

Ed Discussion for Faculty

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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**; in 2023, a **chat feature** has been introduced and can be added to a course already using Ed Discussion.

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 instructor experience in Ed Discussion. For information on utilizing Ed Discussion in your course as a student, [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 faculty perspective, Ed Discussion has a clear set of color-coded categories, a searchable discussion area, and a big blue button for posting new threads. It is recommended to include a pinned thread containing instructions for how the tool will be utilized in class, as students will likely have questions about discussion etiquette and overall setup. The categories you see on the lefthand side are customizable and will differ from course to course, so you can add, edit, and delete categories to best fit your teaching needs:

The screenshot displays the Ed Discussion interface for the CIS550 Spring 2022 course. The top navigation bar includes icons for 'Start a new thread', 'Filter by status of post', 'Open EdDiscussion', 'Stay notified about posts', and 'Profile settings'. The sidebar on the left shows 'COURSES' and 'CATEGORIES' with toggle options. The main content area features a 'Welcome to CIS550' post by Edward Tao, with a 'Filter' dropdown menu open showing options like 'All', 'Unread', 'New Replies', etc. The post content includes a welcome message, 'How to get started' instructions, 'How to get help' information, 'Ed Discussion' guidelines, 'TA Office Hours', and 'Instructor OH/Weekly Recitations'.

Edward Tao, Penn Engineering, via <https://online.seas.upenn.edu/student-knowledge-base/ed-discussion/>

Creating a New Thread

When creating a new thread as an instructor, you will see the option to pose a question, post, or announcement. Students will have the ability to draft only a question or post, so they will not see the Announcement option. Note that the grayed-out items indicate they are deselected, while the colored item (shown below in blue) indicates a selection. In this example, the instructor has selected to pose a post:

New Thread

New Post

Question

Post

Announcement

Title

Category

Week 1

Posts

Announcements

Questions

Select a category.

Pinned

Keep at top of thread list

Private

Visible to you and staff only

Anonymous

Hide your name from students

Anonymous Comments

Allow anonymous comments

Megathread

Resolvable comments

Post

Anything you post will need to include a title, category, and sub-category, if applicable.

In order to start drafting the thread, you will need to first select a category. Once the selection is made, you will see

the tool's rich content editor. The question, post, or announcement can be pinned at the top of the discussion thread list, private to just you and your teaching team members, anonymous, or set as a **megathread**, meaning you can collate all questions on a specific topic into a single thread. As the instructor, you also can enable anonymous comments.

Specific to Announcements, you can check the box to send out email notifications as shown below. Note that as the instructor, you also can schedule a post if you would like to send it out at a specific time:

New Announcement

SchedulePost

? Question

Post

Announcement

Title

Welcome to Class!

Category

Week 1

Posts

Announcements

Questions

Paragraph

B I U <> ↻ ☰ ≡ 🖼️ ▶ 🔍 ⌂ ⏪ ⌕ ↩ 👁

Hello! Here are some tips for the first day...

☐ Pinned
Keep at top of thread list

☐ Anonymous Comments
Allow anonymous comments

☐ Megathread
Resolvable comments

☒ Email
Send email notifications

Draft saved

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. You as the instructor can pin posts to the top (as depicted by the purple pin icon), mark an answer as "accepted" by clicking the grayed out check mark boxed below, and "endorse" an item to distinguish high-quality content:

Search

Visual Analysis Assignment Sample

General Taylor Kahny **STAFF** 1mth
 8 (8 new)

Welcome!

General Taylor Kahny **STAFF** 1mth

Question about homework
 2

Problem Sets Anonymous 1mth

Question about homework #3

Anonymous
Last mo. in **Problem Sets**

PIN
 STAR
 WATCH
5
VIEWS

I need help with #3...

Comment
Edit
Delete
Endorse ...

1 Answer

Ishtar Test286
2 days ago

I found the following guide helpful for answering Question 3:

1

howtocreateaworldclassrecog.pdf

Comment
Edit
Delete
Endorse ...

Cady Test280 2d

Very helpful!

Reply
Edit
Delete ...

Your Answer

Paragraph
 B
 I
 U
 <>

Rich Content Editor

The screenshot shows the Ed Discussion editor interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with various icons. Callout lines point from labels to specific icons: 'Format text' points to the Paragraph dropdown; 'Hyperlink text' points to the link icon; 'Create a list' points to the bulleted list icon; 'Upload an image' points to the image icon; 'Embed a video' points to the video icon; 'Upload documents' points to the document icon; 'Write an equation' points to the math icon; 'Write code' points to the code icon; 'Insert web snippets' points to the code icon; and 'Annotate images' points to the eye icon.

