Getting started with the VLE

STUDENT GUIDE

v6.0

User Services
IT Services

L-Università ta' Malta

User Services
IT Services
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080
Malta

Web: www.um.edu.mt/itservices/vle
Help: www.um.edu.mt/itservices/help
Tel: +356 2340 4112

Last updated: 1 September 2025

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A. Accessing the VLE

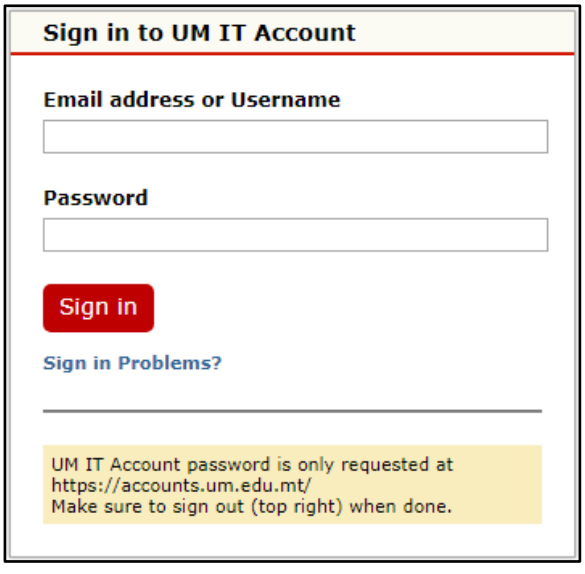
The VLE is available at,

- UM VLE: https://www.um.edu.mt/vle/my
- JC VLE: https://www.um.edu.mt/jc/vle/my

or by selecting **VLE** from the *Current students* drop-down menu at the upper left-hand corner of the University of Malta homepage.

If you are already signed in, you will immediately be directed to the VLE. Your VLE Dashboard will be displayed, showing all the areas that you have access to.

If you are not signed in, the UM IT Account authentication screen is displayed. Type in your **Email address or Username** and **Password** in the respective fields, and click the **Sign in** button.



Note that:

- Before entering your UM IT username and password in any screen, you should routinely check that the web address of the page displayed in the browser begins with *https://accounts.um.edu.mt/*

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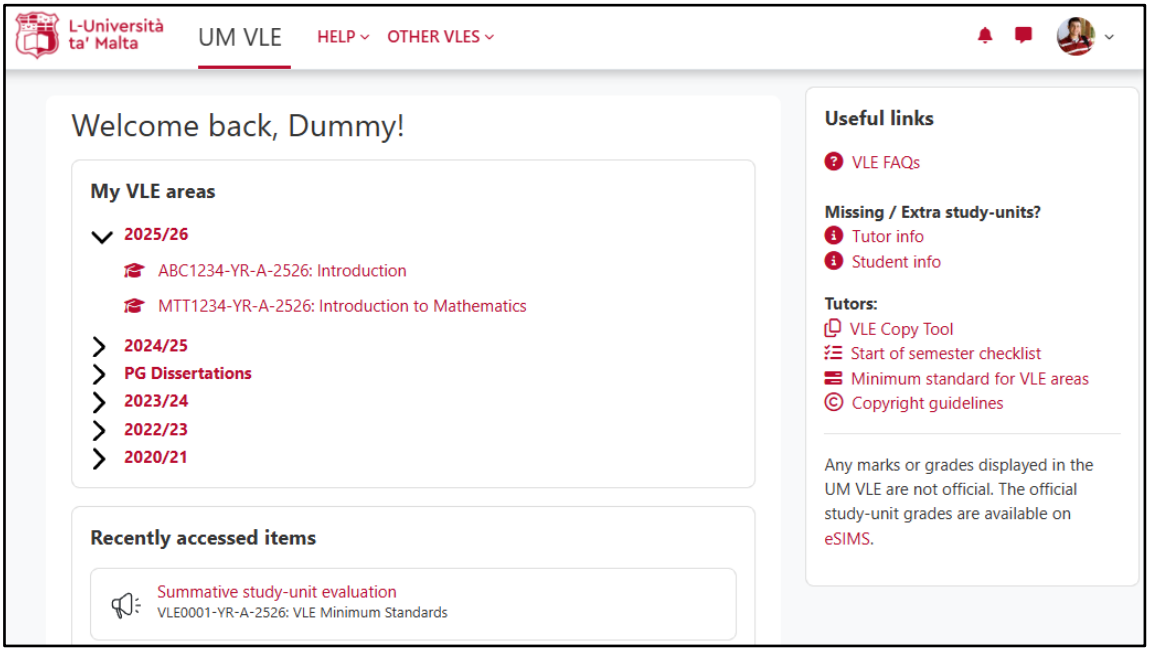
- When you sign in, your name and surname will be displayed at the top-right of the screen.

- It is of utmost importance that you sign out and close all browser windows when you are done using UM services, particularly if you are using a shared computer which is not set up with different computer accounts for different users. If you don't sign out or lock your user account on that computer, subsequent users of the computer will have total access to the UM services that you have permission to use. The safest way to ensure that you have signed out from all UM services is by closing all the browser windows.

B. Accessing VLE areas

When you access the VLE, your VLE areas will be displayed in the **My VLE areas** block. By default, **My VLE areas** displays all the VLE areas you are registered for by listing the latest academic year/s at the top, then the PG Dissertations (if you are a UM postgraduate student), and finally the archived academic years.



If you cannot find a particular VLE area in the list, make sure that your tutor is using the VLE. Not all tutors will make use of the VLE. Your tutors should inform you if they are expecting you to use the VLE for their study-unit / class areas.

If your tutor is using the VLE but you cannot find the study-unit / class area, there could be two possible reasons:

1. You are not registered for your study-unit / class on eSIMS / eSIMS JC. Refer to VLE FAQ 4 for more information.
2. Your tutor/s have not made the VLE area available to students. It is best to inform your tutor/s that you cannot access the VLE area so that they make it available to students. Your tutors can contact us if they require assistance.

