see [“Content”](#) and [“Options”](#) on page 479.

To edit a user's post or reply:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Locate the post or reply you want to edit.

3. Click the **Edit** icon.



The system makes the post modifiable.

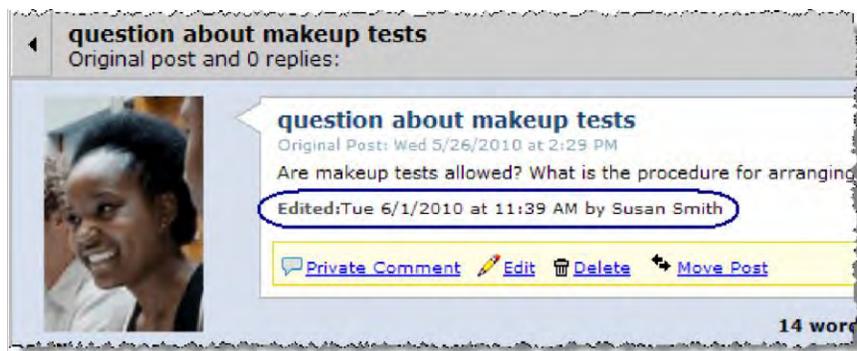
If this is an original post, and if you have the **Can Administer Feature** permission, the system displays two tabs at the top of the post, with the **Content** tab displayed by default.



In this case, do one of the following:

- If the change you want to make is on the **Content** tab, go ahead and make your change.
 - Click the **Options** tab to display it. Make any changes that are appropriate.
4. When you have made all of the changes you want to make, click **Preview** to preview the post (if desired).
 5. Click **Submit** to save your changes.

The system saves your changes and adds a note stating that you edited the item.



Deleting a post or reply

If a user has published a post or reply that you want to delete, use this procedure.

Note that the effect of deleting a message varies depending on your version of JICS:

- If your JICS version is 7.5.2 or earlier, when you delete a post or reply, you also delete all of its replies.
- If your JICS version is 7.5.3 or later, when you delete a post or reply, you delete only that message—any replies to the item you’re deleting will remain intact and viewable in the feature instance.

To delete a post or reply:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Locate the post or reply you want to delete.
3. Click the **Delete** icon.



The system displays a dialog asking if you are sure you want to delete the post.

4. Click **OK**.

The system removes the post.



Another way to delete a post and all of its replies is to change the display setting of the original post, as described in [“Adjusting a post’s display setting”](#) on page 483.

Moving a post and its replies

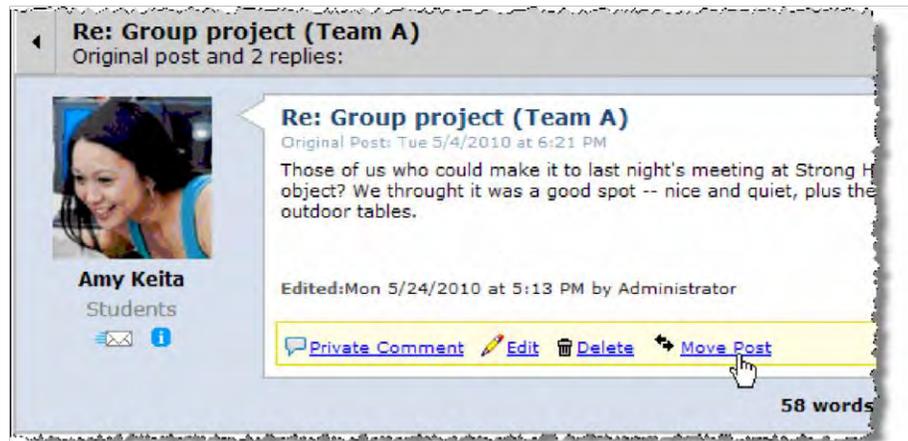
If appropriate, you can move a post and its replies to a different category or topic within the same feature instance.

