Conferencing

FirstClass Conferencing

A conference can be described as a public or group mailbox, a place where users can exchange information online and where group discussions may take place on one or many topics.

Conferences, as well as containing messages posted by other users, may also contain topic specific areas known as subconferences. Messages can be addressed directly to a conference, a red flag will appear by the conference icon when it contains messages you have not yet read. You must open the conference to be able to read the messages posted into it.

The Open University's FirstClass e-mail and conferencing system contains many thousands of conferences. Some of these are open to all Open University FirstClass Users such as the OUSA study areas; some are course specific restricted access areas and some are read only notice areas such as OU Service News.

By default your FirstClass desktop will contain a standard set of public conference areas and possibly course related conferences as well.

Many conferences will have a 'Welcome', 'Spirit of Conference' or 'About this conference' message in them explaining their purpose. It will probably be the first message in the conference, so you may have to scroll down the list of messages to find it.

Guidelines and tips for communicating with other FirstClass users can be found in the Information section of this site.

Conference Navigation

As users reply to discuss a topic in a conference, they create a thread of related messages about the particular dicussion topic. The original message on a specific subject and replies to it comprise a message thread. Every time users reply to a message in a conference, they are adding a new message to the thread.

Using Previous in Thread or Next in Thread

To open the conference you wish to navigate by either

. Highlighting the conference and from the menubar select File> Open> Open

Selected or

. Double-clicking on the conference icon to open it

Open a message that is part of a 'thread' by double-clicking on the name or subject of the message

From the tool bar select the Next in Thread icon or the Previous in Thread icon to navigate through a list of threaded messages within the conference

Click on the play button located at the bottom right hand corner of the

animation screen to play the movie taking you through navigating a FirstClass thread (also covered in the text above).

Using Next Unread

To open the conference you wish to navigate either

. Highlight the conference and from the menubar select File> Open> Open Selected or

. Double-click on the conference icon to open it

Open a message within the conference by double-clicking on the name or subject of the message

From the tool bar select the Next Unread icon to navigate through the messages within the conference

Click on the play button located at the bottom right hand corner of the

animation screen to play the movie taking you through navigating a FirstClass conference (also covered in the text above).

Send to Conference

To send a new message to a conference:

Open the conference you wish to send to by either

. Highlighting the conference and from the menubar select File> Open> Open Selected or

. Double-clicking on the conference icon to open it

Select Message> New Message from the menu bar, alternatively click the New

Message icon ![icon] on the toolbar

.

The new conference message will have been automatically pre-addressed to the conference

Add an appropriate subject title to your message

From the Menu toolbar select Message> Send and Close

or click the Send and Close icon ![icon]

Your message will appear in the conference with a red flag next to it

Reply to Conference

Once you have read a conference message you can send a reply back to the conference, enabling all users with access to that conference to read your response

Open the message you wish to reply to

From the toolbar menu select Message> Reply,

alternatively click the Reply icon ![icon] on the toolbar

A message window will open. The message will be pre-addressed to the conference and the subject field will also contain some pre-filled text indicating this message is a reply

Type in your response

Select Message> Send and Close from the toolbar menu to send the message

Reply with Quote to Conference

On completion of this exercise you will be able to reply to a FirstClass message in a conference including the text from another user.

All users with access to that conference will be able to read your response.

Open the message you wish to reply to

From the Menu toolbar select Message> Reply Special> Reply with Quote,

alternatively click the Reply with Quote icon ![icon] on the toolbar

Add any reply into the body of the message (you can delete the parts of the message that are not applicable - if you wish)

To send the message select Message> Send and Close from the toolbar menu

or click the Send and Close icon

Message Summary

Information and content from a group of messages can be pulled together into a single message window. This is known as summarising messages.

Decide which message thread you would like to summarise, press down the keyboard Ctrl and Shift keys at the same time, then click on the message subject of one of the messages in the thread with your mouse

This will highlight all the messages with the same subject title, i.e. messages in the same thread

From the menu bar select Message> Summarize Selected. A new Summary window containing all of the selected messages will open

This can be printed or saved as a text file to your computers hard disk using the File> Save As command

Search Conference

Open the conference to search by either

.
   Highlighting the conference and from the menubar select File> Open> Open Selected or

.
   Double-clicking on a conference icon to open it

From the Menu toolbar Edit> Find, alternatively to search a conference click on the Find icon on the toolbar