The main content area contains the text 'Ed Discussion allows users to:' followed by a bulleted list:

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

Below the list is a mathematical equation:

$$u(x,t) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{4\pi kt}} \int_0^\infty \left[\exp\left(-\frac{(x-y)^2}{4kt}\right) - \exp\left(-\frac{(x+y)^2}{4kt}\right) \right] g(y) dy$$

Below the equation is a code editor with a 'Run' button. The code editor has checkboxes for 'Line Numbers' and 'Runnable', and a dropdown for 'Python'. The code is:

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

Below the code editor is the output 'Hello, world!'. At the bottom left, there is a 'Private' checkbox with the text 'Visible to you and staff only'. At the bottom right, there is a blue 'Post' button. A callout line points from the label 'Submit your post' to the 'Post' button.

- 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**

Ed - Quick Start Guide (Version One), via <https://edstem.org/quickstart/ed-discussion.pdf>

As an instructor, you also have the option to create a poll. To create a poll, click on the lightning bolt from your content editor, and then establish suitable question and answer types. There are currently two question types: multiple-choice and multiple-answer:

Poll results are displayed in realtime and do not require the page to be refreshed to get the most current data.

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. As the instructor, you may have as many or as little categories as you choose.

Important Key for Understanding Thread Icons

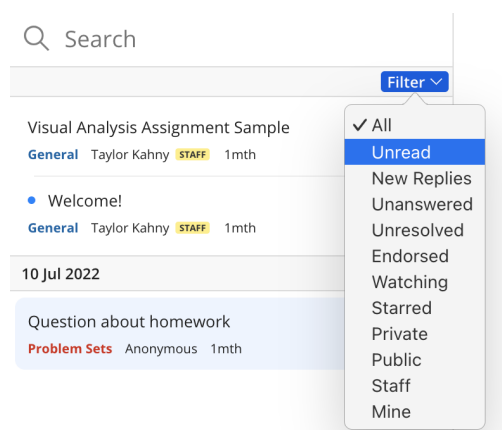
- Threads with a blue dot are **unread**. These are threads that you have not seen.
- Threads with a green tick are questions that have been **resolved**. This means that the question has already been answered.
- Threads with a purple pin have been **pinned** and will be kept at the top of the discussion 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  WATCHING 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 an instructor, 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:

question

Clear

×

5 results

Most relevant

I have a question #32

I have a question

Questions Ranzi Hall 6 mo. ago

Wordle #38

The wordle today is...

Questions Taylor Kahny 5 mo. ago

Question Category #29

Question

Questions Taylor Kahny 7 mo. ago

What was the homework? #31

What was the homework?

Questions Taylor Kahny 6 mo. ago

What are you hoping to get out of today's class session? #26

Please respond with a topic from the syllabus.

Questions Taylor Kahny 7 mo. ago

FILTER

All

Unread

New Replies

Unanswered

Unresolved

Endorsed

Watching

Starred

Private

Public

Staff

Mine

CATEGORY

Week 1

Posts

Announcements

Questions

DATE

From

To

To drill down the search even further, you can select one of the filtered options, a specific category, or even a date range.

Analytics

As an instructor, you can view and download analytics depicting participation stats, such as views, threads, and answers, for a certain point in time. Access your Course Analytics by clicking the tab boxed in red below:

