Using the Course Discussion Board for Q & A

Your Bb shell contains a single discussion board called Course Q & A. Used regularly, it can be a valuable tool in helping manage communications with students, particularly those related to simple clarifications regarding course structure, deadlines, homework and tests. The Course Q & A discussion board can reduce the number of emails that you, as instructor, respond to by enabling a one-to-many communication for questions and issues that multiple students may be experiencing.

The general operation of Course Q & A works as follows: students post their questions or issues to the discussion board rather email the instructor. The instructor regularly checks the board, and responds to the postings. Students generally need to be trained to use the Course Q & A discussion board; this is accomplished by deflecting direct emails and requesting that the student post to the board instead. Timely instructor responses to the Course Q & A board are key in building student trust that this form of communication is effective in addressing questions. You can also encourage students to respond to other students’ posts if they know the answer.

Note: If you choose to not use the Course Q & A discussion board in your course, please delete it from the discussion board area so that students do not use it expecting a response.

Training Students to Use Course Q & A

The first couple of weeks of the course you must consistently train students to use the Q & A forum. When you receive emails from students regarding anything that could be remotely useful to other students, politely thank them and ask them to post in the discussion board so that all students can benefit from your response. Resist the temptation to answer the question via email.

Suggested Timeline for Using Course Q & A Discussion Board

Course Prep:
- In the syllabus, discuss the use of the Course Q & A discussion board.
- In the shell “Start Here”, describe the use of the Q & A board, including your response policy.

First Week:
- In your first Announcement, discuss the use of the Course Q & A board.
- On Day 3, remind students to post to it and check it frequently. Urge them to post responses to other students’ questions.

Second and subsequent weeks:
- Remind students to check the board frequently.

TIP: Check the Course Q & A board frequently, - twice daily or more

— OR —
subscribe to the forum to receive an email each a student posts to the board. Click on the Course Q & A forum, and then choose “Subscribe” from the options.