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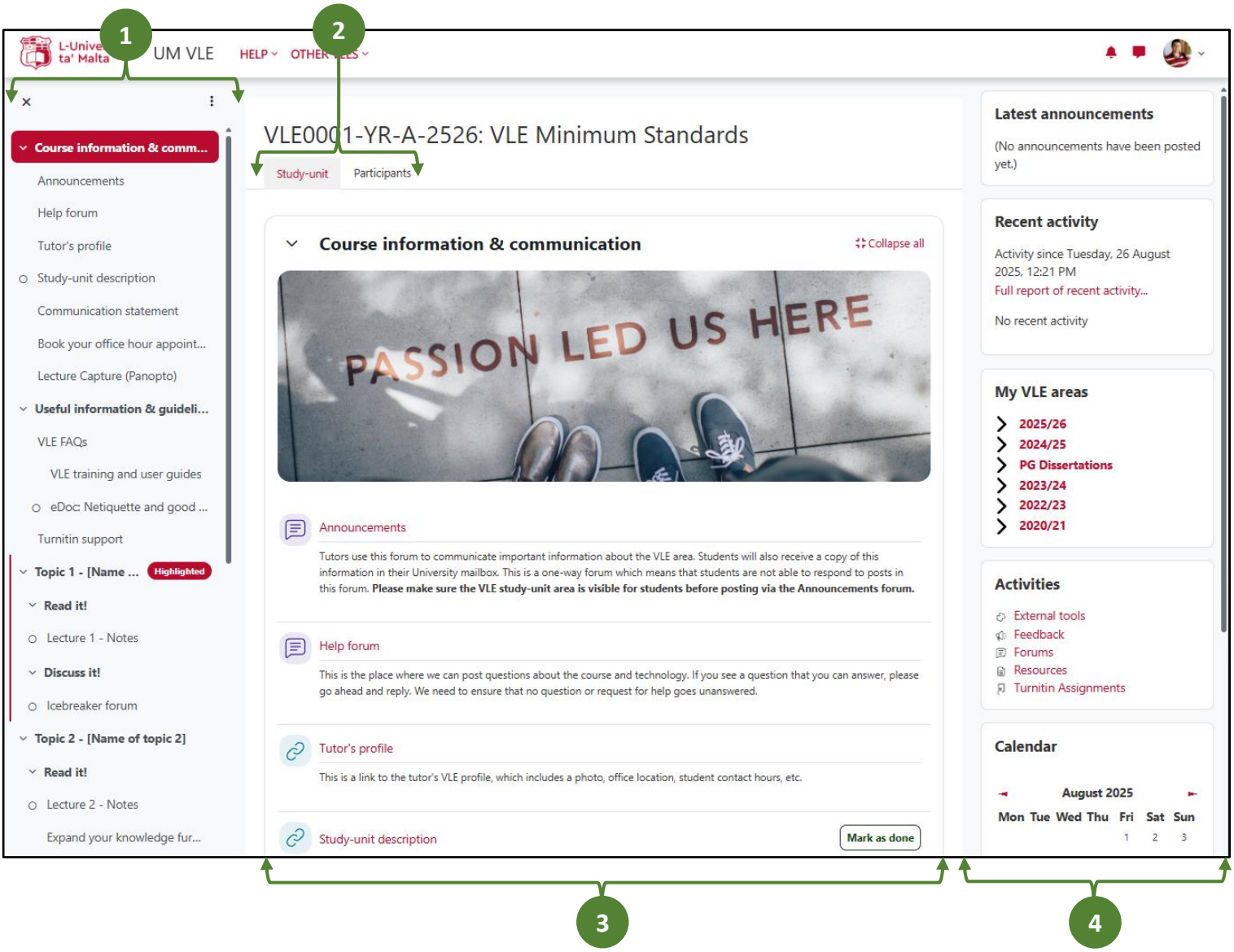
C. Overview of the VLE area

By default, the homepage of each VLE area has the layout shown below:



1 This is the **Course index** drawer, which acts as a table of contents for activities and resources available within a VLE area. Students can click on an activity and navigate directly to it. For more screen space, this drawer can be opened and closed as required.

2 A **tabular navigation menu** at the top of each VLE area.

3 This is the **main content area** where tutors upload study material and set up activities. This area is typically divided into sections: Topics or Weeks. Each topic or week may contain subsections, lecture notes, links to readings, forums, quizzes, assignments, etc.

By default, the first section is often referred to as the *General* section. This contains the *Announcements* forum (used for class announcements) and may also contain other introductory study-unit / subject level information such as a link to the study-unit / syllabus description.

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On the right-hand side of your screen, you will find the following **blocks**:

- **Latest announcements** – lists the latest items added to the *Announcements* forum.
- **Recent activity** – shows recent changes to the VLE area since the user's last login, such as, creation of new resources and activities, forum postings and your assignment submissions.
- **My VLE areas** – enables easier access between VLE areas.
- **Activities** – lists the variety of activities created in the VLE area. For example, if you would like to view all the forums in an area, click on the *Forums* link.
- **Calendar** – displays a small version of the current month's calendar. Events and due dates are colour-coded to distinguish VLE area events from personal (User) events.
- **Lecture Capture (Panopto)** – lists Panopto captured videos and/or other uploaded media files, if any.

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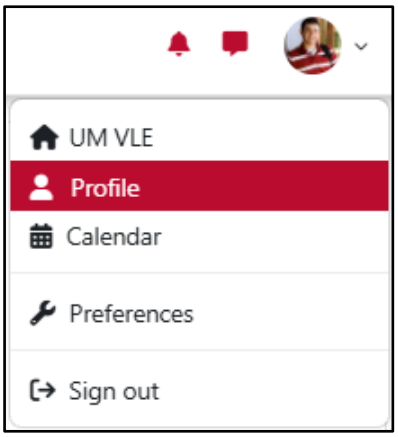
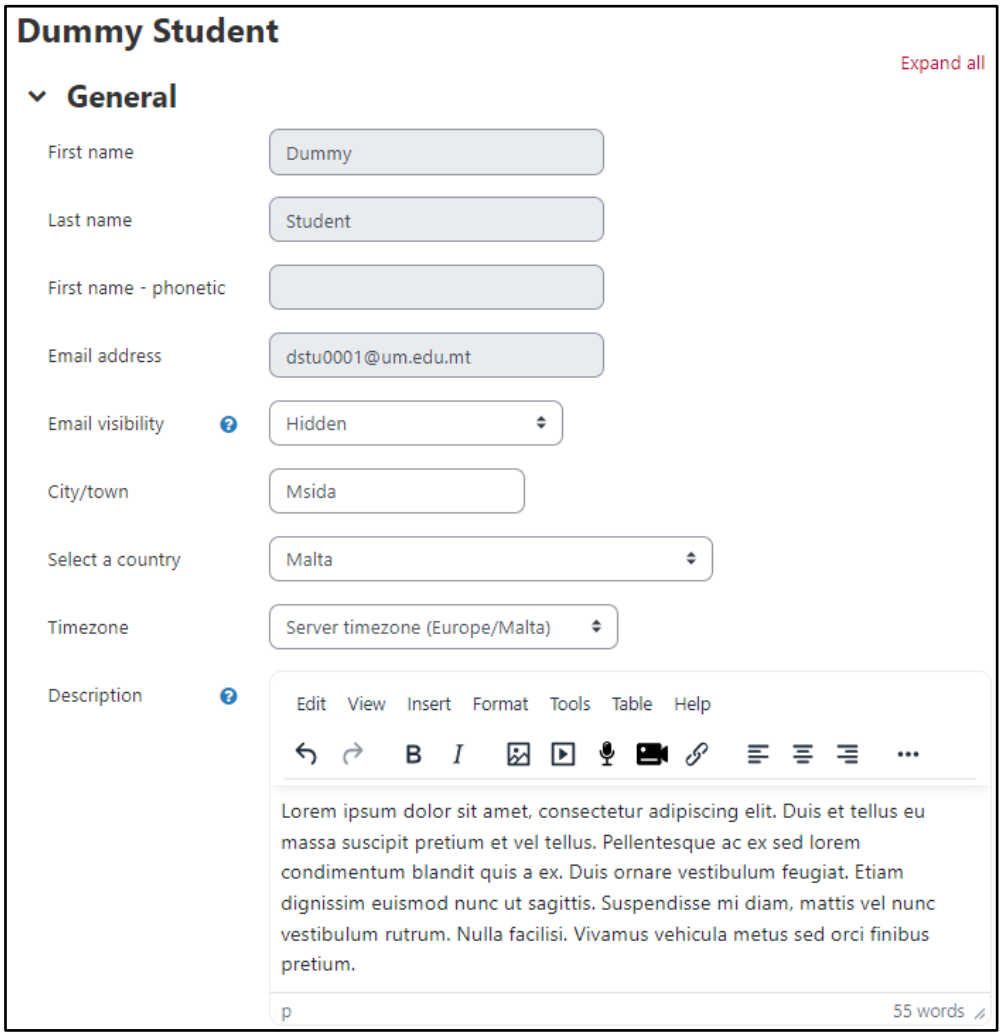
D. Editing your Profile