ed Taylor's - Ed Discussion

New Thread

Search

Filter

COURSES

FNCE 250 91

FNCE 750 5

MGMT 773 Q3 4

MGMT 773 Q4 10

Taylor's 1

11 more

This Week

Ed

Week 1 - Videos Cady Text280 19h

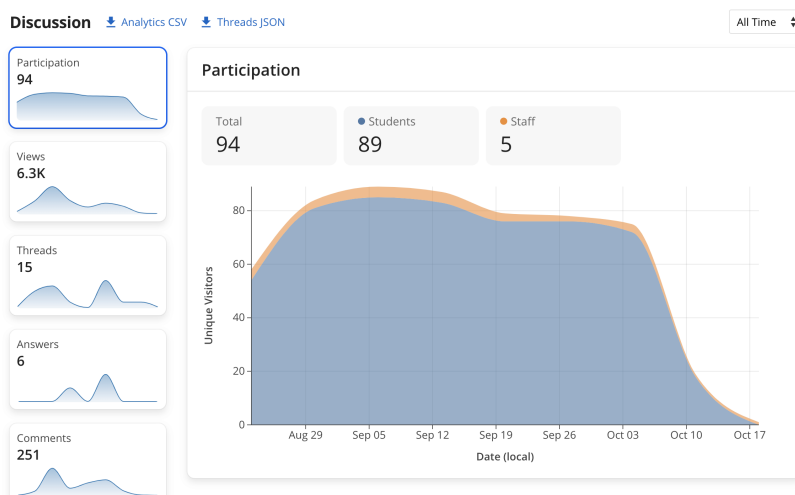
27 Mar 2022

Wordle

Questions Taylor Kahny 5 mo. ago

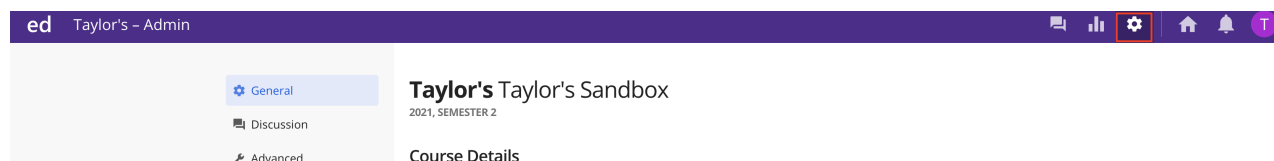
20 Feb 2022

You can also view details on top contributors in the class. These stats can then be downloaded and viewed in .csv format for further drill-down capabilities such as user email addresses, roles, and specific activity metrics. The image below shows how these metrics appear from your Analytics tab:



Admin

Another feature specific to a teaching team member role is the Admin tab. You can access this by clicking the gear icon boxed in red below:



When working with the admin controls, you will see three different sections: General, Discussion, and Advanced.

In the **General** section, it is not recommended to further edit your Course Details or send out a Join Link, as this syncing happens through Canvas. However, you will need to activate your course for each new semester once you are ready to make Ed Discussion available to students:

Activate Course

Activate the course to allow students access.

Activate Course

Then, under "Users," please check to make sure all members of your Canvas course are appropriately synced by clicking the blue "Sync With LMS" button show below:

General

Discussion

Advanced

Users

37 users (34 students) are enrolled in this course. All users have accepted their invitation.

Click a cell to edit its value. Press **↵** or click away to save the changes, or **⌘** to cancel.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yousef Test264	youseftest264@whacware.33mail.com	Staff	90304385	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anisa Test240	anisatest240@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304361	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brax Test241	braxtest241@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304362	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cady Test280	cadytest280@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90310813	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cassian Test242	cassiantest242@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304363	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Damon Test243	damontest243@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304364	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Desdemona Test281	desdemonatest281@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90310814	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emmett Test244	emmetttest244@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304365	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ernest Test282	ernesttest282@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90310815	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farrell Test245	farrelltest245@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304366	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gail Test246	gailtest246@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304367	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Homer Test247	homertest247@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304368	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ida Test248	idatest248@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304369	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jasmine Test249	jasminetest249@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304370	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kenya Test250	kenyatest250@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304371	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Layla Test251	laylatest251@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304372	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitchell Test252	mitchelltest252@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304373	Enrolled	⌵
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nikola Test253	nikolatest253@whacware.33mail.com	Student	90304374	Enrolled	⌵

Unenroll

Resend Invitations

Sync with LMS ⌵

Refresh

During the add/drop period, you may need to return here to ensure all users are appropriately synced and Ed Discussion is pulling the most current data from Canvas.

In the **Discussion** section, you can customize your categories by editing the text field shown below. Each category should be entered on its own line, and you can use the TAB key on your computer to specify subcategories. In the example below, Week 1, Posts, Announcements, and Questions are the course categories, while "Videos" is a subcategory. Also, the "Category unselected by default" option is checked, which is useful for organizational purposes, as students will need to consider where they are posting their new thread before drafting the content:

General

Discussion

Advanced

Taylor's Taylor's Sandbox

2021, SEMESTER 2

Categories

Define categories one per line and use the TAB key to indent and specify subcategories.

