Content & Learning Resources

About course content and learning resources

The type of content in a Moodle course is divided into two broad categories: *Resources* and *Activities.* This document provides an overview of Moodle *Resources,* which you use to add resource materials to your course. Moodle *Activities* include Assignments, Discussion Forums, Quizzes, etc., and are covered in other documentation on the York Moodle site.

Resources include lesson and lecture notes, slides, links to Web sites, course readings, documentation, pictures and other learning aids that students will need to meet the planned outcomes and requirements of your course.

Moodle offers an assortment of Resources. Some are directly related to creating course content while others, such as the *Book*, *Tab* and *Label* resources are typically used in course design and content organization.

Resources can be added to any of the sections on your course main page. To add a resource, editing must be turned on. You can toggle Edit on or off by using either the link in the *Administration* Block, generally located on the left side of your course page, or the **Turn editing on/off** button at the top right of the course main page.

Once in edit mode, a link will appear in each course section/topic to *Add an activity or resource.* Clicking this reveals a list of activity and resource types that can be added to the course. Select a resource type, then click **Add**.

There are several settings and options available with most Moodle resources in order to customize them to suit your needs. Though many of the settings are the same, each resource will have its own set of specific settings.

When creating resources or activities, some settings are required and are identified by this symbol *

Please review the documentation specific to each resource for more details and instructions on adding them to your course.

Adding course pages

A course page in Moodle is a web page that you can create yourself that links to one of the course sections or topics. You can easily add different kinds of content to a Page including text, links, embedded media such as YouTube videos, and images. This format is ideal for building your content with a mix of media types that you would like to display in Moodle rather than including as a separate document. An advantage of the *Page* resource is that it is accessible from any browser, including those on Mobile devices and would not require users to download any files.

One of the benefits of using Moodle it does not require any knowledge of HTML or programming. The process to create a page is very similar to creating a document using word processing software. Several common editing and formatting options are available.

Follow these steps to add a Course Page to your course.

1. Click the **Turn editing on** button at the top right of the course home page.

2. Click the **Add an activity or resource** link in the course section where you want the web page to be listed.

3. Select **Page** from the pop-up from within the *Resources* section.

4. Click **Add**. The *Adding a New Page* page appears.

5. Click **Expand all** to expand each of the sections and reveal the options.
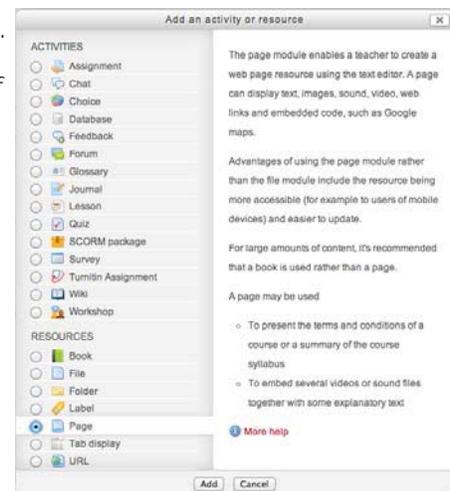
General

1. Enter page title in the **Name** field, which will appear as a link on the course main page. Students can access the page from this link.

2. You can also add an optional description in the **Description** field to briefly explain the content or subject of the Course page. The description should not include the content itself, which will be added next.

   To display the text editor toolbar to add links, insert media and format text, click **Show editing tools**.

Adding a new Page to Topic 2

General

Name

Description

Display description on
course page
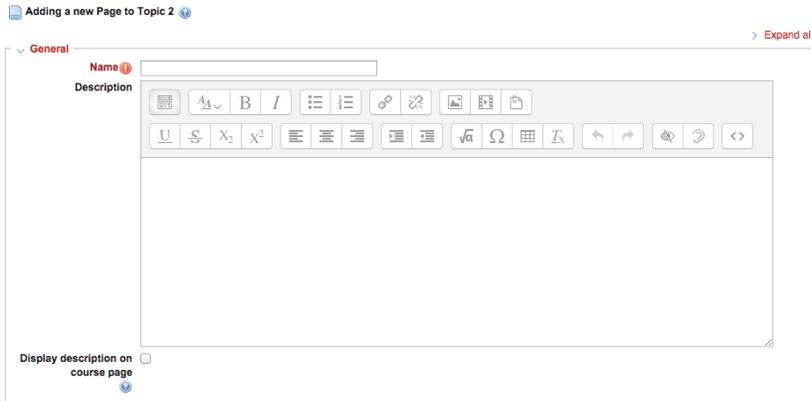
3. Click the **Display description on course page** check box to make it visible on the course home page. Make sure a ✔ is displayed in the box to activate this option. When enabled, the description will appear directly below the link to your page.

