Ed Discussion for Students

As of May 2022, Ed Discussion is available to all Penn faculty, staff, and students. A Canvas integration is available for all courses taught through Penn Canvas.

Ed Discussion is an asynchronous discussion tool that provides a platform for students and members of the teaching team to interact through threaded conversation. Students can answer one another's questions, work on and run code together, embed videos, annotate images, and share documents. They can also like one another's posts, post anonymously, and receive instructor feedback all in one place.

In this article, you will learn more about the student experience in Ed Discussion. For information on utilizing Ed Discussion in your course as an instructor, view the guide linked here.

Before You Start

You will need the following before you can complete this task:

- You will need access to Canvas.
- If you are using Ed Discussion in a course that does not use Canvas, you may log in with your Penn email address at edstem.org/us/login.

Navigating Ed

From the student perspective, Ed Discussion has a clear set of color-coded categories, a searchable discussion area, and a big blue button for posting new threads. As with any tool, it is important to consult your professor or other teaching team members to best understand how this will be used in class. Some faculty include a pinned thread containing these instructions, so you can check for this, as well. The categories you see on the lefthand side are customizable and will differ from course to course, so keep this in mind when learning the functionality:

[✏ New Thread] Creating a New Thread

When creating a new thread as a student, you will see the option to pose a question or post. Note that the grayed-out item indicates it is deselected, while the colored item (shown below in pink) indicates a selection. In this example, the student has selected to pose a question:

Anything you post will need to include a title, category, and sub-category, if applicable. Once you begin typing your title, you can also see a drop-down for similar threads if you would like to reference an earlier post. To link to an earlier thread within the new post, since all threads are numbered, you can type the hashtag (#) sign followed by the thread's unique numeric value:

#30

#30 – Poll: Your Feedback on the ...
[Poll - View on Ed] [Poll - View on Ed]

In order to start drafting the question or post, you will need to first select a category. Once the selection is made, you will see the tool's rich content editor. The question or post can be private to just you and the teaching team, or you can share with the class while making it anonymous to other students:

New Question

? Question	🗐 Post

Title   Reading Question

▶ Similar Threads

Category   Week 1   Posts   Announcements   Questions

¶ | Paragraph ∨ | **B** *I* U ‹› ∞ ☰ ☰ ⊠ ▶ @ Σ ‹› ⊕ ☑ ⊙

I have a question about today's reading...

☐ Private
Visible to you and staff only

☐ Anonymous
Hide your name from students

Post

In the example below, an anonymous user posted a question about the homework under the Problem Sets category. In response, Ishtar answered the question by posting a guide which Cady found to be "very helpful." Also visible in the screenshot, students have the ability to "heart" questions, answers, posts, and comments they love, and they can also "star" and "watch" questions or posts, making it easier to filter the content in the discussion area:

Filter ⌄

Visual Analysis Assignment Sample
General   Taylor Kahny STAFF   1mth   8 (7 new)

● Welcome!
General   Taylor Kahny STAFF   1mth

10 Jul 2022

Question about homework
Problem Sets   Anonymous   1mth   2

Question about homework #3

Anonymous
Last mo. in **Problem Sets**

I need help with #3...
Comment ···

⭐ UNSTAR   👁 WATCHING   4 VIEWS

1 Answer

I   Ishtar Test286
6 min. ago

I found the following guide helpful for answering Question 3:

📄 howtocreateaworldclassrecog.pdf

❤ 1

Comment ···

💬 Add comment

C   Cady Test280 now
Very helpful!
♡ Reply Edit Delete ···

Your Answer

⚡ | Paragraph ⌄ | **B** *I* U ‹› 🔗 ☰ ☰ 🖼 ▶ 📎 Σ ‹› ⊕ ✐ 👁

Rich Content Editor

When you draft a new thread or comment on someone else's content, you will edit the post through the rich content editor. The editor provides tools for formatting text, inserting media, LaTex, and other programming language snippets. In addition, you can directly create formatted text and mathematical equations by typing in Markdown and LaTex syntax:

Format **text**   **Hyperlink** text   Create a **list**   Upload an **image**   Embed a **video**   Upload **documents**   Write an **equation**   Write **code**   Insert **web snippets**   Annotate **images**

Paragraph ▼ | **B** *I* U ‹› 🔗 ☰ ☰ 🖼 ▶ 📎 Σ ‹› ⊕ ✐ 👁

Ed Discussion allows users to:

- Upload images
- Embed videos
- Write math equations
- Upload documents
- Embed runnable codes
- Annotate images

$$u(x,t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{4\pi kt}} \int_0^\infty \left[\exp\left(-\frac{(x-y)^2}{4kt}\right) - \exp\left(-\frac{(x+y)^2}{4kt}\right) \right] g(y), dy$$
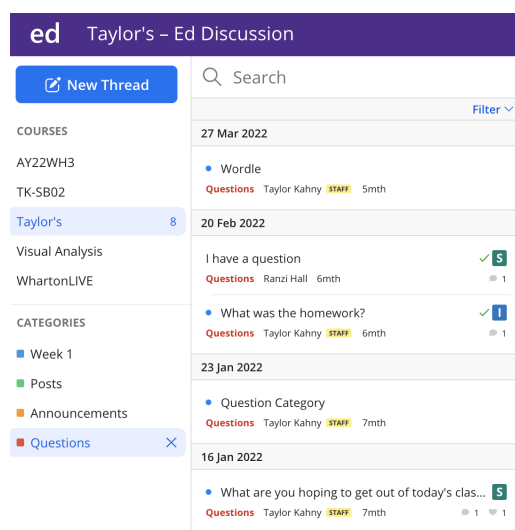
▶ Run   ☑ Line Numbers ☑ Runnable   Python ⬍ ⛶

```
1  print ("Hello, world!")
```

Hello, world!

