



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Student guide to WebCT 6 Using the Discussions Tool

This guide details how to:

- How to read messages
 - Threaded and Unthreaded view
- How to write a message
 - How to check spelling using the HTML creator
- How to edit a message
- How to reply to a message
- How to add an attachment
 - How to open an attachment

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Discussion Boards

Discussion boards are a means of communication between tutors and students. The boards allow messages to be 'posted', these are visible to all who use the individual board. Messages can include attached files, such as WORD documents, PDF files and graphics. The tutor can choose to set up individual boards for different groups of students. These boards are named 'Topics' and allow the posted messages to be organised into relevant groups. Topics can also be made private, allowing only the students who are members to post and read messages in them.

Topics

The topics represent the main theme of the messages posted to them. For example, a tutor may set up a topic about an article. The tutor may even include the article as an 'attachment' to the first message. Any comments or replies are then posted to the same 'topic' and can be read by all. One of the most useful features of a public board is that public messages can be read by all members and, therefore, replies can be posted by any member.

Categories

Topics can be grouped into categories by the tutor, to keep relevant topics together.

Threads

Messages are organised into 'threads' as they are posted. A thread is a string of messages that follow on from each other. That is the replies to a posting are 'threaded' onto the end of the preceding message. This becomes important as it allows an 'argument' or 'discussion' to build up.

Starting to use the Discussion Board

You can access the discussion boards by pressing **Discussions** on the left menu. Your tutor might also have added links to discussion threads from other parts of the course. In the example below the tutor has set up a direct link to a topic called 'Welcome' from 'Course Content Home'.

The screenshot shows the 'Course Content Home' page. The left sidebar contains a 'Course Tools' menu with 'Discussions' highlighted. An arrow points from this menu item to a 'Welcome' link in the main content area. The main content area features a banner for 'Welcome to WebCT Campus Edition 6 EXAMPLE COURSE' and five icons with links: 'Welcome' (Why not post a message and tell us what you think of WebCT 6?), 'Resources' (Includes WebCT documentation), 'Assessment' (Includes an example quiz and assignment drop box), 'Narrated PowerPoints' (Information and example presentations), and 'Discussion groups' (Please sign-up for a discussion group).

If you access the discussion boards by pressing **Discussions** on the left menu you will see a list of all available discussions. To go into discussion click on one of the topic titles:

The screenshot shows the 'Discussions' page. The 'All Topics' tab is selected, showing a list of discussion threads: 'Welcome' (20 Messages), 'Hints and tips' (0 Messages), 'Discussion activities' (0 Messages), and 'Cafe' (5 Messages / 5 New). The 'Welcome' thread is highlighted with a red box and an arrow pointing to it.

If your tutor has used a direct link, as in the example above, this will take you to the discussion topic:

The screenshot shows the 'Welcome' discussion topic page. The page shows the 'Welcome' title, a description, and a list of messages. The first message is 'Hello and Welcome' by Beasley, Susie, dated 10 April 2006 11:06. The table below shows the list of messages:

Subject	Messages	Author	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hello and Welcome	7 (2 Unread)	Beasley, Susie	10 April 2006 11:06
<input type="checkbox"/> First visit	2		12 April 2006 12:52
<input type="checkbox"/> visiting			12 April 2006 13:43
<input type="checkbox"/> Hi			20 April 2006 12:39
<input type="checkbox"/> WebCT course			06 June 2006 11:27
<input type="checkbox"/> Well I've got this far			08 June 2006 14:46
<input type="checkbox"/> WebCT 6			22 June 2006 14:09
<input type="checkbox"/> hooray!	3 (3 Unread)		23 June 2006 15:16
<input type="checkbox"/> Sending a message	2 (2 Unread)		26 June 2006 13:56
<input type="checkbox"/> IPE			17 July 2006 10:43

How to read a message

Threaded View

The following picture shows an example discussion topic.

The screenshot shows a discussion topic titled 'Welcome' with a description: 'Why not post a message and tell us what you think of WebCT 6?'. The interface includes 'Expand All' and 'Collapse All' buttons, and a 'Display:' menu set to 'Threaded'. A list of messages is shown, with one thread expanded to show replies. Callout boxes provide the following information:

- The Description** will tell you what kind of messages your tutor would like you to send to this topic.
- You can see how many messages are in a thread and in bracket you can see how many are unread.
- The message view is **Threaded**.
- Beside the message you can see the name of the person who posted it.
- You can also see the date when they posted it.

WebCT has two ways you can look at the discussion messages, **Threaded** and **Unthreaded**. You can move between these views by clicking on the **Display** options **Threaded** and **Unthreaded**.



In the **Threaded** view, illustrated above, the Messages are organised into 'threads' as they are posted. A thread is a string of messages that follow on from each other. That is the replies to a posting are 'threaded' onto the end of the preceding message. This becomes important as it allows an 'argument' or 'discussion' to build up. Threads can be Expanded or Collapsed by pressing **Expand All** or **Collapse All**. A collapsed thread shows only the first message title, once this is expanded you can see the titles of all of the messages in the thread.

A Collapsed Thread:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hello and Welcome	7 (6 Unread)	Beasley, Susie	10 April 2006 11:06
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An Expanded Thread:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hello and Welcome	7 (6 Unread)	Beasley, Susie	10 April 2006 11:06
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			26 April 2006 14:12
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			02 June 2006 13:50
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			06 June 2006 11:23
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			11 June 2006 17:44
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			26 July 2006 08:52
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Re:Hello and Welcome			10 August 2006 10:51

You can **Expand** an individual thread by pressing:

You can **Collapse** an individual thread by pressing:

Unthreaded View

In the **Unthread** view you see the messages in the order of the date and time they were posted.