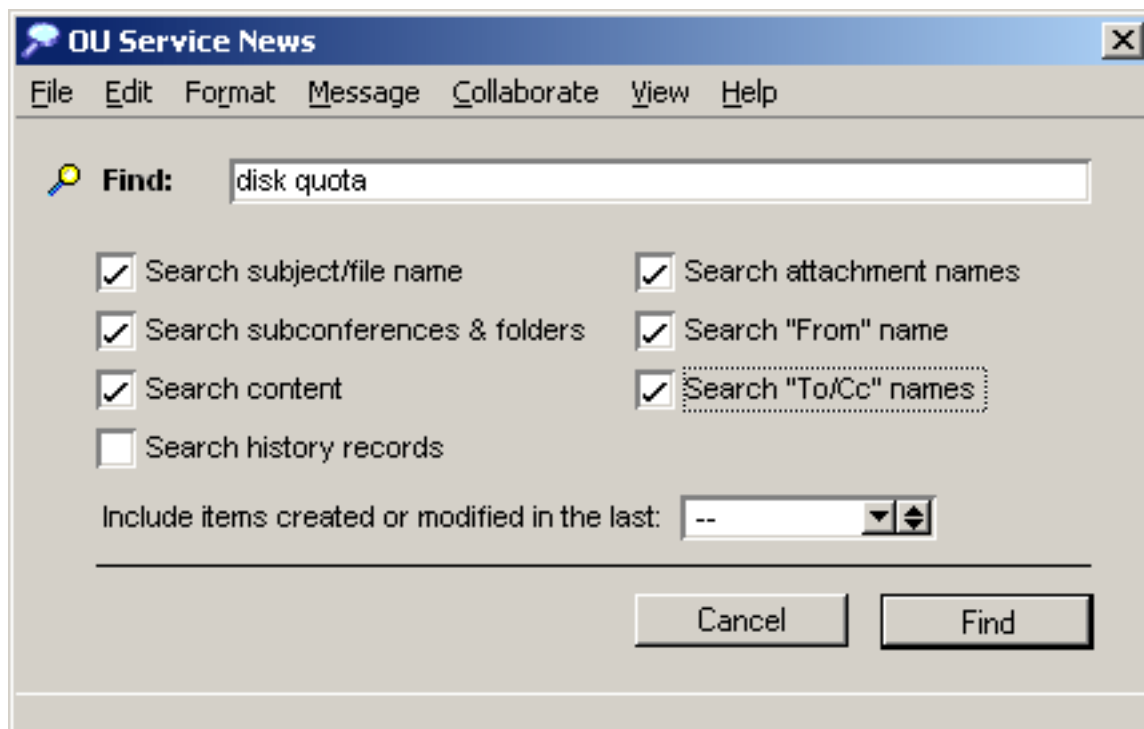The Find Dialogue Box as shown in Figure 1 will open

Figure 1 - Find Dialogue Box

Type your requirements in the Find: field. You can modify the search by selecting/unselecting the search criteria

Click on Find button to search the conference for your required match or Cancel to end the search

If match(es) are found they will be displayed as shown in figure 2 Match results
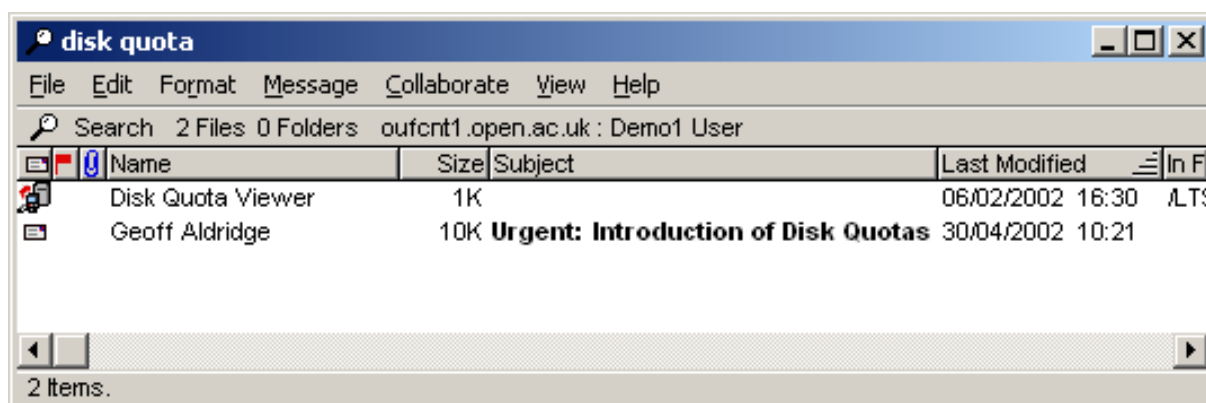

Figure 2 - Match results

Double-clicking on an entry in the search results window to open the message

Once you are finished close down the search results window