You are encouraged to set your profile as soon as you start using the VLE. You may upload a picture of yourself and type some information such as a short description of yourself, course interests, etc.

To edit your profile:

1. Click on your **User** menu (upper right corner).
2. Click **Profile**.
3. Click the **Edit profile** link within the *User details* section.
4. Set your **City/town**.
5. Select your country from **Select a country**.
6. In the **Description** field type some descriptive information.



7. Click the **Update profile** button.

Note:

- If there are typo errors in your name and surname, please contact your Faculty or Departmental Office to have these corrected.
- Some fields have a *Help* button. Click this button to view context sensitive help.

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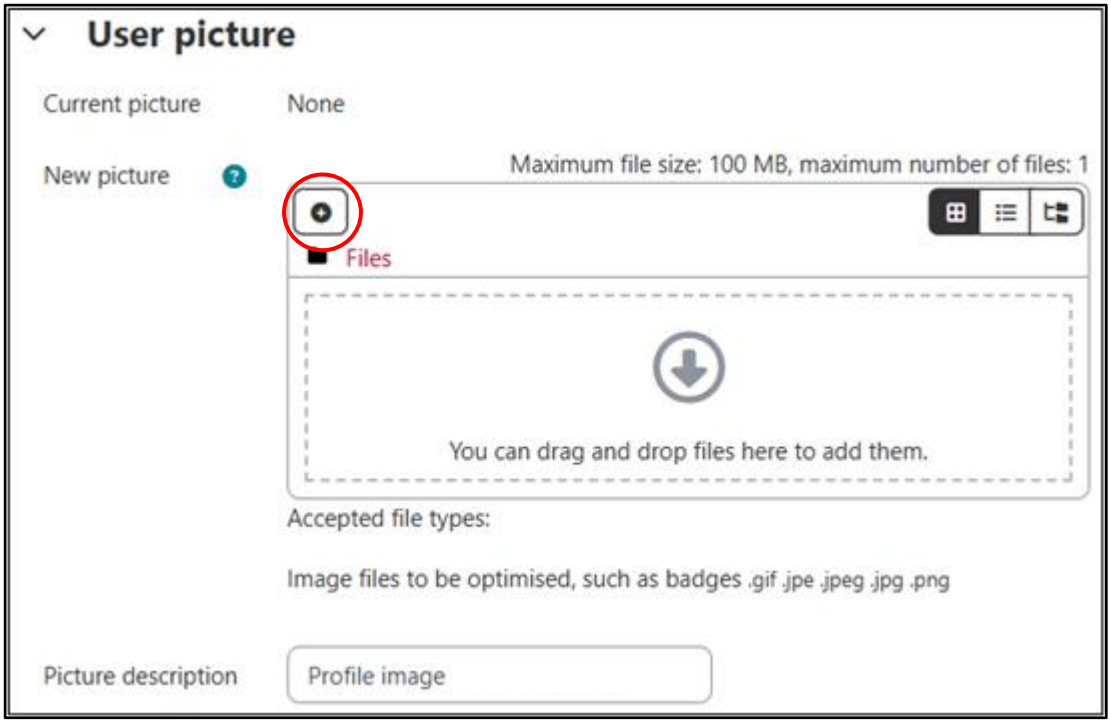
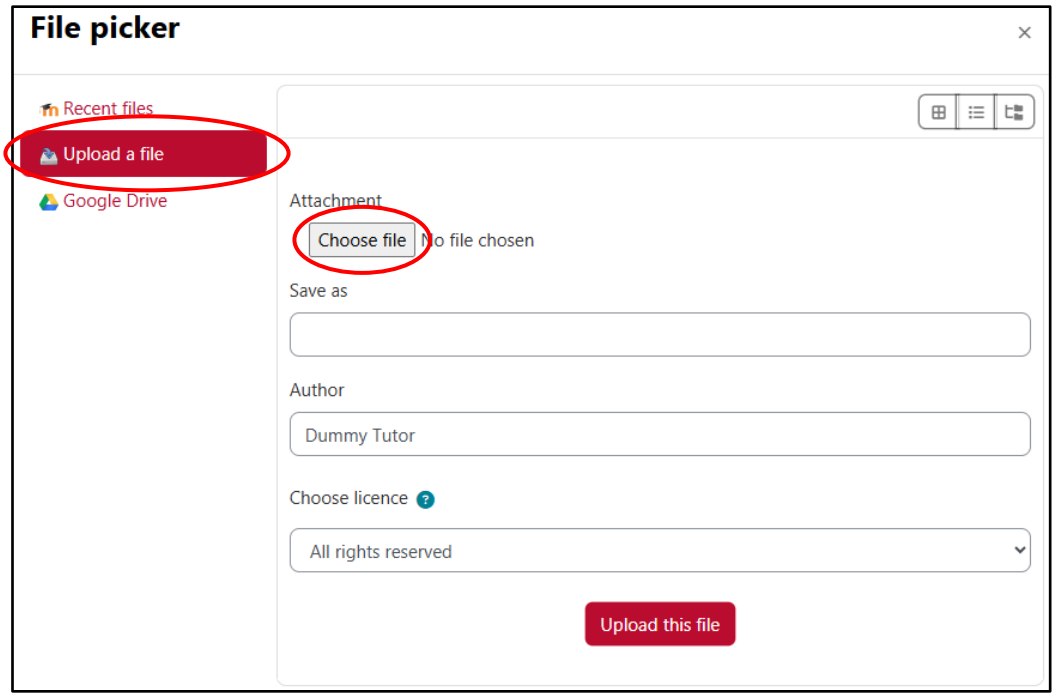
By default, a profile's display picture is a white silhouette on a grey background. To upload your picture:

1. Click on your **User** menu (upper right corner).
2. Click **Profile**.
3. Click the **Edit profile** link within the *User details* section.
4. Scroll down to the *User picture* section.
5. Drag a picture of yourself from your computer to the designated 'drag-and-drop' upload area.