[Description](#)
Why not post a message and tell us what you think of WebCT 6?

Display: Threaded **Unthreaded** | All Unread

<input type="checkbox"/>	Subject	Author	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hello and Welcome	Beasley, Susie	10 April 2006 11:06
<input type="checkbox"/>	First visit		12 April 2006 12:52
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re:First visit		12 April 2006 12:56
<input type="checkbox"/>	visiting		12 April 2006 13:43
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hi		20 April 2006 12:39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re:Hello and Welcome		26 April 2006 14:12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re:Hello and Welcome		02 June 2006 13:50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Re:Hello and Welcome		06 June 2006 11:23
<input type="checkbox"/>	WebCT course		06 June 2006 11:27
<input type="checkbox"/>	Well I've got this far		08 June 2006 14:46

Page: 1 (1-10)

This may mean that the discussion messages appear on several pages. Use the Page drop-down menu to view other pages.

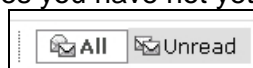
Page: 1 (1-10)

Page: 1 (1-10)
1 (1-10)
2 (11-20)
3 (21-21)
All (1-21)

Select the page you want to view and click the green arrow.

View All or Unread

You can also choose whether you want to see a list of **All** of the messages, in a topic. Or you can press **Unread**, this will show you only the messages that you have not yet read. The title of messages you have not yet read appears in bold text.

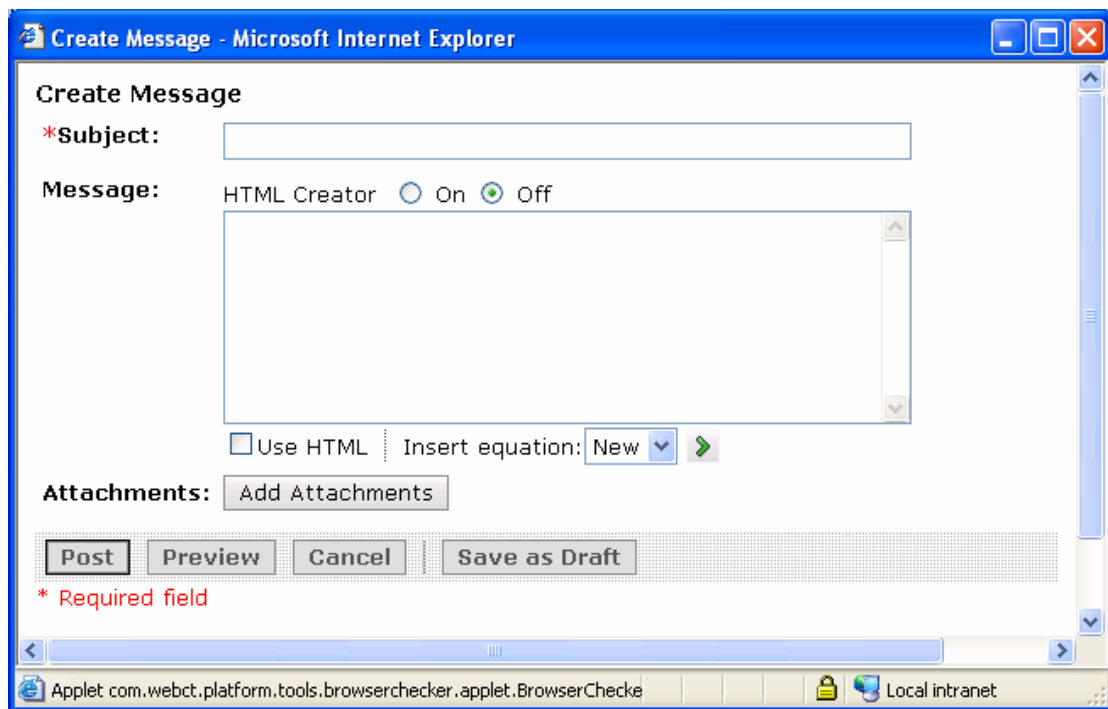


How to write a message

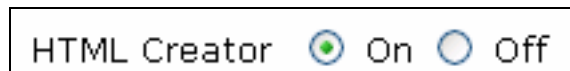
First go into a discussion topic where you would like to add a message. Then click the **Create Message** button.



This will open the **Create Message** window.

