

## Adding a newsgroup to your *InterLearn* materials.

### ***What is the difference between InterLearn and a newsgroup?***

*InterLearn* provides students and teachers with a personalised, engaging, collaborative online learning environment. At its base, *InterLearn* is a database that records student responses to activities and enables them to review and edit those responses. A newsgroup is a form of asynchronous communication, where multiple people can post and read messages relating to a particular topic. Messages can be sorted into threads that simulate a conversation within the overall discussion. The main differences between *InterLearn* and a newsgroup are:

- Responses saved in *InterLearn* can be edited, allowing for an iteration of thought, while a message posted to a newsgroup cannot be changed.
- All response posted to a newsgroup are viewable by all users of the newsgroup, while some activities within *InterLearn* can be viewed only by the individual and the teacher.

### ***Newsgroups within InterLearn***

*InterLearn* currently has the facility to incorporate three types of newsgroups. **News** is used by the teaching staff as a notice board to inform students of relevant information. **Forum** is used to host discussion, by staff and students, of the content studied in the unit. When included both these groups add links to the main *InterLearn* navigation. The final type of newsgroup that can be incorporated into *InterLearn* is the **feedback box type activity**, in which students can post their activity responses directly to the specified newsgroup. This type of newsgroup is added when creating an activity and is discussed in detail in the document entitled "*InterLearn* documentation for staff".

To add either a **news** or **forum** newsgroup to your *InterLearn* materials you must login to the my.monash portal, using your AuthCate username and password. If you are not sure of your AuthCate username and/or password please contact the ITS Helpdesk on +61 3 9905 1777.

Once logged in, go to the Manage Teaching Commitments page by clicking the [Manage] link appearing underneath your teaching commitments listed on the left side of the portal. Ensure you have editing rights to the unit you wish to add the newsgroups to. If you do not, click the [Request editing access] link and continue to the next step when access has been granted. Note you will require editing access in order to create *InterLearn* materials.

Click the [Request a discussion group] link located to the right of the unit code. You will be presented with the "Unitcode Unit Discussion Group request page". You must now complete the details for the

group. The options are fairly self-explanatory however there are a number of standards that must be followed for *InterLearn* newsgroups. These are listed below.

- The teaching period and year that you choose must be that of the semester in which the unit will be offered.
- The name to be displayed on the unit page will also be the heading that appears for the newsgroup when the relevant [news] or [forum] link is followed. The name should reflect the type of group you have created. For example, in the case of a **news** type newsgroup the name given might be "UnitName InterLearn News".
- The actual name for a **news** type groups must be "news" (without the " "), and **forum** type groups must be "forum" (without the " ").
- Access controls for a **forum** type group can be unrestricted, unless undertakings have been made to students as to the privacy of their postings, in which case the "posters" and "readers" should reflect these undertakings.
- Access controls for a **news** type group should set only teaching staff as being able to write messages to the group. This can be done by adding all teaching staff as "owners" or by setting "posters" to a "Tutorial or other group" and listing the teaching staff in the text box at the end of the page. "Readers" can be set to any option you wish except the "No read-only access for this discussion group" or the "Tutorial or other group" where you have used this function to list the teaching staff as "posters".

You can only create one newsgroup at a time so if you wish to include both news and forum groups you will need to repeat this process for the second group.