**CUNY Academic Commons Documentation**

*for Undergraduate students*

**Faculty Fellows Program, Spring 2017**

This a guide for undergraduate students who have courses hosted on the CUNY Academic Commons, (“the Commons”). The Commons designed to support faculty and students and build community through the use of technology in teaching and learning.

More information about the commons can be found here: <https://commons.gc.cuny.edu/about/about-the-commons/>

More information about how to use the Commons is in the Codex:

<https://codex.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

**A Quick Commons How-To**

**How to Join the Commons**

Faculty and students must sign-up and register for the Commons using a CUNY email. Once you have registered, you can create a group, a site, or join an already existing group or site.

1. Head to the CUNY Academic Commons: <https://commons.gc.cuny.edu/>
2. Click “**Register**” in the top right corner.
3. Create a **username** that is suitable for your course (Your Professor may specify how to structure your user name.)
4. You should use a **CUNY email address** to register. You can change this later through “My profile”. (see next section)
5. In **Blog Details** – you do NOT need to create a blog to join - but if you want your own site to play with, you can check this box. If you check the box:
   1. The URL is the site address and cannot be changed.
   2. The site title can be changed later.
   3. You can set the site a public or private. This can also be changed later.
6. You will need to enter your **full name**. You can make this private later.
7. Some other fields are optional but please DO indicate your **College.**
8. Indicate your **Role** as an Undergraduate Student
9. Other fields can be filled in later in your profile.
10. Agree to the **Terms of Service** (You own your own data!)

**YOU’RE DONE! Congrats, you are now a member of the CUNY Commons.**

**How to edit your Commons Profile**

You can change, hide, and add information in your Commons Profile. To edit your profile:

1. **Sign in** to the Commons with your newly created username and password
2. Click **the arrow** in the upper right-hand corner of the page
3. Select “**My Profile**”. This takes you to your public profile
4. Use the “**Edit Profile**” button to make changes.
5. You can change your contact email, picture, and other information here.

**How to Join your Course Group/Site**

The Commons is a WordPress and BuddyPress-powered platform. On the Commons your can join/create Groups and Sites. Your course will have a group, site, or both. Your Professor will share this information with you in class and likely on the syllabus.

To join your course group or find your course site:

1. **Sign in** to the Commons with your newly created username and password
2. Depending on whether you are looking for a Group or a Site, **use the tabs** in the menu to go to the correct area.
3. Once in the Group or Sites area, **use the search bar** to find your course. For best search results, use the “Search Groups” or “Search Sites” search bar.
4. If you find your **Group** you can **Request Membership** to be added.
5. If you find your **Site**, click **Visit Site.** Bookmark your site page.
   1. Your professor should have added you as a user on the site. If you are signed in, you should be able to post (see below). If you cannot gain access to the site or cannot post, email your professor.

**How to Create a Post**

You will be asked to “Post” on the course Site. Your Professor will give you directions about what topics and when to post. To create and publish a post:

1. **Sign in** to the Commons and go to your **Course Site.**
2. Click **+ New (post)** in the black menu bar at the top of the page.
3. You are now in the **Post Editor**. Write your title and post.
4. Make sure **Categorize** your post and add **tags** (if required).
5. Hit **Publish**! Your post is now live on the Course Site.
6. **Go read** your classmates posts!

**How to Create a PRIVATE Post**

Private posts are only visible to you and the professor. Your Professor may want you to make certain posts private for journaling or reporting back about your progress in the class. Making a private post is very similar to making a regular post except there is a an extra steps (Step 5). To make a post private:

1. **Sign in** to the Commons and go to your **Course Site.**
2. Click **+ New** in the black menu bar at the top of the page.
3. You are now in the **Post Editor**. Write your title and post.
4. Make sure **Categorize** your post and add **tags** (if required).
5. In the “**Publish**” box on the upper-right, change **Visibility** to “**Private**”.
   1. Do not use a password unless you and the professor have agreed on a password.
6. Hit **Publish**! Your post is now live on the Course Site.

**Commons Basics**

**What’s the difference between a Group and a Site?**

The Group is just for your class and has several sub-areas for sharing information and documents. You can find more info about the Group area below.

On the Course Site, you will be writing blog posts and interacting with other students in the class. You will also find all your course information on the Site including the syllabus, assignments, course schedule, and events related to the class.

The Course Site can either be public or private, depending on the settings chosen by your professor. Your professor will likely tell you how the site will work but feel free to ask them to tell you more about public/private nature of the Site.

**What are all those things in the Group Menu?**

The Group sub-areas have different functions. Read more below.

Forum – a place to ask questions to other students and the professor. Some Sites have Forums for this too. Forum posts are also sent to your email so you can keep up with what’s going on with the class.

Announcements –Professors may post updates the about the course here. Announcements will also be sent to your email.

Events – A professor may post events related to the course here or on the Site.

Site – This takes you from the Group Area to the Course Site.

Papers – You can write or paste a paper here for comments and feedback. By default the paper will be public so make sure to go into the settings and link the Paper with your group so it stays private in your course.

Files - Your Professor will upload readings, PDFs, and other files for the course here.

Docs – You can create a shared post with other members of your class here. You can use this space (or Papers) to work on a collaborative document or group project.

Members – All members of the group including your classmates and the Professor.

Email Options –Change your email settings here. You can choose a daily or weekly digest instead of getting emails every time someone posts in the forum.

**Other Common(s) Questions**

**Can I have my own site on the Commons?**

**Yes!** Any CUNY student or faculty member can have a site on the Commons. You may want to check out the Commons Codex (<https://codex.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>) for more guidance on designing your own site. If your professor has asked you to create a site for your course, make sure to get their directions and guidelines for site requirements.