Alternatively, click the **Add...** button. This will display the *File picker* dialog box.



a. Select **Upload a file** from the menu on the left-hand side.

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b. Click the **Choose file** button.

c. Browse to the location where your picture file is stored.

d. Double-click the picture file to upload.

e. Click the **Upload this file** button.

f. Type a description in the **Picture description** field for the benefit of visually impaired users who make use of a screen reader. You can type your name and surname.

6. Click the **Update profile** button.

Note:

- Use a JPG or PNG file format for your picture. The VLE will crop your picture and shrink it to 100 by 100 pixels.
- Once uploaded, your picture will appear in your profile, in the *Participants* page and next to all your forum postings. The same picture will appear for all your VLE areas in the VLE.

To delete your profile picture:

1. Click on your **User** menu (upper right corner).
2. Click **Profile**.
3. Click the **Edit profile** link within the *User details* section.
4. Scroll down to the *User picture* section, and tick the **Delete picture** checkbox below your picture.
5. Click the **Update profile** button.

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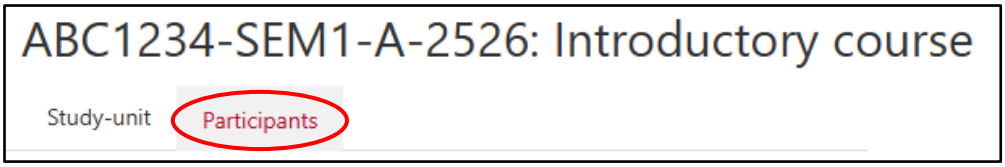
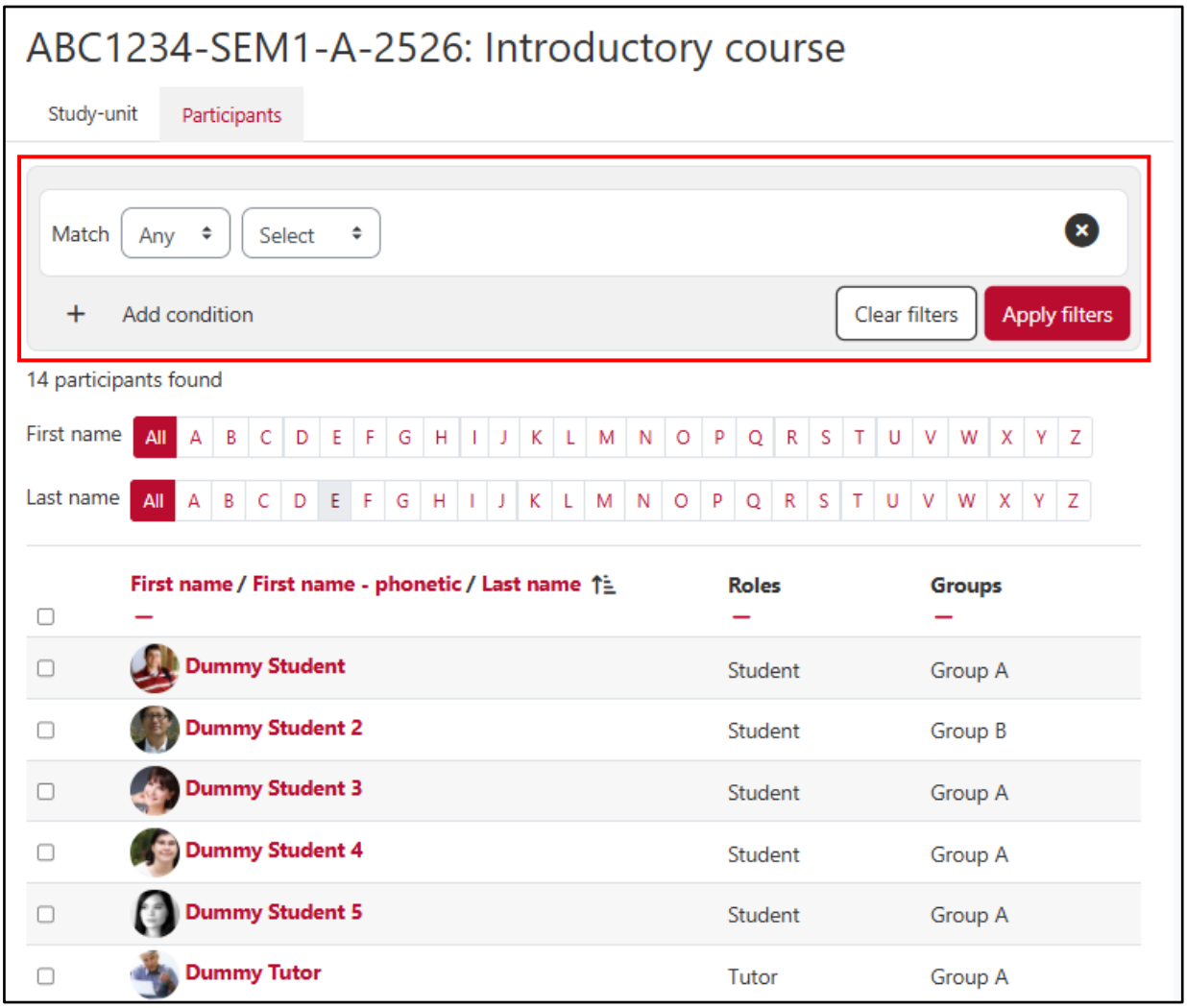
E. Viewing the Participants list of a VLE area

To view the tutor/s and any other students enrolled in a VLE area:

1. Click **Participants** from the tabular menu at the top of the page.



This will display the participants enrolled on the VLE area (shown below). If the participants enrolled on the VLE area amount to more than 20, they will be listed in sets of 20 participants per page. You can click the *Show all xx* link available at the bottom of the page.



2. Within the *Match* setting, leave the first drop-down menu as **Any**.
3. From the **Select** drop-down menu, choose **Roles**. A third drop-down menu is displayed.
   - Select **Student** from the drop-down menu to view a list of students.
   - Select **Tutor** from the drop-down menu to view a list of tutor/s.
4. Click the **Apply filters** button.
5. Click the **Clear filters** button to remove any applied filters and view all participants again.
6. Return to the VLE area homepage by clicking the *Study-unit* / *Class* tab in the navigation menu.