To move a post and its replies:

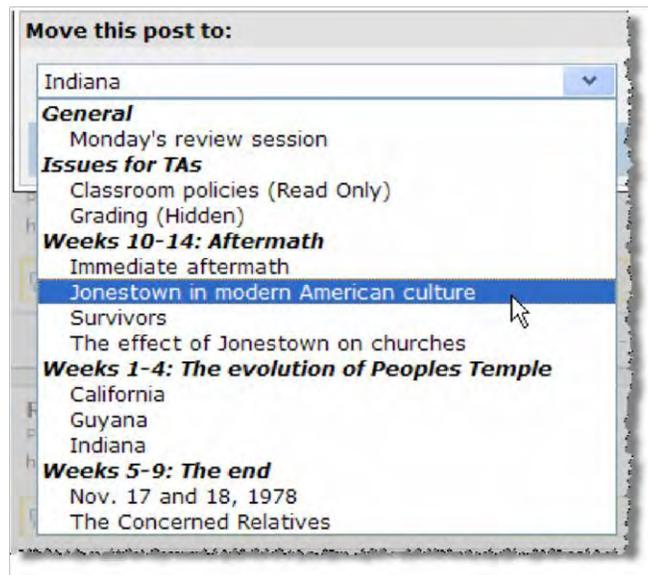
1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the

appropriate feature instance.

2. Display the post that you want to move.
3. Click the **Move Post** icon. If you don't see a Move Post icon, then you are probably looking at a reply. (You can perform the move action only on an original post. All replies to the post will also be moved.)



The system displays a dialog box that lets you select a destination. In this list, categories are listed alphabetically. Topics that are read-only or hidden are flagged as such.



4. Make a selection and then click **OK**.

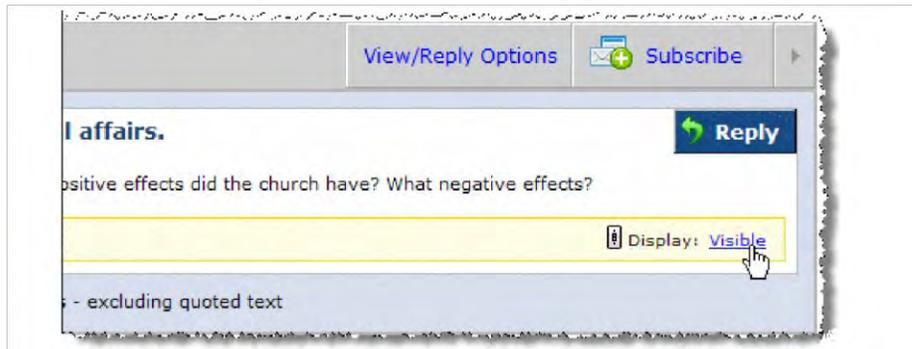
The system moves the post and its replies.

Adjusting a post's display setting

A post's display status determines whether an item is visible, read only, or hidden. (For details on how a post behaves when has been marked read only or hidden, see ["About visible, read-only, and hidden items"](#) on page 466.)

By default, all posts are visible. The post's display setting is displayed at the lower right of the post's

text.



Note, however, that even if the status says **Visible**, if the *topic* has been marked as read-only or hidden, then the post's display status is superseded by the more-restrictive topic setting. So if you think that a post is supposed to be visible and users report that they cannot see it, you may want to check the topic settings.



Another way of changing a post's display status is to open the post for editing and use the Options tab. With this method, you can also choose an end date for the post. For details, see "Editing a user's post or reply" on page 479.

To change a post's display setting:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Display the post that you want to work with.

Click the **Visible** link, which is at the bottom right of the post. If this link is not displayed, you are probably looking at a reply, not an original post. You can perform this action only on an original post, though the action will also affect all replies to the post.

When you click the **Visible** link, the system displays a dialog box that lets you select an action.



3. Make a selection and click **OK**.

The system takes the appropriate action.

