

Creating a Virtual Office in Blackboard

In face-to-face courses, students have the luxury of benefiting from questions asked while in the classroom, or the ability to stop by faculty offices to discuss an issue they might be having. In both cases, they get the chance to interact with faculty and possibly with some of their fellow classmates.

In Blackboard, instructors can create a virtual space where students can experience the same kind of connection and feedback they receive in their traditional classrooms.

Using a virtual office:

- puts the instructor *in* the course
- Reduces the number of emails an instructor receives
- promotes the use of Blackboard (the LMS or Learning Management System)

By placing a personal photo, contact information, and a little biographical info, faculty members can go a long way toward helping students see them as individuals and not some synthetic version of themselves. For even better results, instructors can replace the photo with a quick *Intro* or *Welcome* video that can bring out their personality and help the students get to know them.

By **subscribing** to their own *virtual office discussion forums*, instructors will receive prompts when questions are posted. These prompts will help faculty members engage with students in a timely fashion, and make the students feel like the instructor is *in* the course.

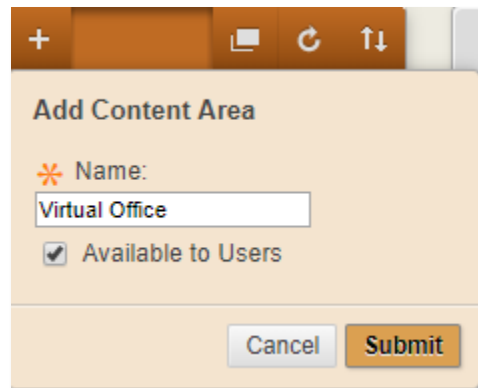
Everyone misplaces email from time to time. For some, an inbox receives a hundred new messages or more each day. Why not make life easier on everyone by reserving course-oriented emails for things of a personal or private nature? Instead, instructors can have students post general course questions to the *virtual office discussion forum*. When faculty members answer questions via email, the only people that see that correspondence are themselves and the student who sent the email. If a question is answered in a public space like the virtual office, everyone benefits.

BONUS: The virtual office builds a course **FAQ** over the course of a semester that instructors can then use as part of subsequent semesters' courses.

The more time a student is spending in a course, the more connected they are to what is happening. When students establish the habit of checking the course regularly, they will be more engaged and more successful.

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1. Log in to ole.sandiego.edu and log in with your credentials and navigate to your course.
2. Click on the **cross** at the top of the left hand navigation panel and select **Content Area**.
3. Give your Virtual Office Discussion Board a meaningful name, such as Virtual Office, and make it **Available to Users** by checking the box. Click **Submit**.



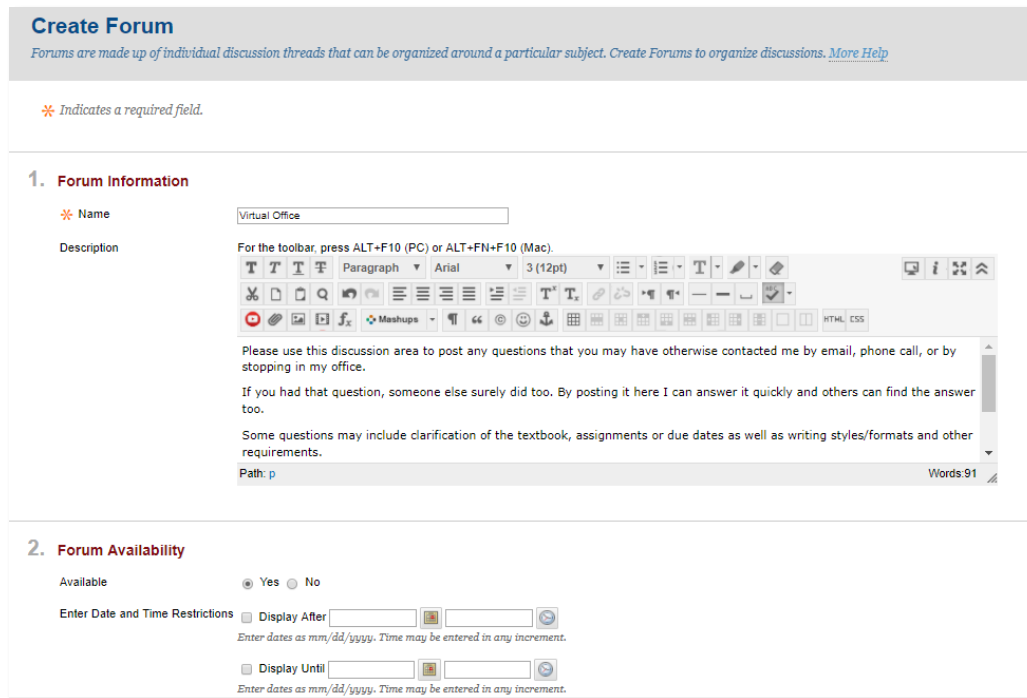
4. Find your newly created **Virtual Office** link in the Navigation Panel and click it. Click on the **Tools** menu and select **Discussion Board**.