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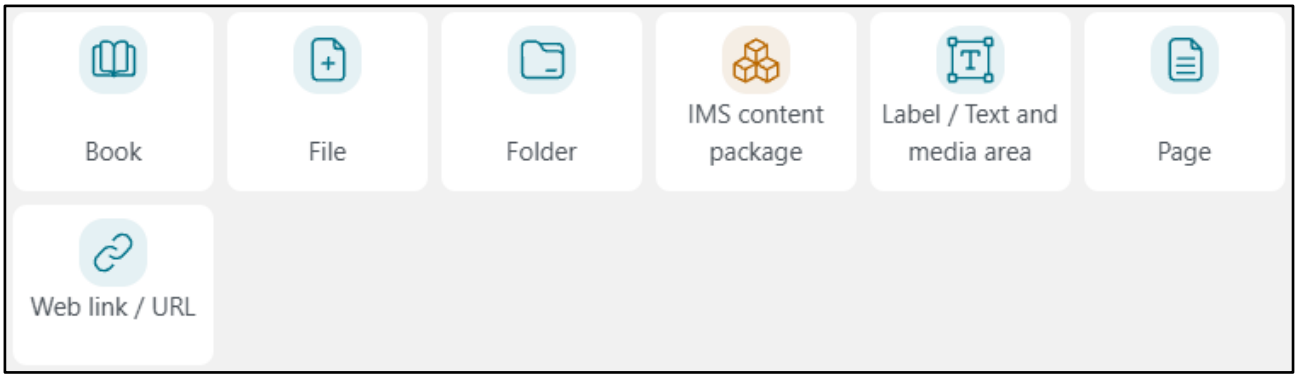
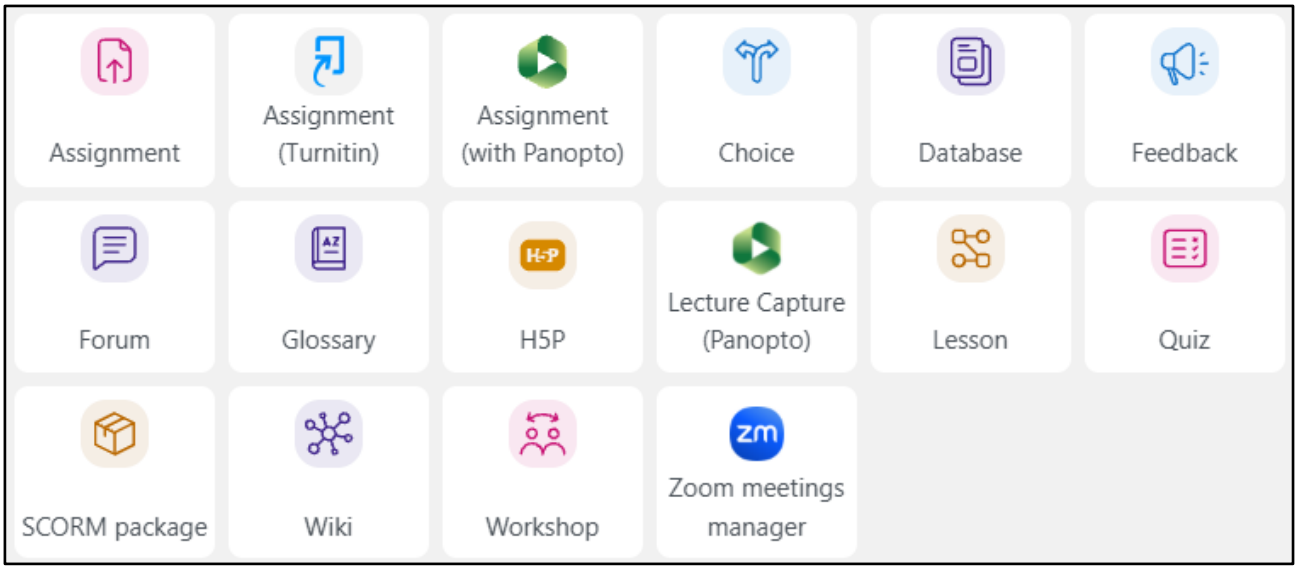
F. VLE area resources and activities

As outlined in section C, the middle section of the VLE area homepage is where your tutor will put the main study material and activities. Different resources and activities may be identified by their unique icon.

Resources



Activities



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Submitting assignments

Your tutor may require you to submit your assignments (such as essays, spreadsheets, presentations, web pages, photographs, video / audio-clips) for grading through the VLE.

There are three types of assignment activities which your tutor might make available in a VLE area:

Assignment – used to collect students work. Refer to the guidelines below if you need to submit via an *Assignment* activity.

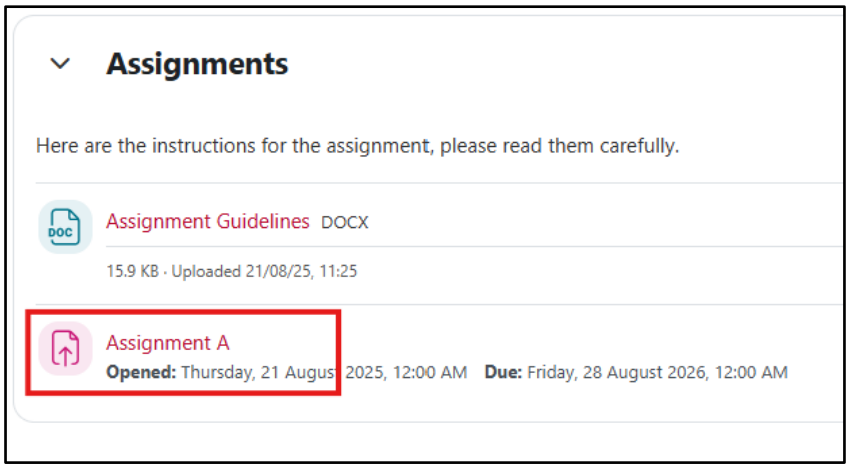
Assignment (Turnitin) – used to detect and prevent possible plagiarism in students' uploaded assignments *(available in UM VLE only)*. Guidelines are available in the Submitting through Turnitin user guide.

Assignment (with Panopto) – used to upload media files such as videos or audio podcasts. Guidelines are available in the Submitting via an Assignment (with Panopto) activity guide.

