Canvas Feature: Discussion Checkpoints

Settings

To see the discussion checkpoints settings, create a discussion assignment in Canvas. If you have already created a discussion, click on the "Edit" button to begin.

To use discussion checkpoints, "Graded" must be enabled in the discussion settings because checkpoints are graded.

1. Check the checkbox next to Graded [1].
2. Then, check the checkbox next to Assign graded checkpoints [2].
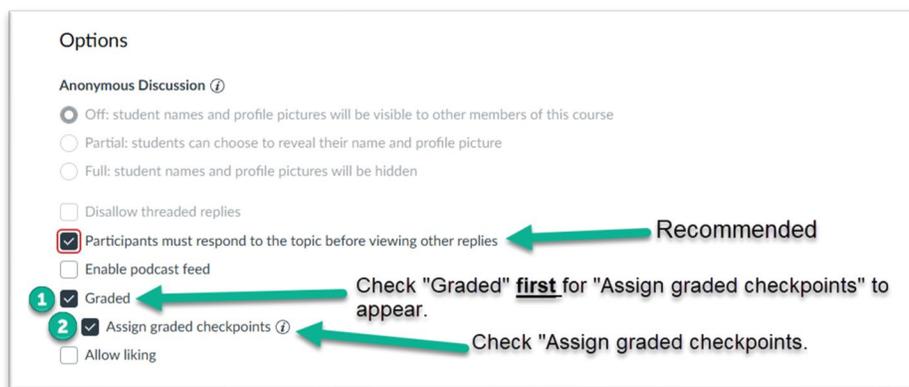
Scroll down the settings page until you see "Checkpoint Settings."

3. The first line under "Checkpoint Settings" is "Points Possible: Reply to Topic." [3] This is where you will determine the point value available for a student's initial reply to the faculty's discussion prompt(s).
4. In the second line, "Additional Replies Required" appears [4]. This is where you will determine the number of required peer post replies. By default, one reply is required but this number can be adjusted.
5. In the third line, "Points Possible: Additional Replies" appears [5]. This is where you will determine how many points are available to be earned for peer post replies.
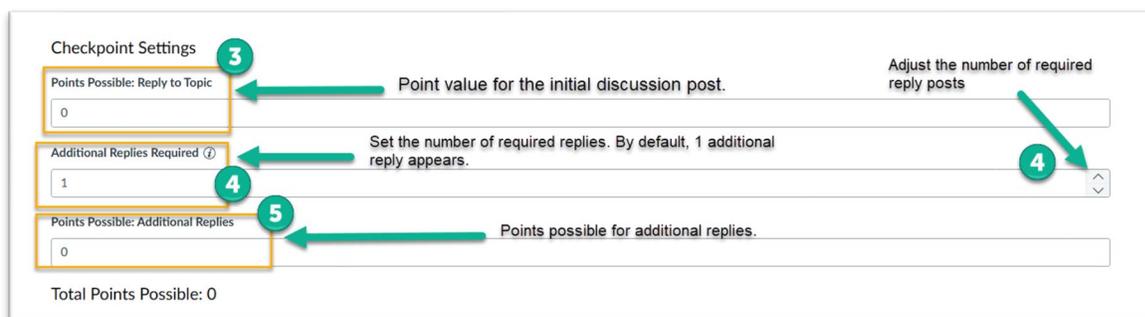
Example

- Points possible for the initial post are 6 points [1].
- There are two (2) required peer posts [2].
- There are four [4] points possible in total for the peer posts (additional replies) [3].
- The total points possible is ten (10) points [4].

Assignment Settings

Under "Assignment Settings," you determine the due date for the initial post, and the due date for the reply to posts.

1. Assign To [1] – by default, the discussion is assigned to "Everyone" (all students enrolled in the course)
2. Reply to Topic Due Date and Time [2]
3. Required Replies Due Date and Time [3]
4. Available from (date) and Time [4]
5. Until (date) and Time [5]
6. Assign To [6] – give a select student (or select students) in the course a set of due dates that differ from the due dates assigned to all students in the course.