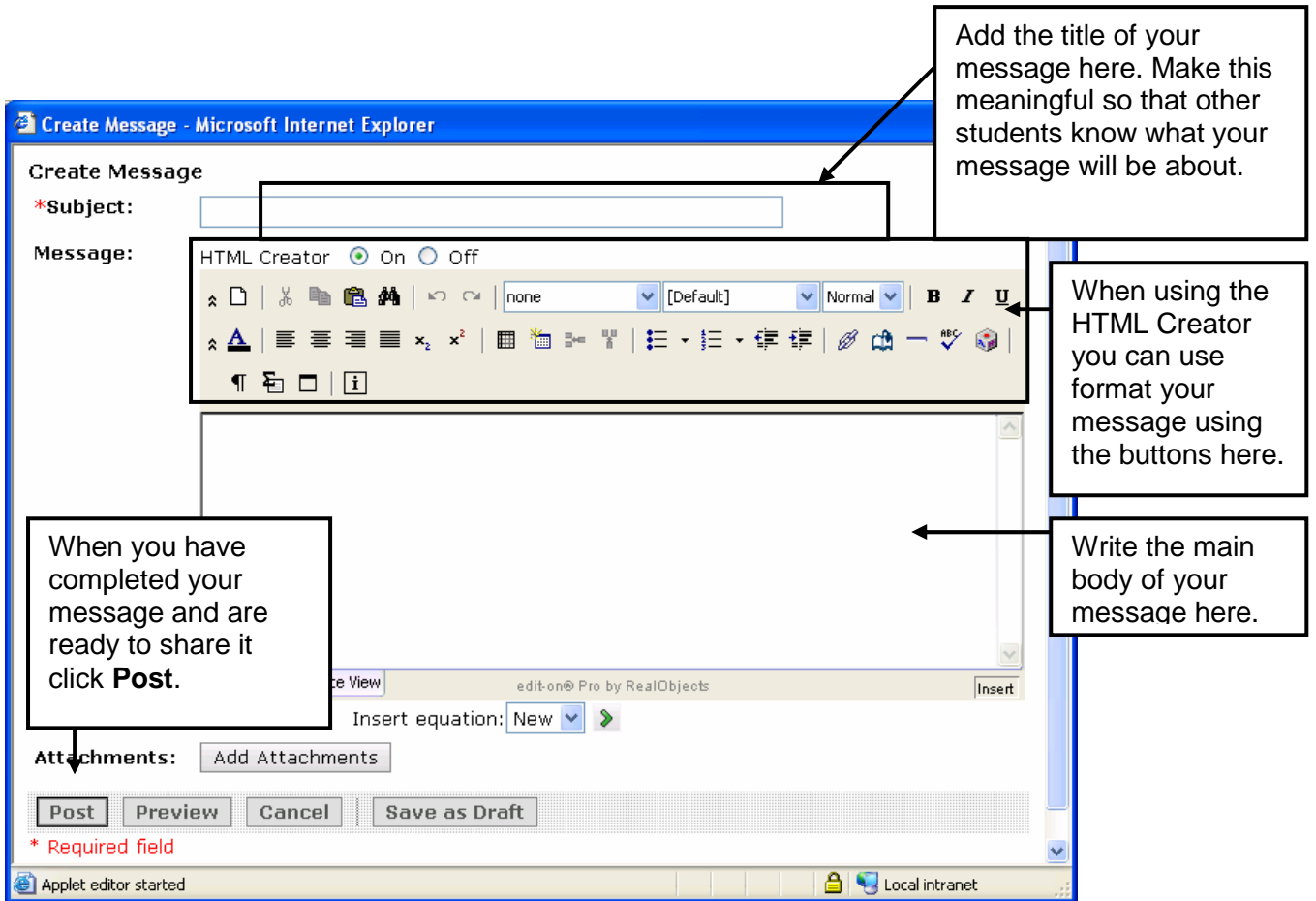


You can write your message in this view, or you can open the **HTML Creator**. Using this allows you to use the spell checker and formatting options.

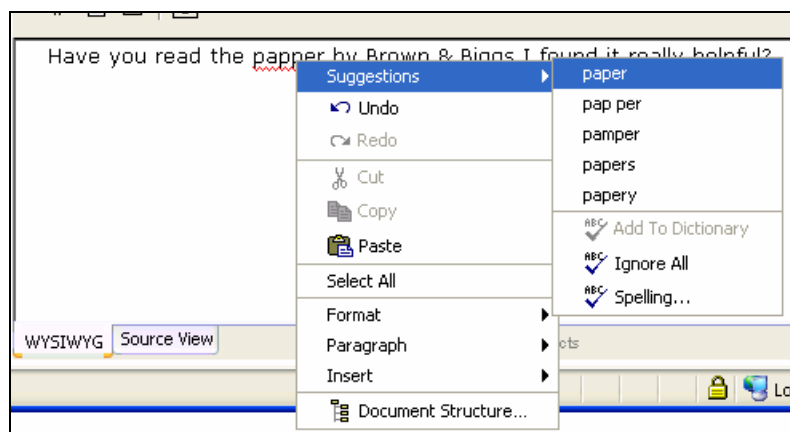
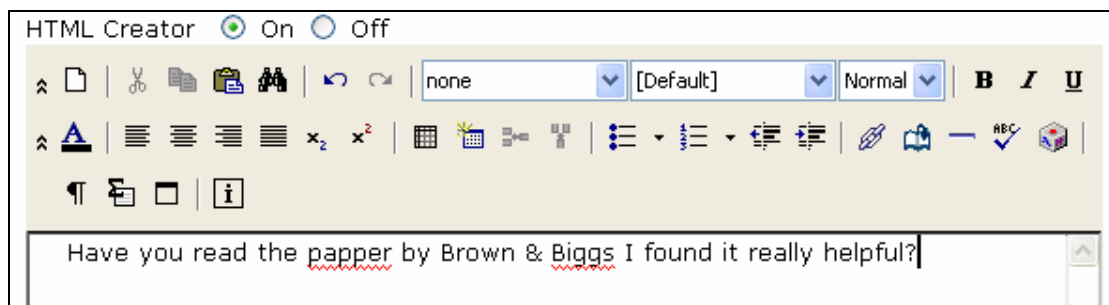



Note that there is a short delay while the **HTML Creator** opens, and you may see the following for a few seconds while it loads.





When you are using the HTML creator you are also able to check the spelling in your message. Any words that are misspelt are underlined in red. If you place your cursor on the word and click the right mouse button, you will see some suggested corrections.