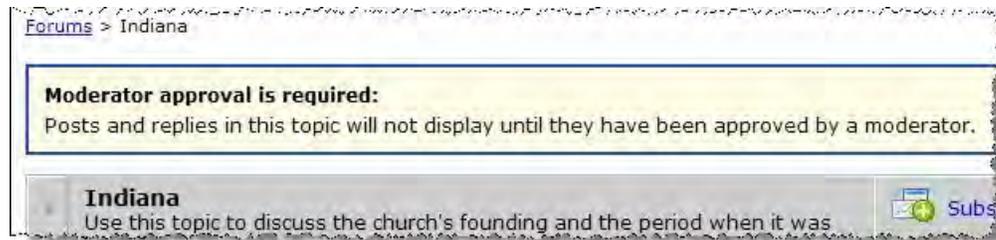
Working with an approval queue

This section explains how to work with posts and replies in a topic where approval is required.

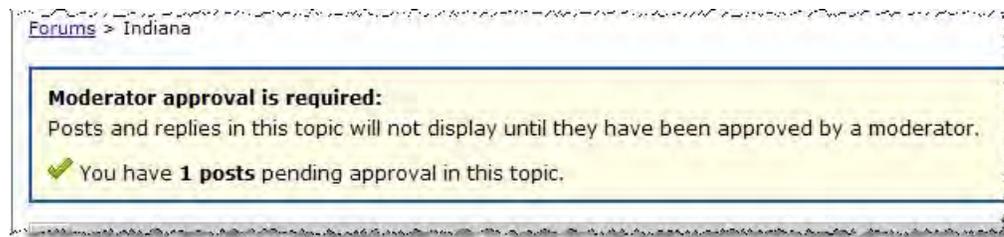
If you need help setting up a topic so that approval *is* required, see [“Moderation” on page 476](#).

Indicators for end users

When a user displays a topic where approval is required, a dialog stating as much is displayed at the top of the screen.



If the user submits a post or reply, the system updates this dialog to include the number of posts the logged-in user currently has pending approval.



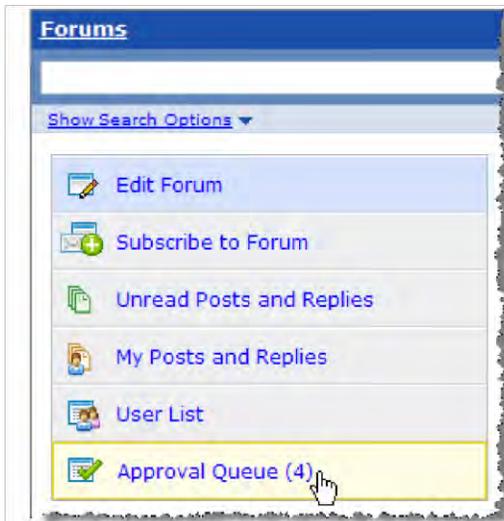
Indicators for moderators and administrators

When you display an instance of the Forums feature in which there are posts awaiting approval, you will see several indicators if there are posts awaiting approval. These include the following:

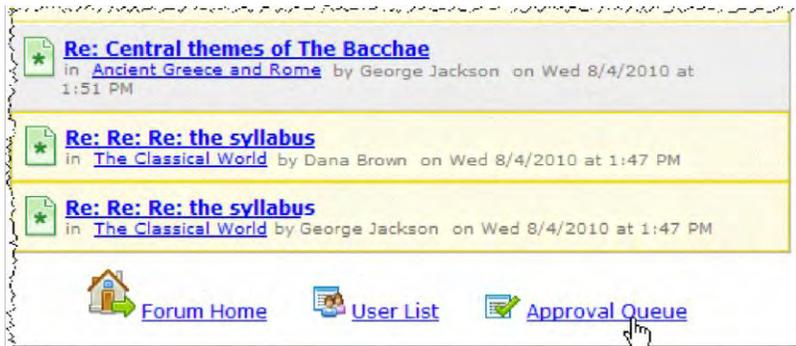
When they open the Forums feature, administrators and moderators will see several indicators if there are posts awaiting approval. These include the following:

- Yellow highlighting on any post that is awaiting approval.
- In the **Approval** column in any category summary, a tally of the items awaiting approval in each topic.
- An “approval queue” button. Clicking this button displays a list of all items that are awaiting approval.

