



Quick Start Guide

What is Piazza?

Piazza is an online platform that facilitates interaction among students who are possibly stumped on homework problems. They can find solutions with the help of their classmates, TAs and professors via Piazza.

Over time this product has evolved to become a centralized place for instructors to conduct all class related communication where –

you can answer students' questions once for all students to see

your students can engage with classmates in online discussion

you can post class related announcements

you can post class files, resources and the class syllabus

you can conduct polls to get a sense of where students stand

you can receive/send private messages from/to students on more sensitive subject matters

Why would I want to use Piazza?

In many courses, a portion of students' successes relies heavily on collaborative problem solving during and outside of class. It isn't terribly difficult to get students to work together and help each other during class. However, when students don't see each other unless they have other classes together, getting them to assist and work with each other can be difficult.

Therefore the challenge I faced in my courses has been, to get the "quiet" and sometimes self-isolating students to participate in out-of-class discussions.

Additionally, some being the quiet type do not seek answers from fellow classmates. Sometimes the types of questions one needs answers to are merely logistics then other questions come about later in the semester pertaining more to the content of the class.

Often I would hear students stating, "*oh, I didn't know that was due yesterday.*" or "*I didn't want to bother you, so I waited till class time to ask how to ...*" so by the time last semester was almost over they began to see the value in communicating between class sessions. In this document, I will give purpose for the application, detailed instructions, and some examples of how I have observed it to be a valuable tool.

What makes Piazza different?

- ***Piazza is Intuitive***

After personally meeting with thousands of students and instructors. The result is a beautifully intuitive and simple product that students love and use.

- ***Real Time Activity***

All activity happening on Piazza is pushed to users in real time – you see new posts and updates as soon as they happen.

- ***Class Q&A***

Participation & Anonymity

On Piazza, students can ask questions; instructors and fellow classmates can answer. You can allow your students to participate anonymously, to encourage participation from even the quietest students.

At the time of posting a new question, students can select whether they want their question to be public (for the rest of the class to see), or private (for only instructors to see). Instructors can make public questions private and vice versa.

Collaborative Editing

Questions and answers on Piazza are community-edited – a student can edit another student’s question, as well as the collaborative students’ answer. An instructor can edit a student’s question, the collaborative instructors’ answer, as well as the collaborative students’ answer.

A history slider at the top of each post lets users see how the question and answer have evolved over time. If instructors do not approve of any posted content, they can edit the content and disable the history, or delete the content altogether.

Follow-up Discussions

Questions also have a separate follow-up discussion section where follow on questions can be hashed out in a more unstructured manner. Follow-up discussions are initially marked as unresolved and can be marked as resolved by anyone who thinks the follow-up has been addressed. Content from the follow-up discussions are often incorporated back into the community-edited question and answer above to build a single high quality question & answer combo.

Workflow Tips

Instructors can easily distinguish which questions need their attention by looking for unanswered questions (highlighted in red) or questions with unresolved follow-up discussions (marked in red as well).

Questions clearly indicate whether they have an instructors’ answer and/or a students’ answer. And with a single click, instructors can endorse the students’ answers, giving the student(s) who answered a virtual ‘pat on the back’, and letting the other students know that the answer is approved. Collectively, this allows

instructors to prioritize questions that have neither an instructors' answer nor an instructor-endorsed students' answer.

Resources, Files & Announcements Course Page

The Course Page on Piazza is the place to manage announcements, course information, course resources, your syllabus and more. Course Pages were built since many instructors wanted to use Piazza as a complete replacement for all things class-related.

Class Announcements

Instructors can post announcements to their class by posting a note on Piazza. Notes do not need an answer, and are often a great way to update the class of a change in office hours, a change in the homework due date, etc.

When posting a note on Piazza, you are presented with the option to send email notifications to your students immediately as well as to post the note to the static announcements section on the Course Page.

Polls/In-Class Response System

Piazza lets you post polls as a way to gauge the pulse of the class. Professors often use polls to learn about the background of their students, to assess understanding of concepts among students, to conduct quick quizzes, or even to seek real-time feedback during class of whether students are following the material or not. When used for in-class responses, there is no hardware component required and they can be used as a (free) replacement for clickers.

The Piazza smartphone apps are free for instructors and students and can be downloaded from the app store (iPhone OS, Android, and Windows).