Week 1
 Videos
 Posts
 Announcements
 Questions

☒ **Category unselected by default**
 Requires the user to explicitly select a category before they can begin typing the thread content. Recommended if you are using thread templates.

The **Discussion** section also allows you to configure more advanced discussion features, such as enabling anonymous threads, private threads, and anonymous comments for the entire course. You can also create Threaded Templates, allowing you to populate new text for a specific category with initial content to help guide users in their posts. In the example below, the text, "Have a question? Post it in this category." will automatically populate when a student chooses to add a new thread to the Questions category. The student can then erase that text and begin drafting their question:

Thread Templates

Customize the initial content of new question threads for each discussion category below.

☒ Enabled

▶ Week 1

Posts

Announcements

Questions

Paragraph

B

I

U

<>

↺

⋮

⋮

🖼️

▶

🔗

🌐

✍️

👁️

Have a question? Post it in this category.

As a final note about the **Discussion** section, faculty can choose to require any new threads to receive approval by someone on the teaching team before it can be made public to the class. You can also enter a templated message for any posts that are declined by an instructor. Underneath the Moderation settings, you will also see a Code section where you can choose snippet languages, set a default language, and automatically syntax highlight code paragraphs based on your selected languages:

☐ **New threads require approval**
New threads posted by students will be hidden from other students until it is approved by a staff member.

Enter the template for a comment that you can post to the student when declining a thread.

Code

Choose which languages are available inside snippets, separated by commas, or leave blank for all languages.

Choose which language will be selected by default for a snippet.

Automatically syntax highlight code paragraphs based on the selected languages.

- Although multiple Canvas sites cannot link to the same Ed Discussion board (in the case of a course containing multiple sections, each with a distinct Canvas site), you can use the "Join Link" option for this functionality.

For example, if ACCT 1010 has two course sections (003 and 004) and there is one site for 003 and a separate site for 004, it is possible to enable the "Join Link" and display that link on the Canvas course home page of each site (or a similar page for easy access):

The screenshot shows the 'Course Details' page in Canvas. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: General (selected), Discussion, Advanced, and Bots++. The main content area is titled 'Course Details' and contains fields for Code, Name, Year, and Session. Below these is the 'Join Link' section. It includes a warning: 'You can automatically add all students to this course with the **Sync with LMS** button below. You should *not* enable the Join Link unless you have a specific reason to.' Below the warning, it says 'Allow students with a @upenn.edu or @*.upenn.edu email to self sign up to the course by using the Join Link below.' A red box highlights the 'Join Link' settings: a checked checkbox labeled 'Enable (not recommended)' and a text field containing the URL 'https://edstem.org/us/join/abxNj5' with a 'Copy' button to its right.

This will allow students with a **@upenn.edu** or **@wharton.upenn.edu** email to self sign up to the course. In this case, students will not access from the "Ed Discussion" course navigation bar item.

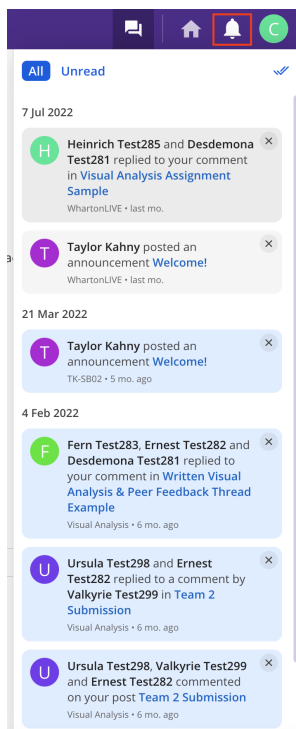
On the other hand, if multiple sections are in the same Canvas site and the professor would like separate "boards" for each section, this can be accomplished through separate Categories for each section.

The screenshot shows the 'Ed Discussion' page in Canvas. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: Chat, COURSES, and CATEGORIES. The 'CATEGORIES' section is highlighted with a red box and contains four items: Week 1 (blue square), Week 2 (green square), Week 3 (orange square), and Questions (red square). The main content area is titled 'Taylor's - Ed Discussion' and contains a search bar and a list of discussion threads. The threads are organized by date, with sections for 'Nov 24, 2024', 'Feb 12, 2023', and 'Jan 15, 2023'. Each thread has a title, a date, and a status (e.g., '2y', '7mth').

How to create new categories is mentioned earlier in this **Admin section**.