4. Enter content of the web page in **Page content** text editor.

    To display the text editor toolbar to add links, insert media and format text, click **Show editing tools**.

Content

Page content

Appearance

1. Select **Display page name** if you would like the page name to appear at the top of the page.

2. Select **Display page description** if you would like the page description to be displayed at the top of the page under the page name, if enabled.

Common Module Settings

Establishing groups in a course is a separate process from that of creating activities groups will work with. Once groups have been configured in a course, they then need to be set for use on particular course activities, such as Assignments.

1. Select the appropriate group setting from the the **Common module settings** if groups have been configured in your course. Refer to the Groups and Groupings training page for setting up groups

Restrict Access

Restrict access options allow you to set restrictions on an activity or resource by date & time, or by conditions related to previous activities.

1. Set conditions for activity completion as required. Refer to the Restricting access to resource and activity training page for setting up restriction criteria.

Activity Completion

 When enabled, completion tracking allows resources and activities to be marked as "completed" manually or when certain conditions have been met to help students manage their workloads.

1. Set conditions for activity tracking as required. Refer to the Using Completion Tracking training page for setting up tracking criteria.

Click **Save and display** to view the assignment.

Uploading and managing files

Adding Files

You may want to add files to your course and make them available to students. When doing so, please make sure the file types are compatible with the software and computer systems students are using. You may want to inform students by way of a broadcast message or announcement about the files types you will use in your course.

You can upload a file to your Moodle course by either dragging it directly to your course page or by uploading it using Add an activity or resource dialogue box.

Option 1 - Drag and Drop

1. Click **Turn editing on** at the top right of the course home page.

2. Drag the file from your local hard drive to the section on the course main page where you want the file to be listed. When a dotted box appears, drop the file within the designated area.

Option 2 - Add File Resource

Follow the steps below to add a File resource to one or more of the sections on the course home page.

1. Click **Turn editing on** at the top right of the course home page.

2. Click **Add an activity or resource** in the course section where you want the file to be listed.

3. Select **File** in the pop-up under *Resources*, and then click **Add**. The settings page will appear.
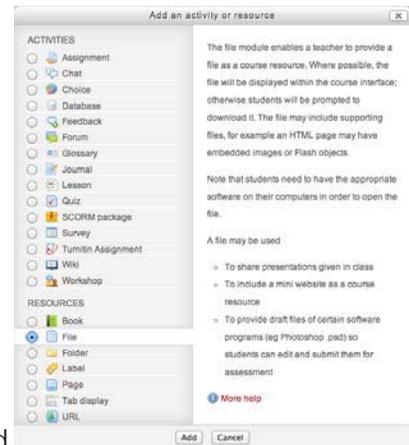
Configuring Options for a File

1. Click **Expand all** to expand each of the sections and reveal the options.

General

1. Enter the title of the file in the **Name** field. This name will appear as a link to access the file on the course main page.

2. Enter a brief optional description about the file in the **Description** edit box.

The box can be expanded by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner outwards. To make more editing options available, click the ⊞ button to expand the toolbar.

3. Click the **Display description on course page** checkbox if you would like the description to be displayed on the course page. Make sure a ✔ is displayed in the box to activate this option.

If this option is not used, the description will still appear on the Resources page that lists all course resources.

Content

The content is the file itself that you want to share. You can share a file from different locations, but the most common is to share a file from your computer.

Do not create folders here as part of the add files procedure. If you add more than one file during this procedure, <u>only one</u> of them will be displayed on the course homepage. However, you can upload several linked HTML pages and associated files, or another file type with associated files (i.e. a PowerPoint file with embedded files). Only the index page or main file will display, but other pages will be accessible when linked to one another through relative linking.

Choose the appropriate copyright status option for the file you want to share. For information on all options available to you visit copyright information page.

Folders should be created separately as outlined in Adding Folders.