You can also run a spell check on the message by pressing: 

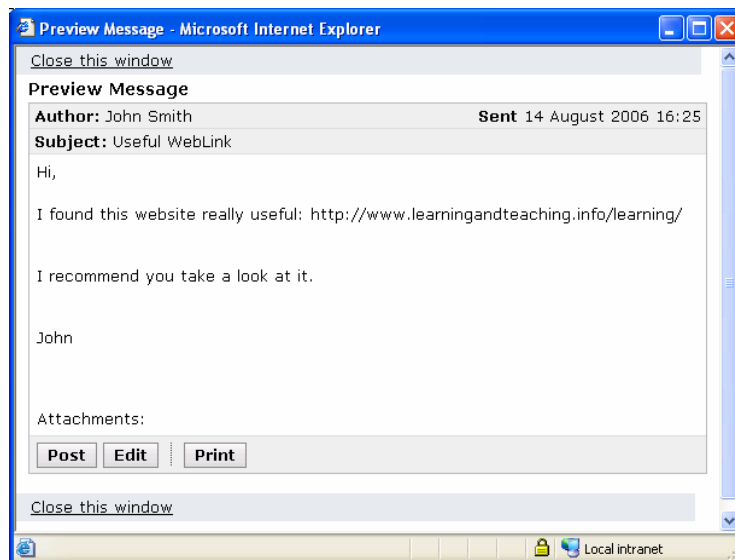
Once you have written your message you have several options. You will see at these bottom of the **Create Message** window. There are four options: **Post**, **Preview**, **Cancel** and **Save as Draft**.



Post - click to add your completed message to the discussion thread. You will see the following message **'Your message was posted successfully'** and your message will now appear on the list.



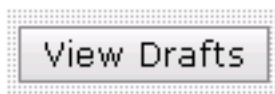
Preview - click to see what you message will look like before you decide to post it.



You can then check the message. If you want to make changes press **Edit**, or if you are happy with the preview you can press **Post**.

Cancel - click to this to delete the message without posting

Save as Draft - this lets you save the message to work on in the future. Once you have pressed **Save as Draft**, you will find the document by pressing **View Draft** on the top right of the screen.



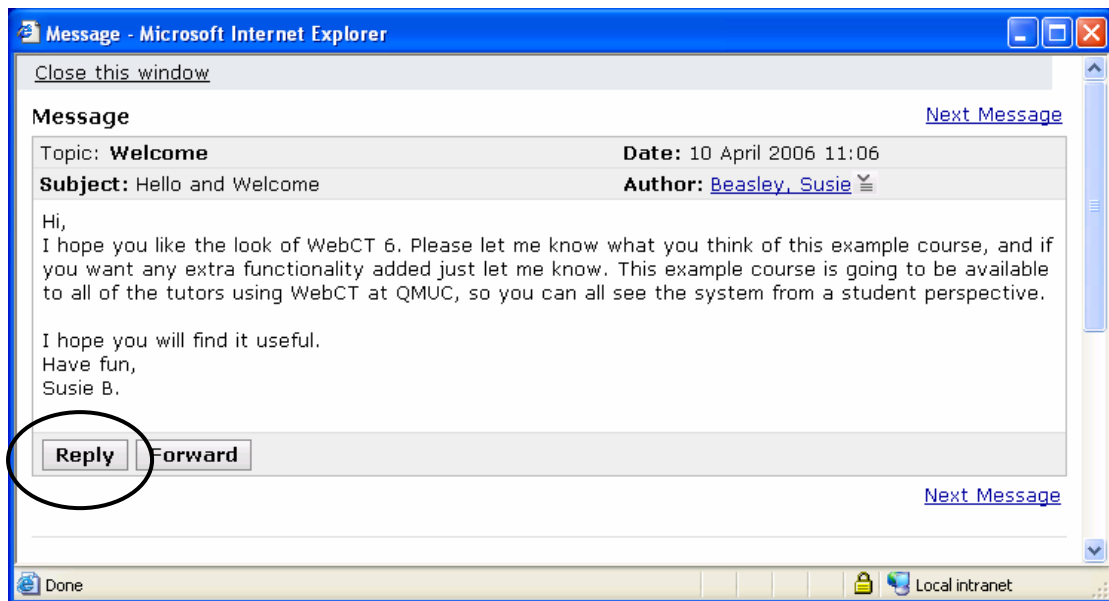
Pressing this will open a new window showing all of your draft messages:



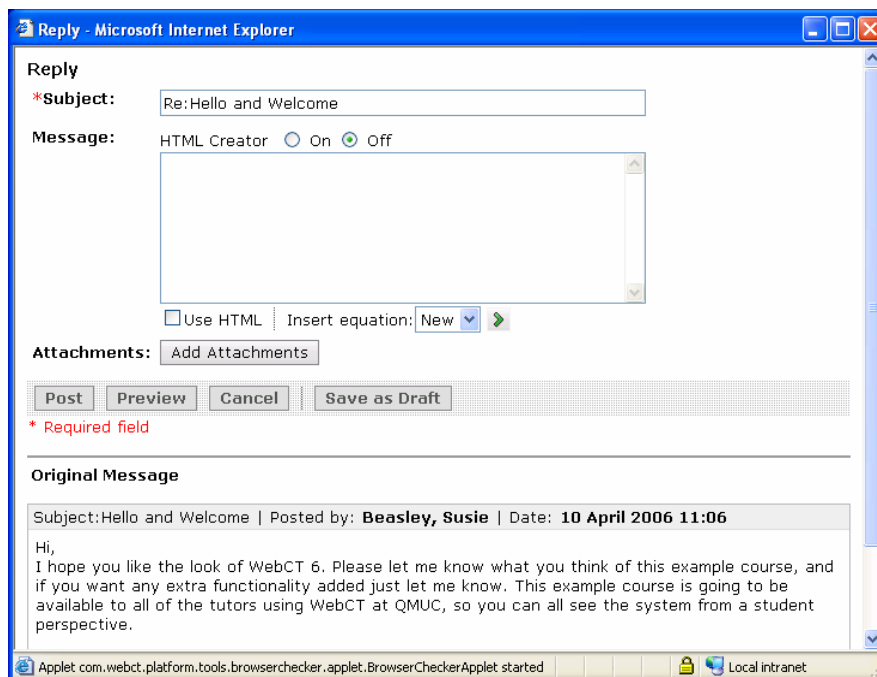
Clicking on the name of the message will reopen the message and allow you to re-edit or post it.

How to reply to a message

First open the message you would like to reply to:



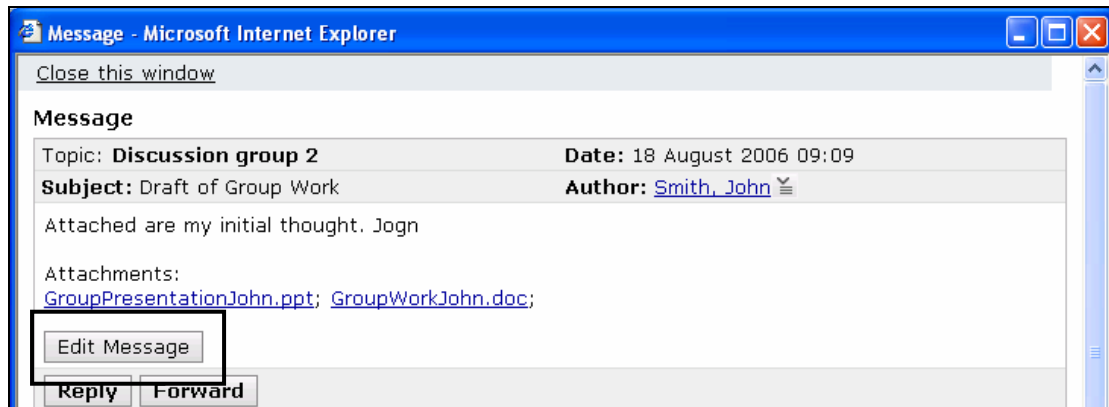
At the bottom of the message press the **Reply** button.



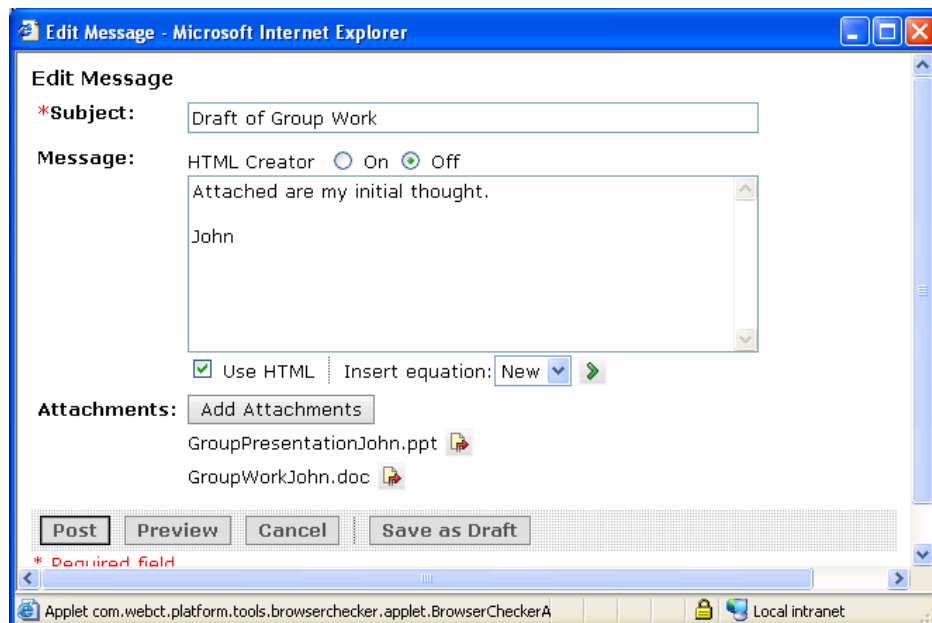
You can then write your reply and can see the original message at the bottom of the window. You can then decide if you want to **Post** the message, **Preview** it or **Save as Draft**.

How to edit a message

You tutor can choose to set up a topic to allow you to edit your messages after they have been posted. When you open a message that you have posted you will see a button at the bottom of the message to **Edit Message**.



You can then edit your message and click **Post**.