The approval queue is listed in the Forum Home, right below the User List. Note that the queue is displayed only if there are posts and replies awaiting approval.



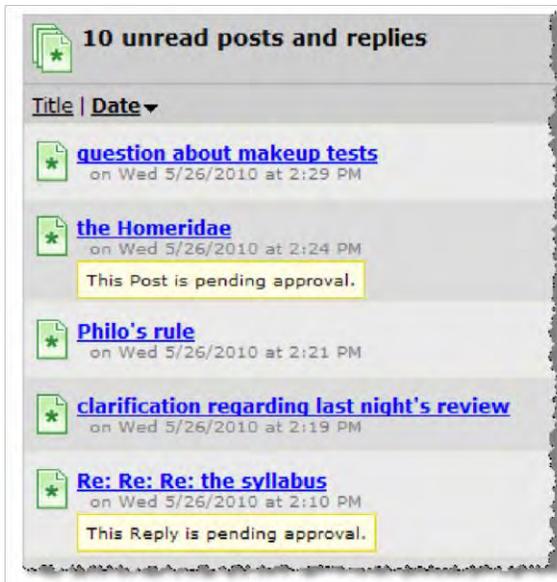
Similarly, if any of the items in need of approval are in the **Recent posts** list, they are highlighted in yellow.



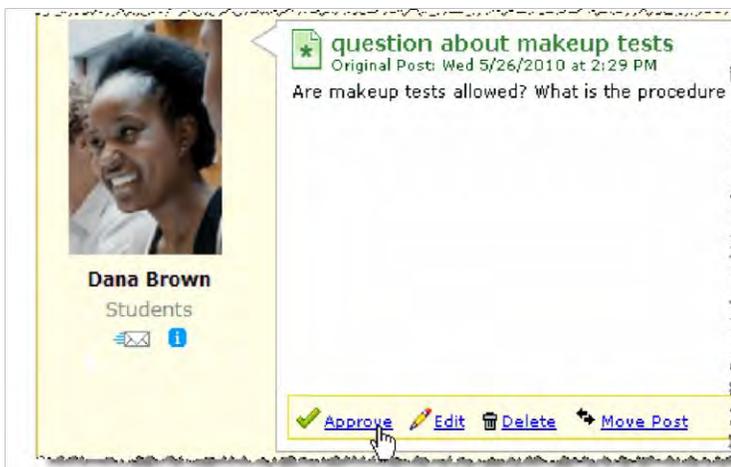
In the Forum Home, if there are items listed in the **Approval** column, these too are highlighted in yellow.

| Weeks 1 through 4 | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| Topic | Users | Approval | Unread |
| The Classical World Moderators: Isabelle Thomas | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Ancient Greece and Rome Moderators: Steve He | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Late Antiquity | 0 | - | 0 |
| Totals: | 5 | 4 | 9 |

If you display a list of posts—such as the list of unread posts or the list of all posts in a topic—items that require approval are flagged.



When you display one of these posts, the background is yellow, rather than the standard blue or white, and the system displays a link that allows you to approve the item.



Processing a post or reply that requires approval

If a topic's moderation setting requires posts to be approved before they are published, you or a designated moderator must review each post that is submitted. For each post, you do one of the following:

- Approve it.
- Edit it and post it.
- Delete it.

People allowed to take these steps include moderators and people with the Can Administer Feature permission.

To process a post or reply that requires approval:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can**

Administer Feature privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.

2. Locate the post or reply that requires approval.
3. Review the post and do one of the following:
 - Click the **Approve** icon. Doing this makes the post active in the feature.
 - Click the **Edit** link, make any necessary modifications, then click the **Submit** link. Doing this makes the post active in the feature.
 - Click the **Delete** link. Doing this discards the post.

Working with private comments

If appropriate, you can add a private comment to a post or a reply. This message will be viewable only by its author, and by other people who have the **Can Administer Feature** permission.