To add a file, you can do one of the following:

Adding a file using Drag and Drop

1. Drag the file from your local computer and drop it in the marked area (dashed rectangle),
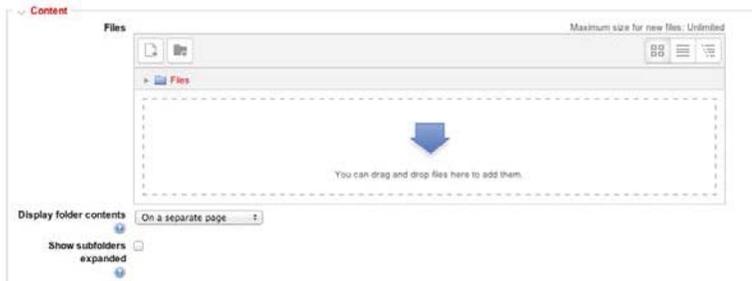
50

2. Specify the copyright status of the attached file by selecting one of the dropdown options in the popup under 'Copyright Status'.

3. Select **Submit**.

Adding a File using the File Picker

1. Click + to open the File picker, and select the location from which you would like
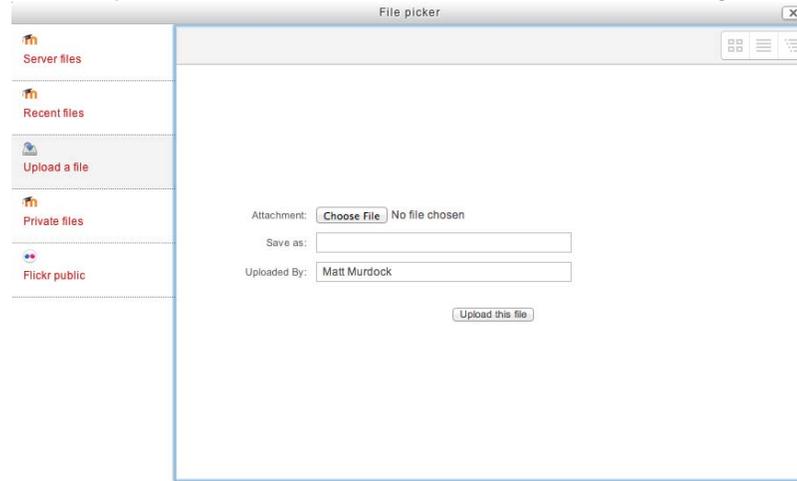
to add your file.

- o **Server files** allows you to add a copy of a file from another course.
  Note that your user account must be set as Teacher in the other course or have appropriate permissions to access server files.

- o **Recent files** allows you to select a file from the last 50 files you uploaded to Moodle from any course you are attached to.

- o Upload a file allows you to upload a file from hard drives on your local computer.

- o **Private files** allows you to upload a file you previously uploaded to your private files area within Moodle.

2. If you have selected Upload a file, click **Browse** to navigate to the file on your computer.

3. Enter the file name in the Save as box.

4. Specify the copyright status of the attached file by selecting one of the dropdown options in the popup under 'Copyright Status'.

5. Click **Upload this file** to confirm and add the file to the course homepage.

Appearance

1. Select the appropriate option from the **Display** drop-down list to set how the file is displayed to students.

- **Automatic**: Moodle will determine the best display based on the file type.

- **Embed:** The file will be embedded in the resource's page with the *Navigation* and *Administration* block.

- **New window**: The file display in a new full browser window with menus and an address bar.

- **Force download**: The file is downloaded to the students' hard drives. Depending on individual browser settings, students may be prompted for a location to save the file.

- **Open**: The file will occupy the entire browser window. No browser menu, heading, footer or description will display.
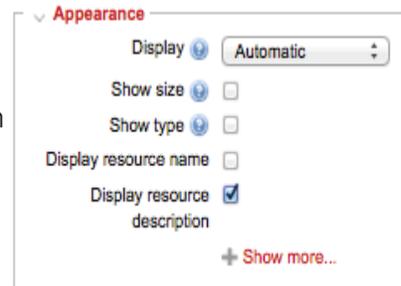
Note that some file types, such as Word documents, cannot be embedded or displayed in a browser window. For these file types, download is forced regardless of the **Display** type selected. PDF, image and audio files can generally be embedded or displayed in a browser window.