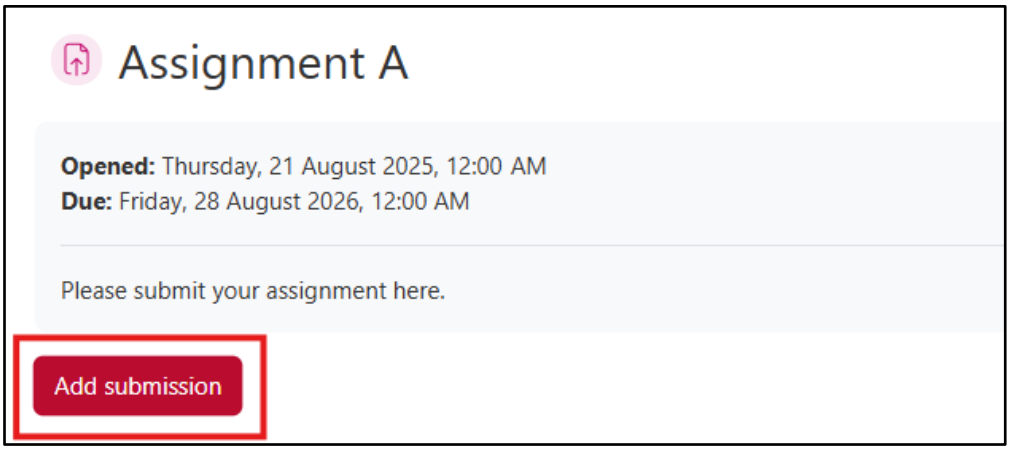
Information about plagiarism detection and the use of Turnitin is available.

To submit to an **Assignment** activity:

1. Click the assignment title in the home page of the VLE area. You will be directed to the submission area.



Information such as the assignment question and due date will be displayed.



2. Click the **Add submission** button.

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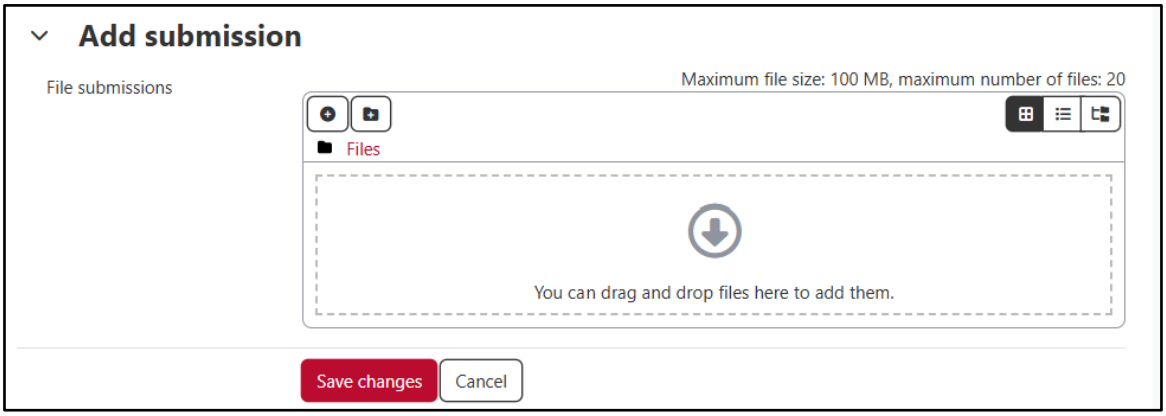
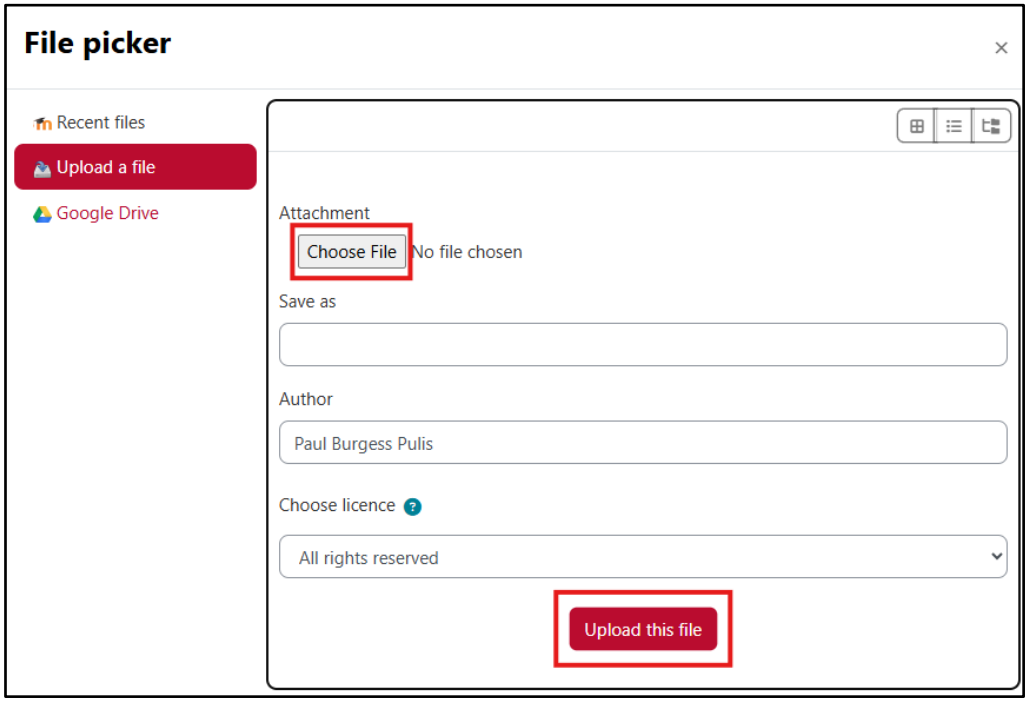
The *File submissions* tool will be displayed.



3. Drag your assignment file from your computer to the designated 'drag-and-drop' upload area, and proceed to step 9.

   Alternatively, click **Add...** button. This will display the *File picker* dialog box.



4. Click the **Choose file** button.
5. Browse to the location where your assignment file is stored.
6. Double-click the file to upload.
7. Click the **Upload this file** button.
8. Click the **Save changes** button.

