Once a discussion gets going, new messages can come in very quickly. There are a number of places in Learning Environment that identify new messages to help you keep on top of things:

- The Updates widget on your course homepage lists the total number of unread messages for all discussion topics in your course.

- The number of unread messages appears beneath each topic in the Discussions List. To see only topics with new messages, click Unread in the Filter by tool navigation. All topics that contain unread messages appear bolded if you have the Discussions List pane visible when viewing topics.

- Inside a topic, select Unread Only from the View drop-down list.

- You can subscribe to specific discussion forums, threads, or messages to receive an email notification whenever there is a new post.

**ASSESSING (EVALUATING) A DISCUSSION TOPIC**

**SETTING UP ASSESSMENT**

You can evaluate users' individual messages and have Learning Environment automatically calculate a topic score for each user, or you can assign a topic score directly to each user. If you choose to assess individual messages, you can specify how you want the system to calculate each user’s overall topic score.

**CONFIGURE A TOPIC FOR ASSESSMENT**

1. On the Discussions List page, click Edit Topic from the context menu of the topic you want to configure.

2. Click the Assessment tab.

3. If you want to link a topic score to a grade item, select your Grade Item from the drop-down list.

4. Specify the number you want to Score Out of. This is the scale, ranging from zero to the number you enter, that users are evaluated on. For example, if you enter 15, users are assessed on a scale from zero to fifteen.

5. Click Add Rubric to associate the topic with a rubric. Click the Create Rubric in New Window link to create a new rubric. See Creating a rubric for more information.
6. If you want to assess individual messages (rather than assigning an overall topic score directly for each user):

   a. Select the Assess each message and automatically calculate the topic score check box.

   b. Select the Calculation method you want to use to determine users’ overall topic scores based on message scores. See Calculation methods for more information.

   c. By default, the system ignores unassessed messages when calculating the topic score. However, if you want the calculation to treat unassessed messages as if those messages receive a score of zero, select the Include unassessed messages in the calculated score as zero check box.

7. Click Save and Close.