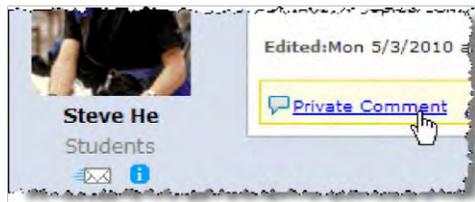
You can also edit or delete private comments that you or another administrator previously made.

Adding a private comment

To add a private comment, use the following procedure.

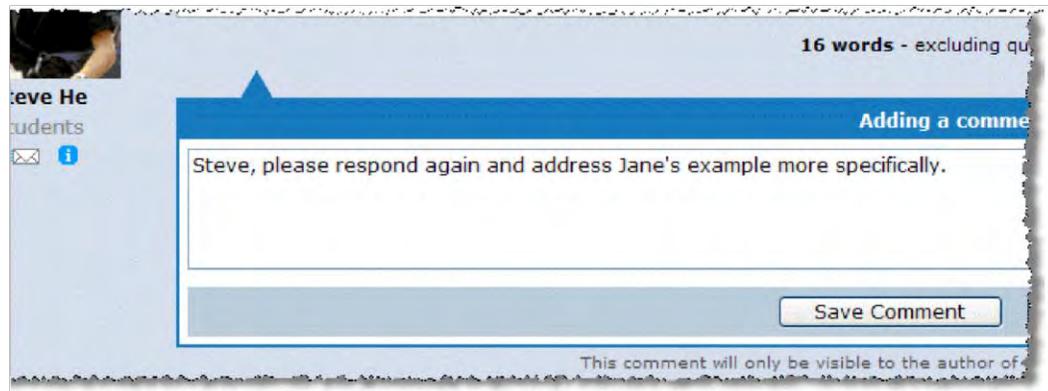
To add a private comment:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Navigate to the post or reply that you want to comment on.
3. Click the link labeled **Private Comment**.



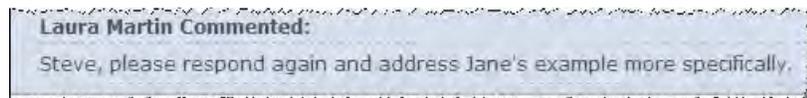
The system displays a field labeled **Adding a Comment**.

4. Enter your remarks.



5. Click **Save Comment**.

The system adds the message to the screen, for those people allowed to see it (the author and administrators). The message is displayed immediately below the post, along with your name.



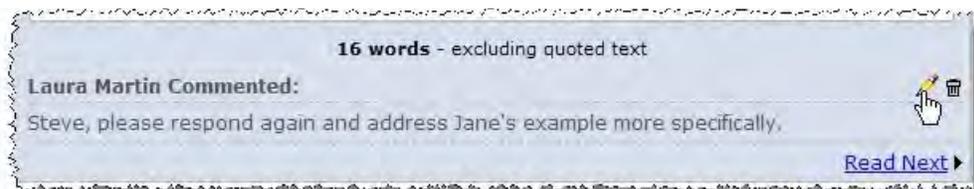
Note that if someone else with administrative privileges were to edit your comment, the attribution would change to that person's name.

Editing a private comment

If you or another administrator has added a private comment, you may edit that comment as appropriate.

To edit a private comment:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Navigate to the appropriate post or reply.
3. In the area over the comment, click the pencil icon.



The system display a field labeled **Editing Comment**.

4. Make any changes appropriate and click **Save Comment**.
5. The system saves your changes. Note that if you were not the original author of the comment, the attribution changes to reflect your name.

Deleting a private comment

If you or another administrator has added a private comment, you may edit that comment as appropriate.

To delete a private comment:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Navigate to the appropriate post or reply.
In the area over the comment, click the trash-barrel icon.
3. The system displays a dialog asking if you are sure you want to delete the comment.
4. Click **OK**.

Reviewing activity by user

Each instance of the Forums feature lets you display a list of all people who have participated in conversations in that instance, with details about their activity. If the feature instance is part of a course context, the system offers greater detail into this activity.