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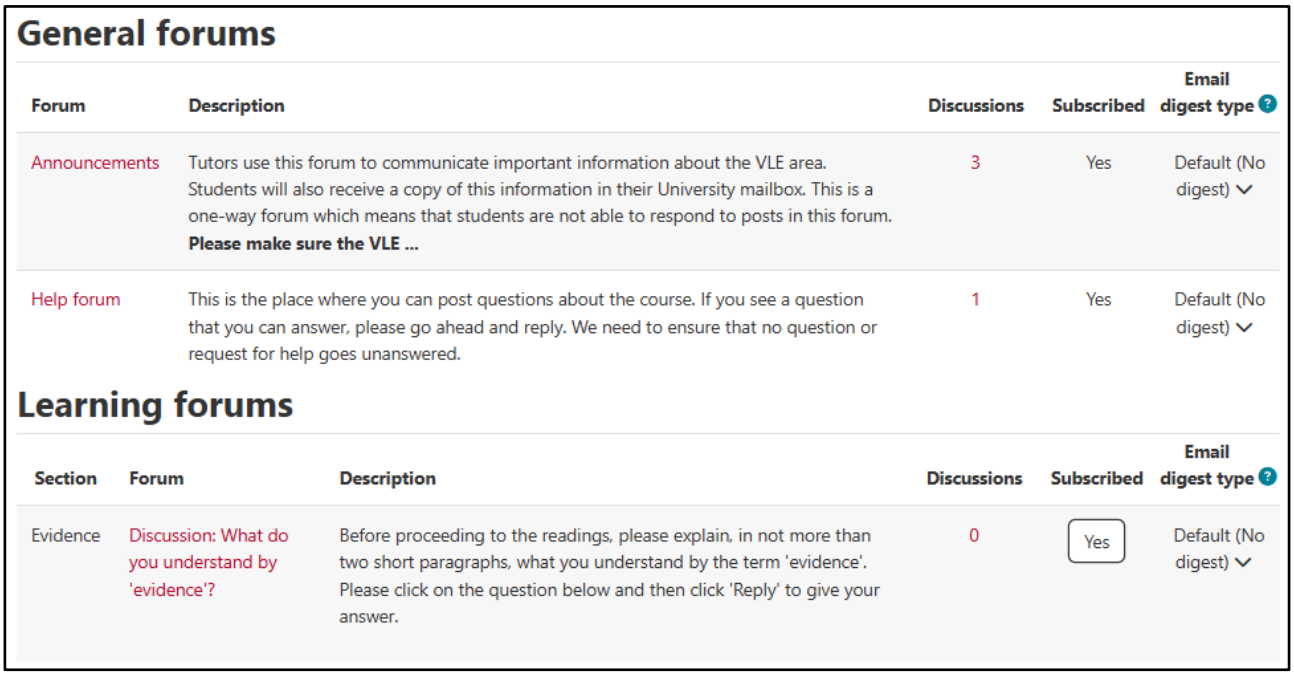
G. Participating in forum discussions

You can access a forum from the link within the contents section of the VLE area. Forums are denoted by the icon displayed on the right.

A list of all the forums in the VLE area (underlying image) can also be accessed by clicking the **Forums** link in the *Activities* block (typically located on right side of the VLE area homepage).



General forums

Forum	Description	Discussions	Subscribed	Email digest type
Announcements	Tutors use this forum to communicate important information about the VLE area. Students will also receive a copy of this information in their University mailbox. This is a one-way forum which means that students are not able to respond to posts in this forum. **Please make sure the VLE ...**	3	Yes	Default (No digest)
Help forum	This is the place where you can post questions about the course. If you see a question that you can answer, please go ahead and reply. We need to ensure that no question or request for help goes unanswered.	1	Yes	Default (No digest)

Learning forums

Section	Forum	Description	Discussions	Subscribed	Email digest type
Evidence	Discussion: What do you understand by 'evidence'?	Before proceeding to the readings, please explain, in not more than two short paragraphs, what you understand by the term 'evidence'. Please click on the question below and then click 'Reply' to give your answer.	0	Yes	Default (No digest)

The *Forums* page displays information about each forum, including title, description and number of discussions, as well as, whether you are subscribed to a forum or not.

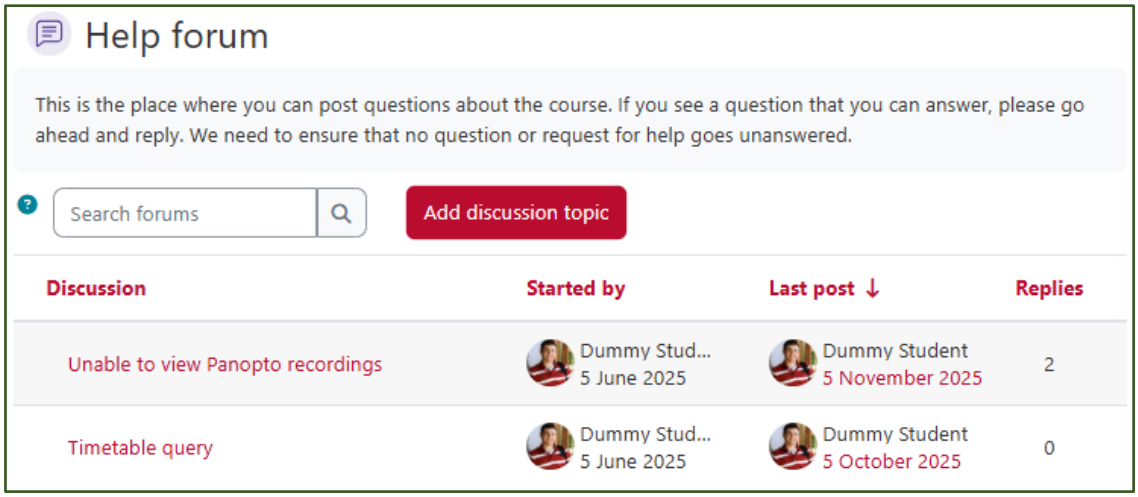
Reading forum discussions

To read a forum discussion:

1. Access the required forum.

   A listing of the forum's discussion topics (also known as threads) is displayed. For each topic, information is displayed, such as the participant who started the topic and the number of replies.

2. To view a topic, click its title under **Discussion**. You will now see all the postings made in that discussion topic.



Help forum

This is the place where you can post questions about the course. If you see a question that you can answer, please go ahead and reply. We need to ensure that no question or request for help goes unanswered.

Search forums | Add discussion topic

Discussion	Started by	Last post ↓	Replies
Unable to view Panopto recordings	Dummy Stud... 5 June 2025	Dummy Student 5 November 2025	2
Timetable query	Dummy Stud... 5 June 2025	Dummy Student 5 October 2025	0

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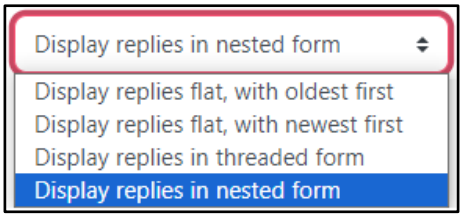
3. A discussion topic may be displayed in four different ways. Click the drop-down menu at the top of the discussion thread to select a display type. By default, a thread displays replies in nested form.



   - **Display replies flat, with oldest first** – The *replies* are displayed aligned and in chronological order, from the oldest reply to the newest one.
   - **Display replies flat, with newest first** - The *replies* are displayed aligned and in chronological order, from the newest reply to the oldest one.
   - **Display replies in threaded form** - Only the initial post is displayed entirely. Replies are reduced to the headlines (including author and date of posting) and shifted to the right. Any replies to the same post are aligned.
   - **Display replies in nested form** - All posts are displayed in their entirety. Replies are shifted to the right so that only replies to the same are aligned.