Example

- Assigned to Everyone (all students) [1]
- Reply to Topic Due Date and Time – May 28, 2025, at 11:59 pm [2]
- Required Replies Due Date and Time – May 31, 2025, at 11:59 pm [3]
- Available from – May 24, 2025, at 12:00 am [4]
- Until – June 1, 2025, at 11:59 pm [5]

# Discussion Checkpoints in SpeedGrader

In SpeedGrader, there are two entry boxes and one point total box.
1. Reply to Topic [1]
2. Required Replies [2]
3. Current Total [3]

You will also see all posts by the student being assessed [4].
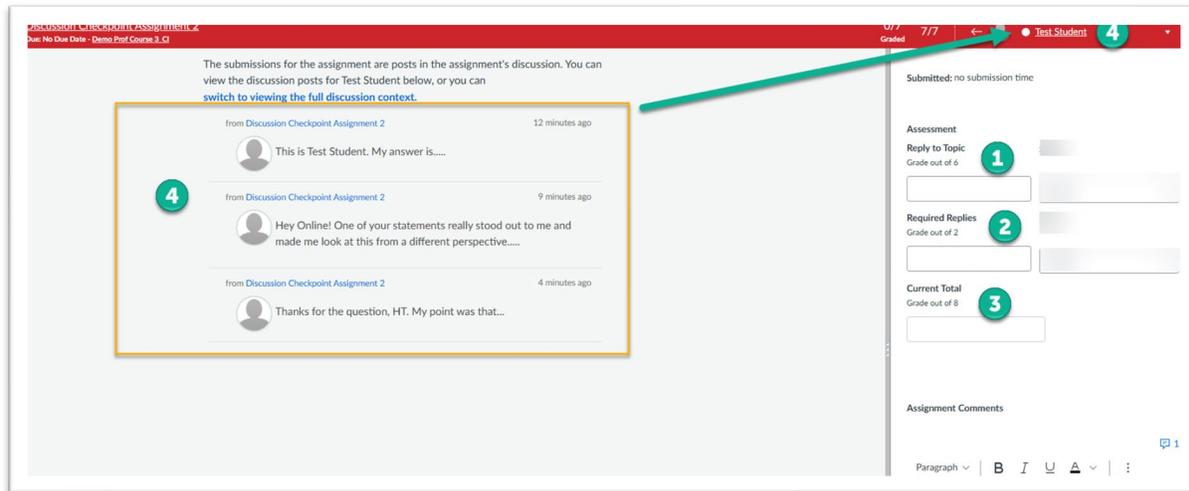
In the enhanced SpeedGrader (coming soon!), you will see an area where you can change the status of discussion submission [5].
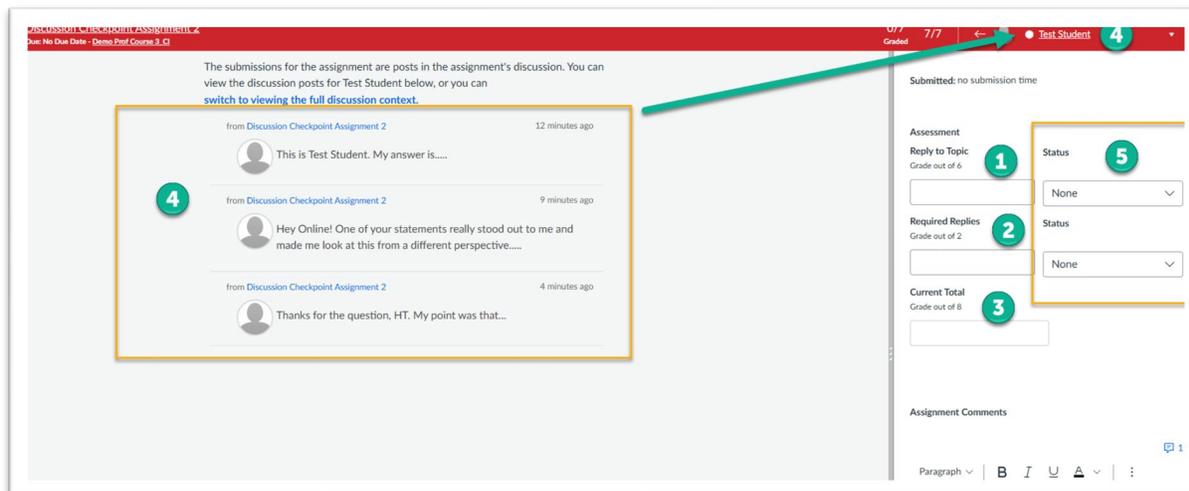
Example