Any user can display this list, but the list contains more options if the user has the **Can Administer Feature** permission. These options are described in “[Navigating to the user list](#),” below.

Navigating to the user list

The **User List** names each person who has submitted a post or a reply in the feature instance. This view also show the total number of posts and replies that each person has submitted.



| Name | Posts | Replies | Overall |
|-----------------|-------|---------|---------|
| Isabelle Thomas | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sam Taylor | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Lisa Sato | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| John Meyer | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Laura Martin | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Amy Keita | 1 | 3 | 4 |

This list is available to every user, but the hyperlinked numbers are displayed only in the administrative view. Clicking one of these numbers displays the appropriate list of posts for that user. From this more-specific list, you can click through to view any of the posts or any of the parent topics. If this feature instance is located within a course context, you can also click the name of the author to display a user participation screen for that person.

7 replies by Dana Brown

| Title | Date | Author | Category | Topic |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Re: Re: Which member did you empathize with most? | on Mon 5/3/2010 at 1:12 PM | Dana Brown | Weeks 1-4: The California | |
| Re: Describe the role of Peoples Temple in municipal affairs. | on Mon 5/3/2010 at 1:08 PM | Dana Brown | Weeks 1-4: The Indiana | |
| Re: Which member did you empathize with most? | on Mon 5/3/2010 at 12:57 PM | Dana Brown | Weeks 1-4: The California | |

Displaying a user participation screen

If an instance of the Forums feature is located within a course context, the administrator/teacher can display a “user participation” screen, which offers more detail than you can get from the User List. Specifically, the user participation screen includes the following:

- A breakdown of how many posts and replies that the user submitted for each category and topic in the feature instance.
- The total number of posts that the user has viewed, both for the entire feature instance and by category and topic. Further, you can expand each topic to show a list of all that topic’s posts, with an indicator of exactly which posts the user has viewed. (If the user has viewed the post, the system displays a checkmark. If the user has not viewed the post, the system displays an X.)

| Weeks 1 through 4 | | Posts Written | Replies Written | Posts Viewed |
|---|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Classical World | | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| » the poetry of the Spartans | | 0 | 0 | X |
| » question on Philo | | 0 | 0 | ✓ |
| » more thoughts on Gilgamesh | | 0 | 0 | X |
| » Hesiod | | 0 | 0 | ✓ |
| » clarification regarding last night's review | | 0 | 0 | X |
| » Philo's rule | | 1 | 0 | ✓ |
| » the Homeridae | | 1 | 0 | X |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ancient Greece and Rome | | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Late Antiquity | | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Totals: | | 2 | 1 | 8 |

Working with the permissions tab

As described in [“Permissions overview” on page 464](#), there are several places within the Forums feature where you make choices that affect a role’s permissions. This procedure deals with how to make choices on the **Permissions** tab.

About the permissions

The **Permissions** tab lets you give a role any of the following permissions, in any instance of the Forums feature.

If your site has an additional permission listed—**Can Manage Categories and Topics**—note that we do not recommend using this permission. If you need to give a role permission to manage categories and topics, we recommend giving that person the **Can Administer Feature** permission.

Can Add Posts

Lets members of a role submit posts in any topic that they have permission to view.

Can Administer Feature

Gives members of a role full administrative rights in the feature instance. That is, this permission automatically gives the role all abilities associated with the other permission levels in this list, as well as the ability to display and modify all categories and topics in the feature instance and to complete any task described in this chapter.

Though this permission is called **Can Administer Feature**, it does not give users access to the wrench-icon menu. If you want to give a role permission to the wrench-icon menu, this can only be done by giving the role the **Can Admin** privilege for the context, which is a much bigger privilege overall (as described in [“Letting a role administer a context” on page 669](#)).

Can Edit and Delete Own Messages

Lets members of a role edit and delete their own messages. In order for this permission to be meaningful, you also have to give the role either the **Can Add Posts** permission or the **Can Reply to Posts** permission).