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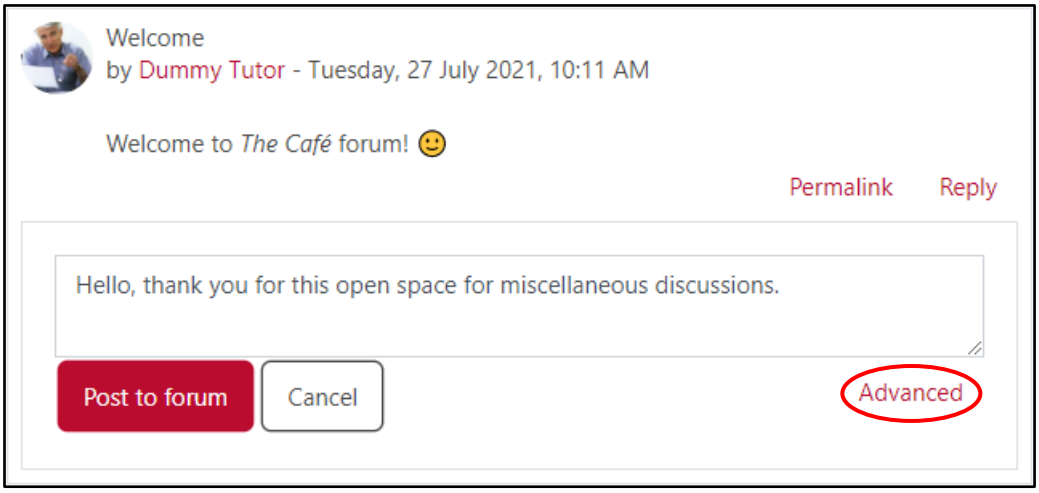
Posting & replying

Posting or replying to a message is similar to composing an email. You can start a new topic by clicking the **Add discussion topic** button (if available) on the forum's main page.

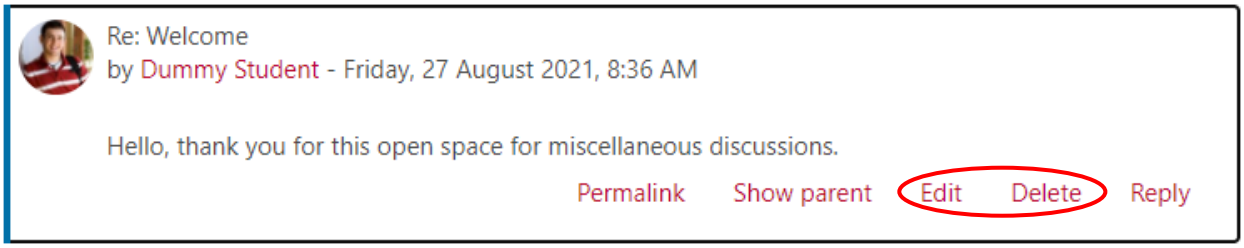
In most cases you will be replying to an existing post.

1. Click the **Reply** link (allocated at the bottom right of each post) to reply to a message.
2. Type in the content of your reply in the **Write your reply…** text box.
3. Optionally, you may attach a file (e.g. MS Word document, PDF, etc.) to your reply by dragging it from your computer to the designated 'drag-and-drop' upload area. Note that to attach a file you must first click the **Advanced** link.



4. Click the **Post to forum** button.

After posting your message, you are given a 30-minute time window to edit or delete your post. This is very helpful if you hit the **Post to forum** button too soon or spot a mistake after posting. Links to **Edit** or **Delete** your post are available at the bottom of your submitted post for the 30-minute period.



Note:

- When you copy text from MS Word and paste this to the text editor, you might need to use the **Clear formatting** T_x tool (available via the *Format* menu) to remove unnecessary HTML tags.

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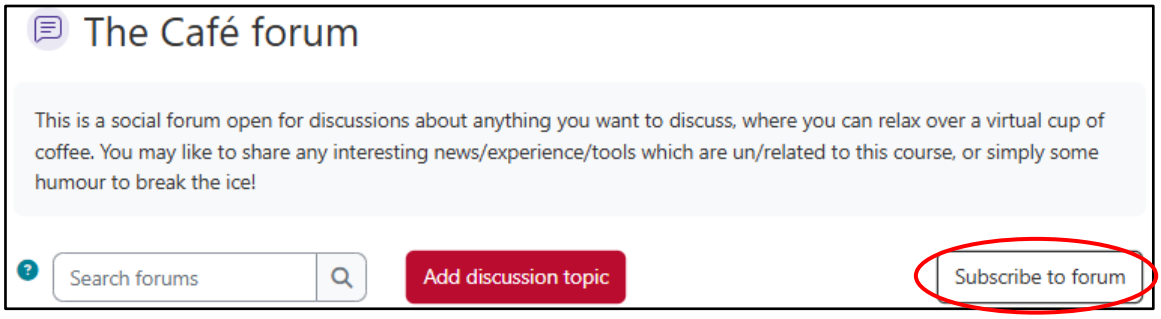
Forum subscriptions

You may also manage forum subscriptions.

When subscribed to a forum, you will receive an email message in your University / JC mailbox each time somebody posts a message or a reply. This makes it easy to keep track of what's happening in the forums without constantly logging in. By default, such email messages are sent 30-45 minutes after the post is made in a forum.

To subscribe to a forum you are currently viewing, click the **Subscribe to forum** button. If this button is not available, it means that your tutor either set *forced* subscription for everyone, or *disabled* subscription for that particular forum activity.



Subscribe to individual discussions

In a forum with *Optional* or *Auto subscription*, you can also choose which discussions to subscribe to. It is not necessary to receive emails for all threads within a particular forum. To subscribe to a particular discussion, click the toggle icon available under the **Subscribe** heading. When the toggle icon is red , it indicates that you are subscribed. To unsubscribe from a particular discussion, click the toggle button.

Enabling email digests

By default, the VLE will send an email message for every forum post you're subscribed to. Although preferred by some users, others might get overwhelmed by all the messages cluttering their mailbox, especially if subscribed to multiple forums.

For this reason, you may enable email digests for your profile, so that the VLE only sends one email a day. This email, which is typically received after 1700hrs (Central European Time), will include all the new posts made throughout the past 24hrs in forums you are subscribed to in all your VLE areas.

To enable / change the email digests:

1. Click your **User** menu (top-right corner).
2. Select **Preferences**. The *Preferences* page will be displayed.
3. Click the **Forum preferences** link.
4. From the **Email digest type**, select your preferred option.
5. Click the **Save changes** button.

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Announcements forum

The *Announcements* forum is a special forum for general announcements. This forum is automatically created for each VLE area and, by default, it is placed in the top of the contents section.

Only your tutors may add posts or reply to posts in the *Announcements* forum. All participants in a VLE area are subscribed to the *Announcements* forum, thus, all will receive an email message in their University / JC mailbox.

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