- Reply to Topic [1] – 5 points
- Required Replies [2] – 3 points
- Current Total [3] – 8 points

FAQs

The following frequently asked questions and responses are provided directly from Instructure Canvas.

Overview Questions

1. **What counts as a "Reply to Topic"?**
   a. A top-level reply to the discussion topic.

2. **What counts as an "Additional Reply"?**
   a. Threaded responses to posts in the discussion.

3. **How does a student complete each checkpoint?**
   a. To meet the first checkpoint requirement, "Reply to Topic", a reply to the discussion prompt must be made. To meet the second checkpoint requirement, "Additional Replies", students must make threaded responses to other posts in the discussion.

4. **Does enabling this setting automatically enforce a discussion to be a threaded discussion?**
   a. Yes, threaded replies are required for checkpoints.

5. **If someone had the discussions checked to "Disallow threaded replies" at first and then enabled discussion checkpoints, would it automatically change it to allow threaded replies too?**
   a. The "disallow threaded replies" setting will be automatically deselected once discussion checkpoints are enabled for that discussion.

6. **Will I be able to give an override score for the total grade?**
   a. Not at this time.

7. **Are there other features that Discussion Checkpoints won't support?**
   a. Yes, though Canvas is looking at adding support for these areas in the future and will prioritize them based on customer needs. These areas include: Course Pacing, Moderated Grading, Curved Grades, Restrict Quantitative Data, and Mastery Paths.

8. **Will you be adding support for Group Discussions?**

      a. Canvas is working to support this.

9. **Will Checkpointed Discussions still work with Grade Passback?**
   a. Yes, because of how it's been architected there is still a single overall grade that will be passed back.

Checkpoints and Rubrics

1. **Can multiple rubrics be associated with each checkpoint?**
   a. Only one rubric can be associated with the entire discussion. Canvas has taken note of this feedback and they are already investigating future improvements.

2. **Will I be able to use "Use this rubric for assignment grading"?**
   a. No, not initially. Canvas is considering how to support this in the future. In the meantime, users will see a message in Speedgrader notifying them that the rubric will not be used to automatically grade the assignment.

3. **When adding a rubric, will the grade from the rubric scale to points set for the discussion, or will it need to match the exact same number of points?**
   a. Currently, users can set the total points on a rubric to be higher or lower than the total assignment points. This behavior is still available to users with discussion checkpoints.

4. **What will the grading experience look like in SpeedGrader when using a rubric with the current design and with the new Enhanced Rubrics?**
   a. It should be the same visual experience as grading any other assignment that has a rubric attached.

Legacy Rubrics

Enhanced Rubrics (Coming Soon!)

To-Do List, Notifications, and Calendar

1. **How will this appear on the instructor's To-Do list?**
    a. Instructors will see two items in their to-do list, one for each checkpoint.

2. **Will the instructor receive a To-Do grading notification for partial requirements met or only after the student has met all reply requirements (initial and the required number of additional replies)?**
    a. A To-Do notification is sent after each submission in a checkpointed discussion, with separate To-Do items created for each checkpoint.

3. **If an instructor grades the initial reply, will they still receive a To-Do notification to grade the student replies later?**
    a. Yes, notifications are sent based on each checkpoint.

4. **If a student makes another reply after grading, will a new To-Do notification appear for the instructor to know they may need to re-grade?**
    a. No, though an instructor can set their notifications to notify them anytime a post is made in the discussion.