5. Click on the **Create New Forum** button to create your Virtual Office discussion board.

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6. On the *Create Forum* screen, under *Forum Information*, enter a name and a description and, in step 2, make the forum **Available**.



Create Forum
Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. Create Forums to organize discussions. [More Help](#)

* Indicates a required field.

1. Forum Information

Name: Virtual Office

Description: For the toolbar, press ALT+F10 (PC) or ALT+FN+F10 (Mac).
 Please use this discussion area to post any questions that you may have otherwise contacted me by email, phone call, or by stopping in my office.
 If you had that question, someone else surely did too. By posting it here I can answer it quickly and others can find the answer too.
 Some questions may include clarification of the textbook, assignments or due dates as well as writing styles/formats and other requirements.
 Path: p Words: 91

2. Forum Availability

Available: Yes No

Enter Date and Time Restrictions: Display After
Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

Display Until
Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

7. In step 3, *Forum Settings*, make sure that the **No Grading in Forum** radial button is selected and select any other criteria, such as *Allow Anonymous Posts*, *Allow Author to Delete Own Posts*, etc.

8. Click **Submit**.

9. Now that the *Forum* has been created it has to be linked to the *Virtual Office* link created earlier. To do this, in the *Create Link: Discussion Board* screen, select the newly created *Discussion Board Forum*, and click **Next**.

10. The *Link Name* takes on the name of the *Discussion Board Forum* selected. Add a description, and, in step 2, *Options*, it is a good idea to set **Track Number of Views** to Yes so that you can see how many students are using and checking the forum during a semester.

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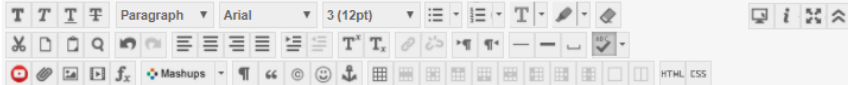
1. Link Information

✳ Link Name

Color of Name Black

Link Discussion Board: Virtual Office

Text For the toolbar, press ALT+F10 (PC) or ALT+FN+F10 (Mac).



Please use this discussion area to post any questions that you may have otherwise contacted me by email, phone call, or by stopping in my office.

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Some questions may include clarification of the textbook, assignments or due dates as well as writing styles/formats and other requirements.

Path: [p](#) Words: 91

2. Options

Available Yes No

Track Number of Views Yes No

Date Restrictions

Display After

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

Display Until

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

11. Click **Submit**.

12. It is a good idea to add a few **threads** to get things started. Some good threads to start are a post about the book and where to find it, what writing style or format you prefer for papers, and whatever else you feel students may email you about in the future – even if it is on the syllabus.