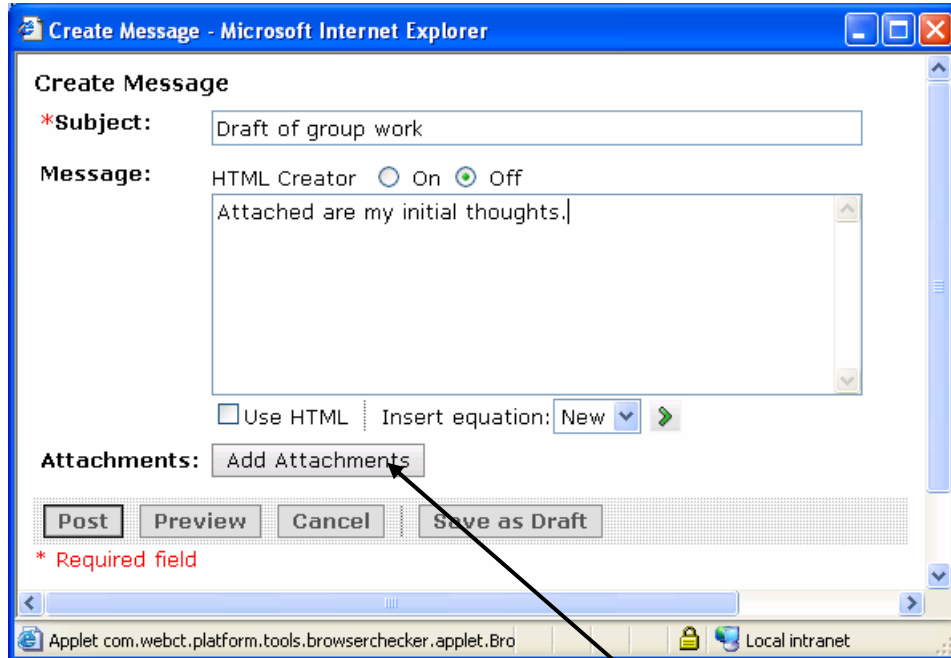
Please note that you can only edit your own messages.

How do I delete messages?

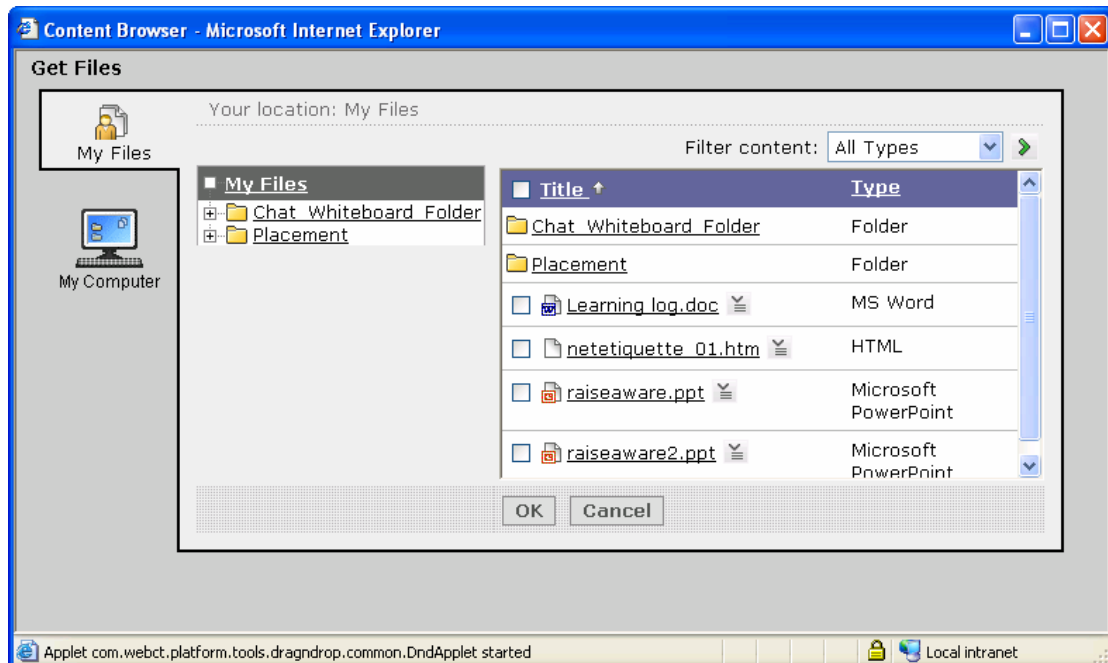
Only tutors can delete messages. If you are worried about a message you have posted, contact your tutor.

How to add an attachment

You can attach a single document or a group of documents to your message. For example you might want to share Word documents or PowerPoint presentations with your fellow students.



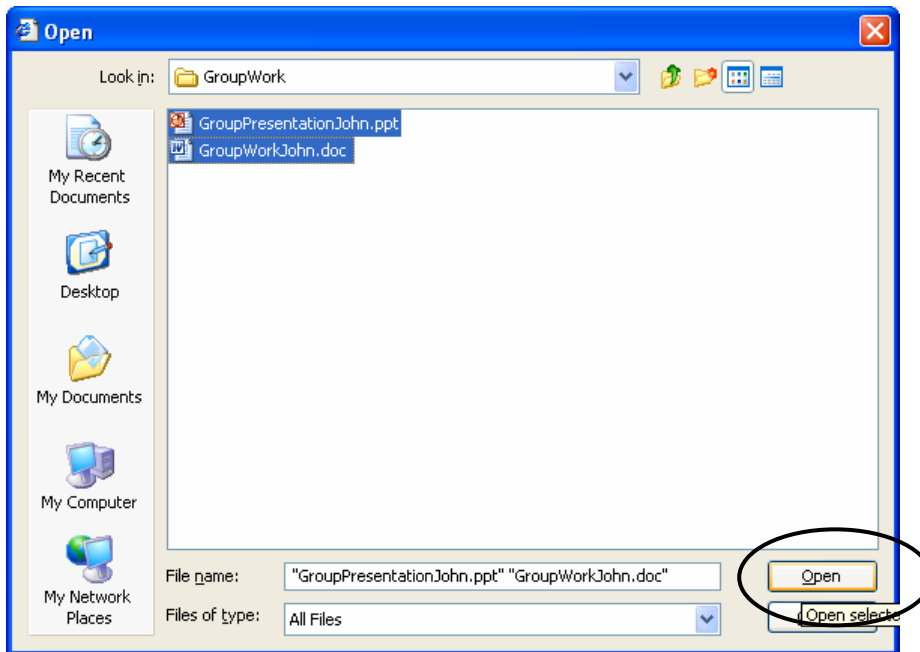
First write your message then click the button **Add Attachment**. This will open the File Browser.