Can Manage Categories and Topics

Lets members of a role do both of the following:

- Create categories and topics.
- Edit or delete any category or topic that the role has permission to display.

Can Reply to Posts

Lets members of a role respond to posts, in any topic that they have permission to view.

Giving a role a permission

Use this procedure to give a role any of the permissions listed in [“About the permissions”](#) on page 492.

To give a role an instance-level permission:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.

The system displays the **Customize Feature Forums** screen, with the **Preferences** tab selected.

2. Click the **Permissions** tab.

The system displays the **Permissions** screen.

3. Locate a role whose permissions you want to manage. Select the corresponding checkbox(es).
4. Click **Save**.

Other administrative tasks

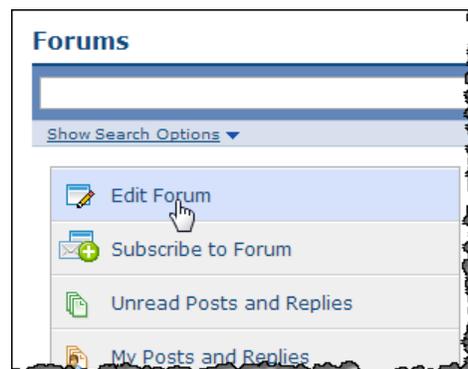
This section covers other administrative details and tasks that might be of interest.

Allowing or disallowing anonymous posts

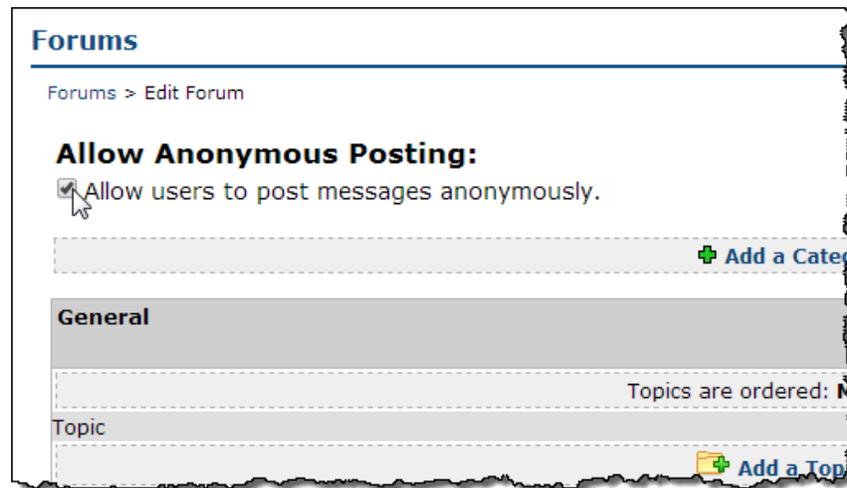
For each instance of the Forums feature, you must decide whether anonymous posts will be allowed. By default, anonymous postings are not allowed.

To allow or disallow anonymous posts:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Administer Feature** privileges in the appropriate feature instance. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.
2. Maximize the feature and click the **Edit Forum** button.



The system displays the **Edit Forum** page. At the top of the page is a field labeled **Allow Anonymous Posting**, which includes a checkbox that allows users to post messages anonymously.



3. Select or deselect the checkbox as appropriate. The system automatically saves your selection as soon as you make it.

Configuring the file upload feature

By default, the system has a 2MB maximum for attachments and images that are attached to each post or reply. However, you can change this if appropriate. This configuration choice affects all instances of the Forums feature.

Note that if you change the maximum to zero, the system removes the file upload and image attachment features from the screen where users create posts and replies.

To configure maximum file uploads:

1. Log in to the portal as a member of the Administrators role or someone with **Can Admin** privileges in the appropriate context. Navigate to the appropriate feature instance.

2. Click the **Site Manager** link.

The system displays the **Site Manager** screen, with the **Site Settings** tab selected by default.

3. Locate the **Advanced site settings** label and click the corresponding **Edit** link.

The system displays a screen with a few tabs, with the **General** tab selected by default.