Common Module Settings

1. Select **Hide** from the **Visible** drop-downlist if you want to hide the page from students. This option allows instructors to control when a resource is available to students.

2. Select the appropriate group settings if groups have been configured in your course.

Establishing groups in a course is a separate process from that of creating activities groups will work with. Refer to the Groups and Groupings training page for setting up groups.

Restrict Access

Restrict access options allow you to set restrictions on an activity or resource by date & time, or by conditions related to previous activities.

1. Set conditions for activity completion as required. Refer to the Restricting access to resource and activity training page for setting up restriction criteria.

Click **Save and display** to view the assignment.

Adding Folders

When you need to make several files available to students in your course, a folder can streamline the process. A folder can act as a container and placed in one or more sections of the course main page. Students can then access the folder and download files from it. Depending on your needs and course design, a folder could be more effective than using several individual file links.

You can upload a folder to your Moodle course by either dragging it directly to your course page or by uploading it using Add an activity or resource dialogue box.

Option 1 - Drag and Drop a Zipped Folder

1. Create a compressed folder on your computer of the files you would like to upload to your course page.

2. Click **Turn editing on** at the top right of the course home page.

3. Drag the compressed folder to the section where you want the folder to be listed.

4. Select the appropriate option and select **Submit**.

5. A pop-up window will appear.
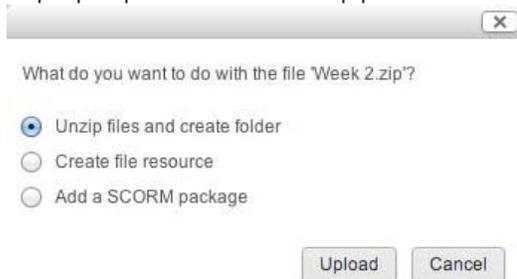
6. Select **Unzip files and create folder** radio, and click **Upload** to finish unzipping the file. The folder appears as a link on the course home page.

Option 2 - Add Folder Resource

1. Click **Turn editing on** at the top right of the course home page.

2. Click **Add an activity or resource** in the course section where you want the folder to be listed.

3. Select **Folder** in the pop-up under *Resources*, and then click **Add**. The settings page appears.

Configuring Options for a Folder

1. Click **Expand all** to expand each of the sections and reveal the options.
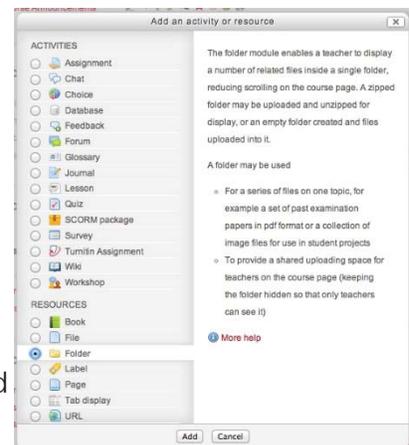
General

1. Enter the title of the folder in the **Name** field. This name will appear as a link to access the Folder on the course main page.

2. Enter a brief optional description about the file in the **Description** edit box.

The box can be expanded by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner outwards. To make more editing options available, click the ▦ button to expand the toolbar.

3. Click the **Display description on course page** checkbox if you would like the description to be display on the course main page. Make sure a ✓ is displayed in the box to activate this option.

Note that if this option is not used, the description will still appear on the Resources page that lists all course resources.

Content

1. To add files to the folder, you can:

   o Drag multiple files from your local computer and drop them in the designated area, a dashed rectangle


or

   o Click + to open the Moodle *File picker* and select the location of the file.

2. Click on the appropriate option. Select **Submit**.

3. Select the preferred setting from the Display folder contents drop-down list.

   o **On a separate page**: Students will click the folder title to be taken to a separate page where the contents of the folder can be accessed.

o **Inline on a course page**: The folder contents will be displayed in the section of the course main page. Students will be able to access all the files directly from this page without clicking off the course page. A resource page will not be created.
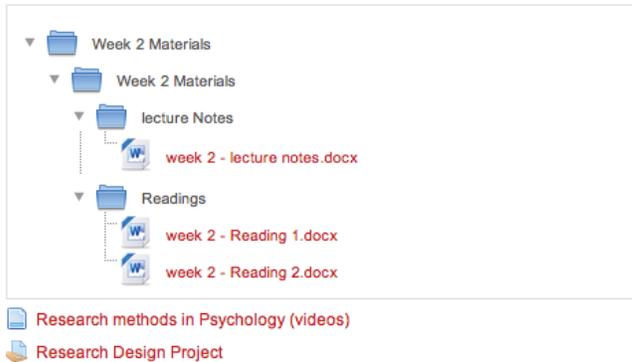
4. Select the **Show sub-folders expanded** check box if you want the contents of the folder to be expanded by default. Otherwise, initially the folder will display collapsed.