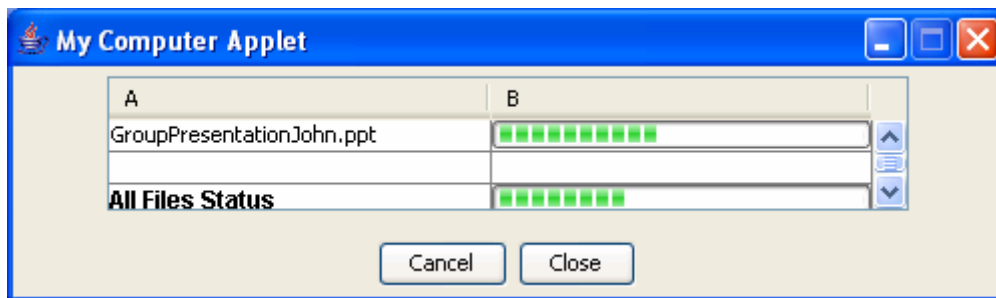
You can access two areas:

My Files - this shows files that you have already uploaded into your private file area in WebCT.

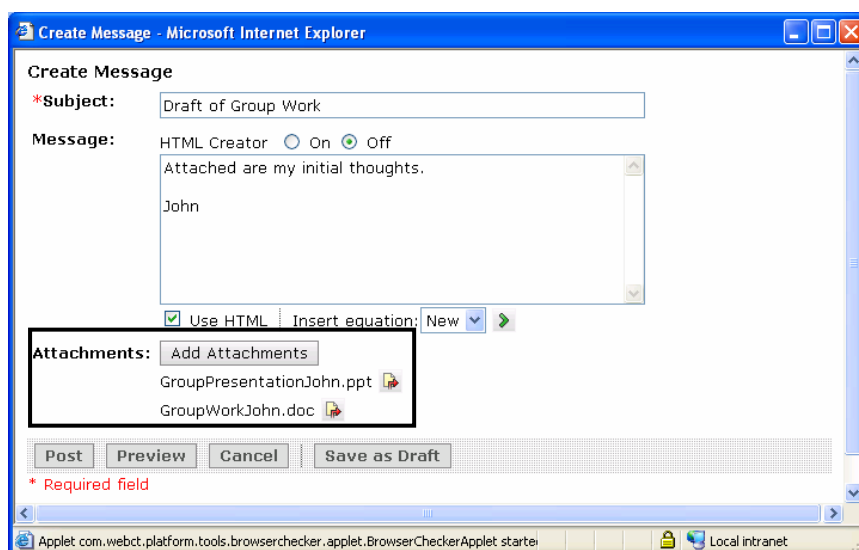
My Computer - this will allow you to navigate to files stored on your computer or on a storage device such as a memory stick. Once you have found the file or files you would like to attach to your message, highlight them and click **Open**.



You will then see a status bar which will close when your documents are attached.



When you look at the message you can see the details of the attached files at the bottom of the message.



You can remove an attachment if you need to by pressing the **Remove Attachment** icon beside it.



Once your message is ready, click **Post**.





Once you have posted your message it will look something like the picture below. When you look at your message you can see the attachment icon beside it, this shows others viewing the message that there is an attachment.


Discussion group 2

Create Message View Drafts

Expand All Collapse All Display: Threaded Unthreaded All Unread

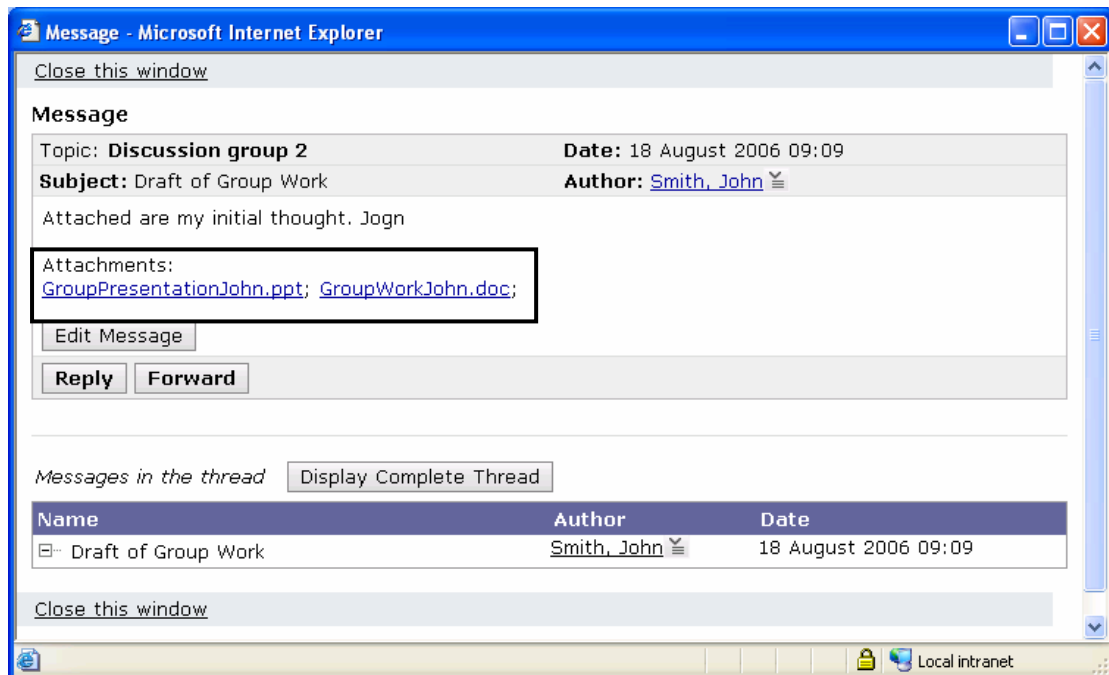
<input type="checkbox"/>	Subject	Messages	Author	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Draft of Group Work		Smith, John 	18 August 2006 09:09