4. Locate the **Forum Feature, Individual Post/Reply files and images** label. Use the corresponding text box to specify the maximum size, in megabytes, for attachments for each post.

5. Click **Save**.

Troubleshooting

This section is intended to help you diagnose configuration s.

The ‘Add a Post’ or ‘Reply’ button does not show up

If users report that the **Add a Post** or **Reply** button does not show up for a post, there may be a few reasons why:

- The user might not have permission to publish posts or replies. To check this, click the wrench icon and navigate to the **Permissions** tab. For the person to have permission to see the **Add a Post** button, that person’s role should have the **Can Add Posts** permission. For the person to have permission to see the **Reply** button, that person’s role should have the **Can Reply to Posts** permission. (For more details, see [“Troubleshooting” on page 495.](#))
- The post, or the topic that contains the post, might be read-only. To check to see whether the topic is read only, check the topic’s **Activation** setting (for help with this, see [“Modifying a topic” on page 478.](#)) To check the setup of the post itself, look at its display setting, which is viewable at the bottom right of the post’s text. (For help with this, see [“Adjusting a post’s display setting” on page 483.](#))

If the **Reply** button specifically is not showing up, there are a few additional possible reasons:

- The post might be set up so that users can respond only once. If this is the case, once the user has responded, the system will remove the **Reply** button from that user’s view. To check this, open the post for editing and display the **Options** tab. This tab contains an area labeled **This post is:**, which will reveal whether users are restricted to only one response. (For more details, see [“Editing a user’s post or reply” on page 479.](#))
- If the user is a moderator or an administrator, he or she could be looking at a post that still requires approval. (You can tell an item is awaiting approval if it has a yellow background and if an **Approval** link is displayed.) As long as an item is awaiting approval, no one can reply to it. For more details, see [“Working with an approval queue” on page 485.](#)

Users cannot display a post or reply

If users cannot display a particular post or reply, and if you think they ought to be able to, there may be a few reasons why:

- The item, or the topic that contains the item, might be hidden. To check to see whether the topic is hidden, check the topic’s **Activation** setting (for help with this, see [“Modifying a topic” on page 478.](#)) To check the post, look at the display setting, which is viewable at the bottom right of the post’s text. (For help with this, see [“Adjusting a post’s display setting” on page 483.](#))
- The item might be part of a category or a topic that the user is not authorized to display. To check this, check the **Access** settings for the category and topic. (For help with this, see [“Working with categories” on page 466](#) and [“Working with topics” on page 472.](#))
- If the item is a reply, the original post might have been set up such that replies are not displayed until after a certain date, or until after the person looking at the post has submitted his or her own reply. To check this, open the post for editing and display the **Options** tab. This tab contains an area labeled **Replies:**, which will detail when replies are available. (For

more details, see [“Editing a user’s post or reply” on page 479.](#))

- The post might be hidden. To check the post, look at the display setting, which is viewable at the bottom right of the post’s text. (For help with this, see [“Adjusting a post’s display setting” on page 483.](#))
- The topic that contains the item might be hidden. To check this, look at the topic’s **Activation** setting (for help with this, see [“Modifying a topic” on page 478.](#))
- The item could be awaiting approval from a moderator. Check to see whether the topic that contains the item requires approval. (For help with this, see [“Working with an approval queue” on page 485.](#))

Users cannot upload files and images

If users cannot upload files and images when creating posts, this might be because the feature has been deactivated for the entire portal. For details, see [“Configuring the file upload feature” on page 494.](#) To find out, speak with your portal administrator.

The Approval Queue is not displayed

If the Approval Queue is not displayed for a particular user, there could be a few reasons why:

- There are no items currently awaiting approval. If no items need to be approved, the Approval Queue is not displayed.

- Moderation is not in effect for any topics in the feature instance. To check this, open each topic for editing and review the Moderation area of the screen. (For help with this, see [“Working with topics” on page 472.](#))
- The user who cannot display the Approval Queue is not a moderator or an administrator. To check to see whether the person is moderator, open the topic for editing and review the moderation area of the screen.