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:

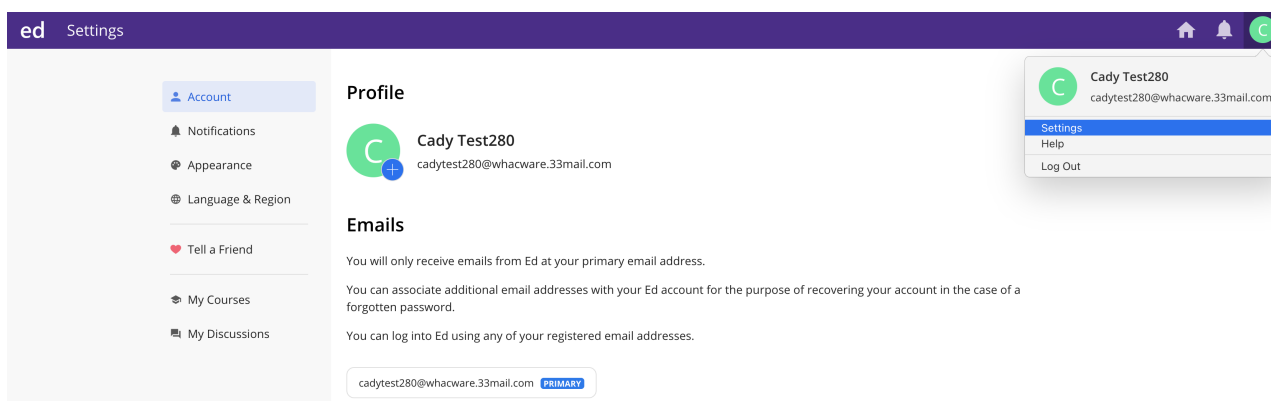


Please note that you will not receive Ed Discussion notifications via Canvas directly, as this is an LTI tool existing as a separate application.

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:

Account
Notifications
Appearance
Language & Region
Tell a Friend
My Courses
My Discussions

Desktop Notifications

Enable Desktop Notifications

New Thread Digests

Be alerted via email about new threads in the discussion you have not read.

Choose how frequently you would like to receive these emails, or turn it off completely.

Instant

► Per-course digest settings

Save

Notification Emails

Reply via Email

Reply to notifications, comments and new threads using your email client.

Email me when there is activity in a thread I am watching

Get an email when someone posts a reply in a thread you're watching.

Email me when someone replies to my thread

Get an email when someone posts a direct reply to your thread.

Email me when someone replies to my comment

Get an email when someone posts a direct reply to your comment.

Email me when someone mentions me

Get an email when someone @mentions you in the discussion.

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:

New Thread Digests

Be alerted via email about new threads in the discussion you have not read.

Choose how frequently you would like to receive these emails, or turn it off completely.

✓ Default

Instant

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.

Account
Notifications
Appearance
Language & Region
Tell a Friend
My Courses
My Discussions

Theme

☐ Sync with OS
Automatically switch between light and dark themes based on your system settings.

Light

Thread List Style

☐ Full
This is the default style.

☒ Compact
Use less padding and display student and instructor answered icons.

☐ Ultra Compact
Display only minimal information.

When is the assessment due?
Assessments Cady Test280 1w 123 20

The lecture tomorrow is cancelled
Lectures Cady Test280 1w 30 88

Pending Approval
Homework solutions
Homework Cady Test280 2w 5

End of semester megathread
General Cady Test280 4w 8,241 (4 unresolved)

The **Language & Region** and **My Courses** tabs enable you to alter the language and time zone and view all courses you are teaching 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:

Account

Notifications

Appearance

Language & Region

Tell a Friend

My Courses

My Discussions

All Courses

AY22WH3
2022 - Academic Year 2021-22

Visual Analysis
2022 - Semester 1

TK-SB02
2022 - Semester 1

2 more

C Cady Test280

Questions 0 Posts 1 Answers 1 Comments 1 Hearts 1 Endorsements 0 Days visited 4

All Threads Answers Comments

Cady Test280 commented on [Written Visual Analysis & Peer Feedback Thread E...](#) in Visual Analysis - Assignment Instructions February 4, 2022
Team 1 (insert group members) Visual Analysis Use of visual stimuli to get attention: Text here Use of visual stimuli to affect fluency: Text here Use of semiotic codes: Text here Use of visual stimuli to affect interpretation: Text here

Cady Test280 posted in Visual Analysis - Team 2 February 2, 2022
Team 2 Submission

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.