5. **How will this be reflected in the To-Do List for students?**
    a. Students will see a to-do list item for each checkpoint, ensuring they understand when each element of the discussion is due, along with points possible for that checkpoint.

6. **Will students be able to get notifications/reminders for both due dates?**

a. Yes, the overall experience may vary depending on individual notification preferences.

7. **If they are no longer meeting a requirement after deleting a post, does it revert back to the To-Do List?**
    a. If they no longer meet the requirements the checkpoint no longer shows as complete. Its state will accurately show and update across Canvas.

8. **How do these show on the calendar?**
    a. Each checkpoint will show as its own calendar event.

9. **Can I use calendar drag and drop?**
    a. No, this feature is not currently supported by Discussion Checkpoints.

10. **What happens if I delete a checkpoint on the calendar?**
    a. Deleting a calendar event will delete both checkpoints (entire discussion).

11. **What happens if I edit a checkpoint on the calendar?**
    a. Editing a calendar event will take users to the edit page for the discussion.

Modules

1. **How do checkpoints show in modules for instructors?**
    a. Instructors will only see one item in the module for checkpointed discussions.

2. **How do checkpoints show in modules for learners?**
    a. Learners will see a more detailed view for checkpointed discussions.

3. **Do they take students/teachers to a different interface or work with module requirements?**
    a. At this time all users are taken to the discussion thread.

4. **Why did Canvas choose this design?**

a. Canvas's decision for choosing this design has multiple factors. One of the primary reasons for this work is to provide greater clarity to students on the different parts of an assignment. This detailed view allows learners to quickly see all parts and due dates.

b. This pattern has also already been implemented in other areas of Canvas for Peer Reviews in Assignment Enhancements Student (feature preview) so it isn't unfamiliar to learners today. The design is also one that will easily allow the feature to grow as we look to add functionality in the future.

5. **Do checkpoints have to be in the same module together?**
   a. At this time yes.

Grading Checkpoints

1. **Does SpeedGrader indicate which reply meets the "reply to the topic" vs "additional replies" or does it leave it up to the teacher to interpret based on all the replies?**
   a. No, because grading practices vary from instructor to instructor we've left this up to the instructor. Statuses like Late and Missing will automatically apply to checkpoints letting instructors know if the checkpoint requirements were met.

2. **Do the "additional replies" count all replies other than the first one?**
   a. To meet the second checkpoint requirement threaded responses must be made. This does not prevent the learner from making other posts in the discussion. All posts made by the student are shown in speedgrader in chronological order.

3. **If a student is only making replies to the topic and not to other posts, are they still meeting the requirement?**
   a. They'll meet the first checkpoint requirement but won't meet the second checkpoint requirement. All posts will still show in Speedgrader, allowing instructors to grade checkpoints even if the requirements are not technically met.

4. **Does it require the "additional replies" to be in response to someone else vs their own reply?**
   a. "Additional Replies" can be in response to any user. In some use cases, it would make sense for a user to be responding to their own post or mistakenly be responding to their own post. Deleted posts are not counted.

5. **As an example, if students aren't able to edit their own post and they make additional replies to their original post are those counting as "additional replies"?**
   a. Yes, they'll count as responses. Instructors will be able to see all posts in Speedgrader and grade accordingly.

6. **How do these requirements handle deleted posts?**
   a. We don't count deleted posts.

7. **Can I leave submission comments on each checkpoint?**
   a. Submission comments can only be left on the overall assignment, not for each checkpoint.

8. **How do statuses work with checkpoints?**
   a. Each checkpoint is capable of having its own status. So the first checkpoint could be excused, while the second checkpoint could be late. Or any other combination of statuses.

9. **How does Late status work with checkpoints?**
   a. If you have a late policy set in your course it will apply to each checkpoint individually. If a student is late on both checkpoints the late policy will adjust based on how it's set and then both checkpoints will total making the overall grade.

10. **Do custom statuses work with checkpoints?**
    a. Yes

11. **How will this appear within the bulk edit due dates area?**
    a. Checkpoints are not currently supported in bulk due date edits. They will simply not appear as an option.