Mark as Read Mark as Unread Create Printable View

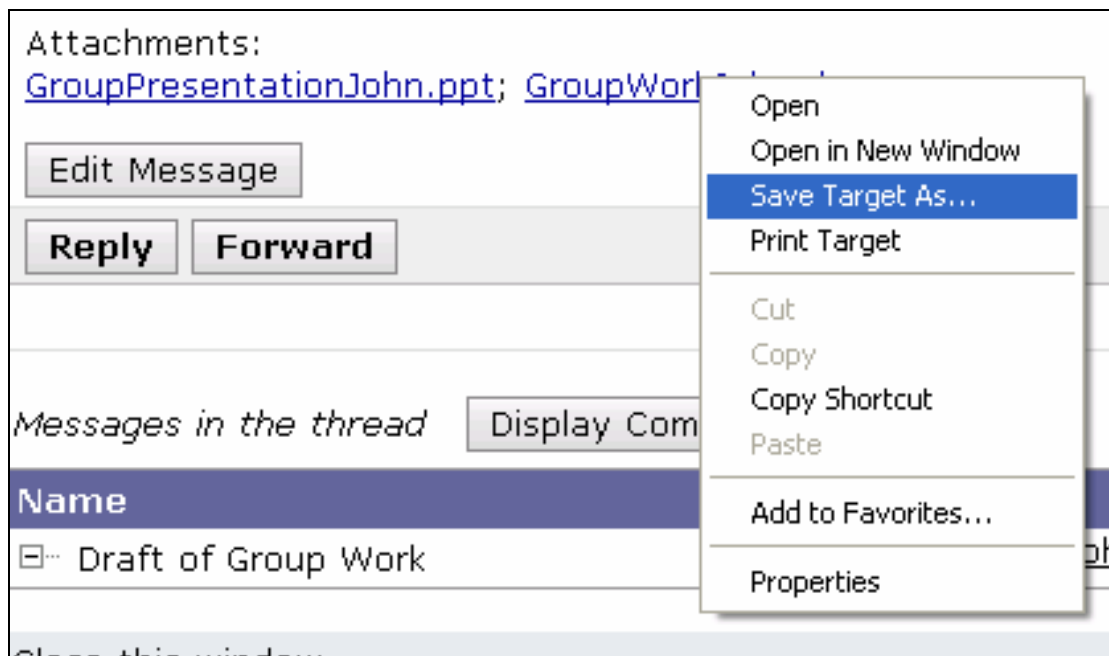
Create Message 

How to open an attachment

When you open the message you will see that the attachments appear as links at the end of the message. Click on the link to open the attachment.



You can also save the attachment. Place your cursor on the link and click the right mouse button, from here select **Save Target As** you can then save the file to your computer.



Public, Private and Locked topics

Topics can be set by you tutor to be:

Public: This means that all students and tutors registered for the WebCT module can both read and post messages.

Private: This means that the tutor has set this topic to be available to only a selected group of students and tutors. This group can access it can both read and post messages. Students and tutors who where not in the group would not be able to see this topic.

Locked: This means that students can no longer post to a topic, but can still read the messages. Your tutor might change this setting on a topic after an activity has taken place, to prevent further discussion.

Where to find help

If you have any issues accessing WebCT 6, please contact:

webct-admin@qmu.ac.uk

Please include your matriculation number in the message.



The screenshot displays the Queen Margaret University WebCT interface. At the top, the university logo and name are visible, along with navigation links for 'Change Password', 'Check Browser', 'Help', and 'Log out'. Below this, there are tabs for 'My WebCT' and 'Content Manager'. A welcome message reads 'Welcome, John Smith. Today is 28 June 2006.' and there are links for 'Channels', 'Colour', and 'Layout'. The main content area is divided into three columns: 'Calendar Day' (showing no entries for today), 'Course List' (listing 'QMUC Online Tutors - WebCT6 Example course' and 'WEBCT SUMMER SCHOOL - WEBCT SUMMER SCHOOL 2006'), and 'Personal Bookmarks' (listing 'Angles on Learning and Teaching' and 'Academic Regulations'). There is also a 'To Do List' on the left with one item: '1 - Take library book...'. A 'Campus Bookmarks' section is also visible on the right.