☐ Private
Visible to you and staff only

Post

Submit your **post**

Categories

When toggling among categories within Ed Discussion, the chosen category's threads will appear underneath the search bar within the discussion area as shown below:


Each thread in the category is organized by date with the category, author, and related icons indicated on each separate post. Your instructors may have as many or as little categories as they choose.

Important Key for Understanding Thread Icons

- Threads with a blue dot   are **unread**. These are threads that you have not seen.
- Threads with a green tick   are questions that have been **resolved**. This means that the question has already been answered.
- Threads with a purple pin   have been **pinned** and will be kept at the top of the discussion list to increase visibility and encourage ongoing discussions**.** Pinned threads are generally reserved for announcements or important information. Only instructors can choose which threads to pin.
- Threads with a blue ribbon   have been **endorsed** by course instructors. This is usually done by instructors to distinguish high-quality content.
- Threads with a heart signify **agreement**.   Hearts are private and do not reveal identities.
- Threads with a star are **bookmarked**   to refer back to later. Stars are private to the individual.
- Threads with an eye icon selected   are those in which you are **subscribed** to receive thread activity email notifications.
- Threads with the "S" icon   indicate a **student has answered** a question thread.
- Threads with the "I" icon   indicate an **instructor has answered** a question thread.

Filtering

In terms of organizing your view as a student, Ed Discussion allows for many filtering options. You can filter by unread items; the latest replies; threads that are unanswered (for questions only), unresolved (for questions only), or endorsed; items you have set to watch or have starred; your private content; any public content; posts from the teaching team; and threads only created by you:
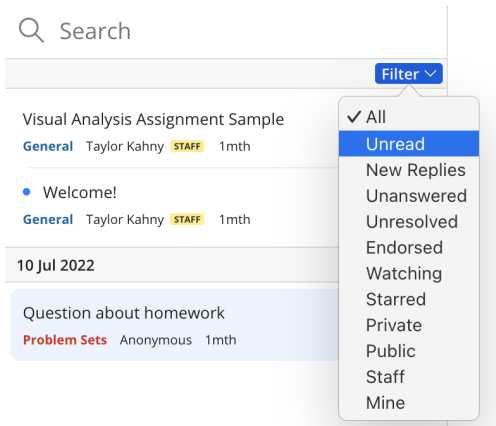
Searching

In order to quickly find posts within the discussion area, you can use the search bar to extract key words from threads. In the example below, the word "question" appears in five different posts within this particular course's Ed Discussion site:
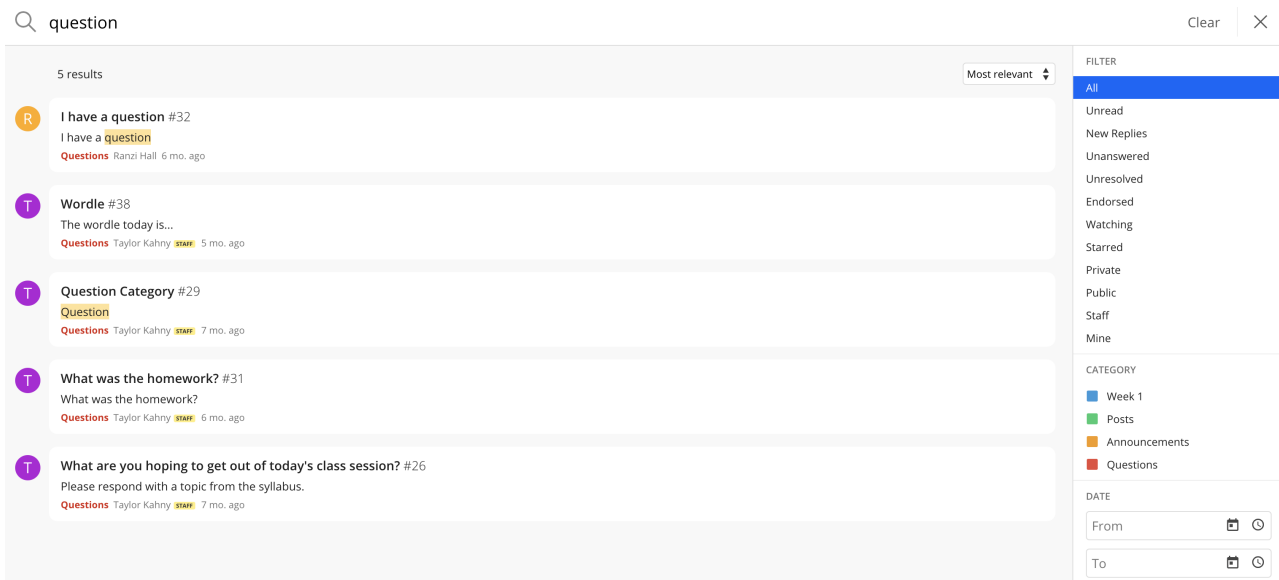
To drill down the search even further, you can select one of the filtered options, a specific category, or even a date range.