Common Module Settings

1. Select **Hide** from the **Visible** drop-downlist if you want to hide the Folder from students. This option allows instructors to control when a resource is available to students.

2. Select the appropriate group settings if groups have been configured in your course. Refer to the Groups and Groupings training page for setting up groups.

Restrict Access

Restrict access options allow you to set restrictions on an activity or resource by date & time, or by conditions related to previous activities.

1. Set conditions for activity completion as required. Refer to the Restricting Access to Resource and Activity training page for setting up restriction criteria.

2. Click **Save and display** to view the folder.

Discussion Forums: An Overview

What is It?

Moodle forums also referred to as discussions, offer instructors and students an opportunity to collaborate, discuss, challenge and otherwise engage in meaningful and thoughtful discourse related to course topics or activities. Forum topics are typically created or set by instructors however, depending on the Forum type, students can also add discussion topics.

Each Forum can contain several discussion threads—a "thread" begins with a topic and includes a series of related replies typically listed chronologically along with the contributor's name (and picture if set in their profile). New and revised Forum posts can optionally generate e-mail notices to subscribed participants.

Why is it Significant?

To be meaningful and successful learning activities, Forums should be moderated and managed effectively to keep the discussion relevant to the topic and on track. This can be an instructor or teaching assistant responsibility or delegated to a student. Note that course instructors always retain control and management of all Forums in the course. If moderated properly, a discussion forum can be an effective tool to enrich a student's learning experience.

Depending on the goal of the Forum and at the instructor's discretion, students can be allowed to grade each other's forum postings acting as a type of peer evaluation. Other useful features include display format/layout options and e-mail notification of new and revised posts. Forums can also be set to support student group work.

Implication for Higher Education

Getting a discussion started is often the hardest part of using Forums. Open-ended questions can act as icebreakers in non-formal discussions while more thought-provoking analytical statements might serve to engage students and elicit the quality responses desired. It is also very helpful when instructors become actively involved in forum discussions to demonstrate by example that they value student contributions and participation.

To encourage student participation, use forums to help students achieve course expectations. For example, as part of a project you might create a forum where students or student groups collaborate on the project. Students are more likely to participate in an on-line discussion forum if they see that it directly supports their learning.

Moodle Forum Features

- Subscribing and unsubscribing, forced subscription is also supported.

- Setting open and close dates to control access to Forums.

- Posts/replies can be graded and included in the formal student assessment process.
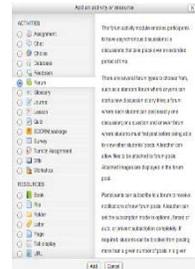
Using Discussion Forums

You can create any number of Forums that can be used for multiple purposes. When using multiple forums configured with the same settings, consider creating a single Forum and then using the duplicate feature.

Adding and Configuring a Discussion Forum

Follow these steps to add a Forum to your course.

1. Click **Turn editing on** at the top right of the course homepage or from the *Administration* block.

2. Click the **Add an activity** drop-down menu in the course section where you want the Forum to be listed.

3. Click **Forum in** the pop-up under *Activities,* and then click **Add**. The *Adding a new Forum* page appears.

4. Click **Expand all** to expand each of the sections and reveal the options on the *Adding a new Forum* page.

General

1. Enter the assignment title in the **Forum name** field. This name will appear as a link to access the Forum on the course main page.

2. Enter a brief description about the Forum in the **Description** text box.

The box can be expanded by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner outwards. To make more editing options available, click the ▦ button to expand the toolbar.

3. Place a checkmark in the **Display description on course page** checkbox to make it visible on the course home page. The description will display directly below the activity link and on the Course Main page.

4. Choose the **Forum type** from the list of drop-down menu items.

   o **A single simple discussion**: A single discussion topic, which everyone can reply to. This type may be a good choice for general or casual, non-graded Forums.

   o Each person posts one discussion: In this type, a student can post only one new discussion topic however replies can be ongoing.

   o **Q and A forum:** Students must post a reply to the Forum topic before they are able to participate further and see posts from other students.

   o **Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format:** An open Forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, and in which discussion topics are displayed on one page and include "Discuss this topic" links.

   o **Standard forum for general use**: An open Forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, however unlike the 'Standard forum display in blog-like format', only the Forum name is displayed along with a list of participants who have replied to it.

Attachments and Word Count

1. Select the appropriate file size limit from the **Maximum attachment size** drop-down list.

2. Select the **Maximum number of attachments** for each post. If you do not want to allow attachments in the forum, select "0".

3. Select yes from the **Display word count** dropdown if you would like to see the word count totals at the bottom of each post.

Subscription and Tracking

1. Select the Forum subscription behaviour from the **Subscription mode** drop-down list.

   o **Optional subscription:** Users can choose whether or not to subscribe.

   o **Forced subscription:** Everyone in the course is subscribed to the forum and cannot unsubscribed from it. Caution is recommended with this option since it could bombard students with digest email for discussions they are not involved in.

   o **Auto-subscription:** Everyone is subscribed initially but can choose to unsubscribe at any time.

   o **Subscription disabled**: Does not allow subscription.

2. Select the appropriate option from the **Read tracking** drop-down list. This option allows you to control whether unread posts should be automatically highlighted, or whether students will be able to control this setting themselves.

   o Optional: Participants can choose whether to turn Forum post tracking on or off.

   o Off: Tracking is always off for the Forum.

RSS

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a Web-based technology that automates information distribution. Forums can be RSS enabled so that students are automatically notified of new topics or posts without needing to login to the course to check. An RSS reader plugin to the browser is required.

1. Select the appropriate option from the **RSS feed for this activity** drop-down list. The options include **Discussions** (with their initial post) or all new **Posts** made in the Forum.

2. Select the **Number of RSS recent articles** to include in notifications if you have enabled

Post Threshold for Blocking

You can enforce a maximum post/reply limit for each course participant by setting how many posts a participant can make over a specific number of days. Enabling this option is useful when you want to ensure that a student does not dominate the discussion.

1. Select the number of days a student will have to make a certain number of posts to a Forum from the **Time period for blocking** drop-down if you would like to enable this feature.

2. Enter the maximum number of times a student can post for the given time in the **Post threshold for blocking**.

3. Enter the number of posts a student must reach in order to be warned that they are approaching for limit for the given time period in in the **Post threshold for warning**.

Ratings

The **Ratings** section provides options to grade Forum replies. Typically instructors and teaching assistants can grade; however, permissions can be set to allow students to grade replies as well.

1. Use the **Aggregate type** drop-down and **Scale** to set the grading criteria. Grading can be restricted to only those replies made during a prescribed time frame. This can be useful if you would like the discussion to continue on freely during the course.

   o   Average of ratings – calculates the average of all grades assigned to each posting.

   o   Maximum of ratings– uses the highest single grade assigned to a posting.

   o   Minimum of ratings– uses the lowest single grade assigned to a posting.

   o   Count of ratings – the number of rated items becomes the final grade.

   o   Sum of ratings – calculates the total of all grades assigned.

Note that these aggregations apply to each student post and not to the overall Forum posts.

Common Module Settings

1. Select **Hide** from the **Visible** drop-downlist if you want to hide the Forum from students. This option allows instructors to control when a resource is available to students.

2. Select the appropriate group settings if groups have been configured in your course.

Establishing groups in a course is a separate process from that of creating activities groups will work with. Refer to the Groups and Groupings training page for setting up groups.

Restrict Access

Restrict access options allow you to set restrictions on an activity or resource by date & time, or by conditions related to previous activities.

1. Set conditions for activity completion as required. Refer to the Restricting access to resource and activity training page for setting up restriction criteria.

Activity Completion

When enabled, completion tracking allows resources and activities to be marked as "completed" manually or when certain conditions have been met to help students manage their workloads.

1. Set conditions for activity tracking as required. Refer to the Using Completion Tracking training page for setting up tracking criteria.

Click **Save and return to the course** to finish adding the Forum. The Forum will appear as a link on your course section. You can begin to add a post by following the instructions below.