Notifications

In the upper right corner of your screen, next to the home dashboard, you will see a bell icon indicating notifications. The notifications are organized by date with a section for "All" notifications and "Unread" notifications. There is also an icon enabling you to mark all notifications as "Read." Similar to the color scheme when posting a new thread, any item that is unread appears blue, while the notifications you have already read are grayed out as shown below:
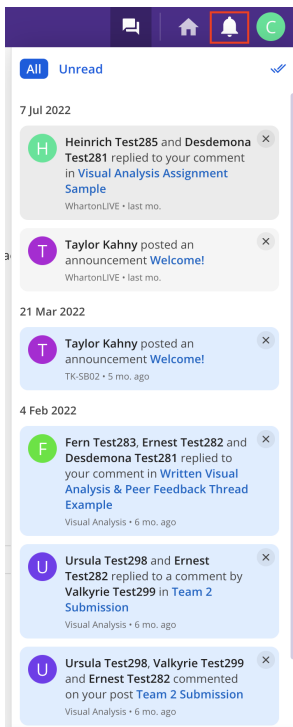
Please note that you will not receive Ed Discussion notifications via Canvas directly, as this is an LTI tool existing as a separate application.

To customize your notification settings, see the **Profile Settings** section below.

Profile Settings

In Ed Discussion, there are ways to further customize your user experience in the **Settings** tab under your account profile:
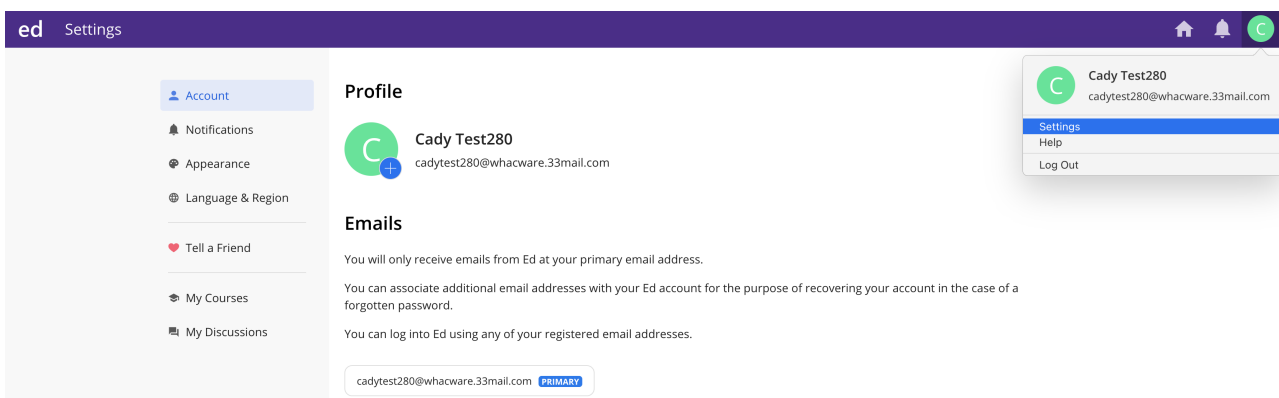
From the Account section pictured above, check to make sure your primary email address is set to your Penn email address. This way, you will receive all Ed Discussion notification emails at this address.

For added security measures, you can also set a password or enable Two-Factor Authentication for your account.

To edit your notification settings, you can toggle to the **Notifications** tab shown below:

You can enable desktop notifications, choose how frequently you receive emails from Ed Discussion or turn this off entirely, and you can toggle various options for the email notifications you would like to receive.

To receive automatic emails from Ed Discussion directly to your @upenn email address, the notifications should be changed to "Instant" rather than the default option:

Under the **Appearance** tab, Ed Discussion enables you to change from Light to Dark mode, even providing an option to sync the particular mode with your operating system's settings. In addition, you can change the threaded list style to full (default), compact, or ultra compact.

The **Language & Region** and **My Courses** tabs enable you to alter the language and time zone and view all courses you are enrolled in that utilize Ed Discussion. Under **My Discussions**, you can drill down to specific threads, answers, and comments you have made on your course discussion boards, making it easy to return to a

conversation without having to search through all user threads:

Using Ed on a Mobile Device

For those who wish to post discussions and respond on a mobile device, it is recommended to add Ed to the phone's homescreen for easy access:

For **iOS**, visit edstem.org in Safari and tap **Share>Add to Home Screen**.

For **Android**, visit edstem.org in Chrome, tap the **menu icon** (3 dots in upper right corner), and select **Add to Home Screen.**

Questions?

If you need more assistance, please contact courseware@wharton.upenn.edu for support.