Adding a Post to a Forum

Once the Forum has been created, you can post messages and reply to messages posted by other participants in the course. If you are using a group discussion you can toggle between the different group forums you have access to view the posts made within that group's discussion.

Be sure to select the correct group to post the message to using the Separate/Visible Groups drop-down menu in the top left hand corner. Students will not be able to reply to messages sent to **All participants**. Follow these steps to create a post in a forum:

1. Click the Forum title link from the course page. A summary page appears listing any specific details the instructor may have provided as well as existing posts.

2. Click **Add a new discussion topic** to start adding your post.

3. Enter a brief title in the **Subject** text field. This subject will appear in the list of discussion topics on the summary page.

4. Compose or copy the message in the **Message** text box.

The box can be expanded by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner outwards. To make more editing options available, click the ⌨ button to expand the toolbar.

5. Choose whether you would like to receive e-mail notifications when other participants reply to your post from **Subscription** drop-down menu.

6. Click or drag the file from your local computer and drop it in the marked area (dashed rectangle) if you would like to attach a file with your post.

7. Place a checkmark in the **Mail now** check box to immediately send the e-mail notification. Normally posts are delayed for 15 minutes, which provides an opportunity to make changes before an e-mail notification is sent to the users.

8. In the **Display period** section you may select when the post will be displayed. Place a checkmark in the **Enable** box(es) of *Display start* and/or *Display end* fields and then set the corresponding date.

Setting a *Display end* date for a post will mean that the post will no longer be visible to students once the date has passed.

9. Click **Post to forum** to add your post to the Forum. A confirmation screen will appear informing you that you have fifteen minutes to edit your post.

Linking to Websites

To complement your course material, you might want to direct your students to view related Web sites on the Internet. The site link (URL) can be added to one of the sections on your course main page as a stand-alone resource.

Adding a Hyperlink to your Moodle Course

Follow the steps below to add a website URL resource to one or more of the sections on the course home page.

1. Click the **Turn editing on** button at the top right of the course home page.

2. Click **Add an activity or resource** button in the course section where you want the URL to be listed. A pop up window will appear on screen with various activities and resources.

Internet content is subject to copyright protection just as other works are so always check the terms of use for the site first, to ensure that there is no specific prohibition to linking. Additional information on copying practices at York University can be found on the York Copyright website.

3. Click the **URL** radio button within the *Resource* sections and click the Add button. The URL settings page will be displayed.

Setting up a Hyperlink

1. Click **Expand all** to expand each of the sections and reveal the options.

General

1. Enter the Web site title in the **Name** field. This name will appear as a link to access the web page on the course main page.

2. Enter a brief optional description about the resource in the **Description** text box. In this field you can describe what the website contains or other relevant details.

The box can be expanded by clicking and dragging the bottom right corner outwards. To make more editing options available, click the ⌨ button to expand the toolbar.

3. Click the **Display description on course page** checkbox to make it visible on the course home page. The description will display directly below the resource link.

When using this option a good practice is to keep the description short since it will appear directly below the resource name on the course homepage.

Content

1. Enter the URL you want to add in the **External URL** field in the following format:

http://www.yorku.ca

Appearance

1. Select the applicable display option from the **Display** drop-down list.

   o **Automatic**: Moodle will choose the best display option from those available.

   o **Embed**: the website displays in a window embedded in the Moodle page. Scroll bars are included. The menu and location bars are not displayed.

   o **New window**: the website displays in a new browser window with menus and an address bar.

   o **Open**: only the website is displayed in the browser window. No menu or address bar.
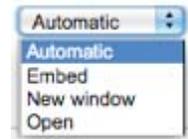
Common Module Settings

1. Select **Hide** from the **Visible** drop-downlist if you want to hide the link from students. This option allows instructors to control when a resource is available to students.

2. Select the appropriate group settings if groups have been configured in your course.

Establishing groups in a course is a separate process from that of creating activities groups will work with. Once groups have been configured in a course, they then need to be set for use on particular course activities, such as Assignments. Refer to the Groups and Groupings training page for setting up groups.

Restrict Access

Restrict access options allow you to set restrictions on an activity or resource by date & time, or by conditions related to previous activities.

1. Set conditions for activity completion as required. Refer to the Restricting Access to Resource and Activity training page for setting up restriction criteria.

Click **Save and display** to view on the page.