Participation Statistics

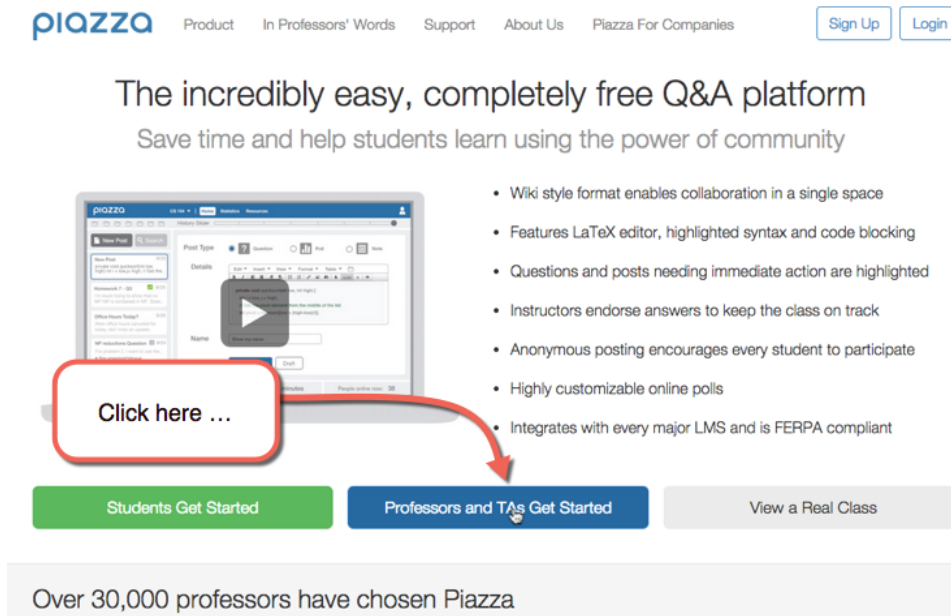
On Piazza, you can view detailed class participation information to learn more about your students. The student participation report (visible on your Class Statistics page) lets you see which students frequently ask questions, answer questions, or simply read posts. Once sufficient class activity has begun, you can download these statistics at any time and use the underlying data to award participation points to your students.

Getting Set Up

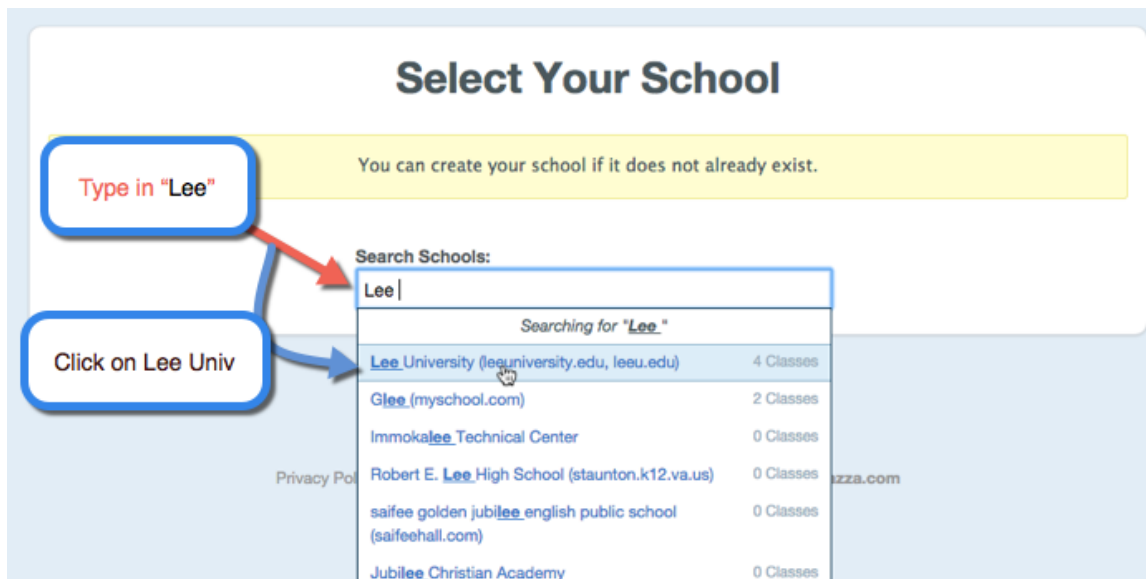
Creating Your Class

Creating a class is straightforward and usually takes just a couple minutes, but please feel free to shoot us an email if you run into troubles or you are not sure what information is needed where. Steps are as follows:

1. Got to the Piazza home page – <http://www.piazza.com/> and click on **“Professors and TAs Get Started”** as shown below.

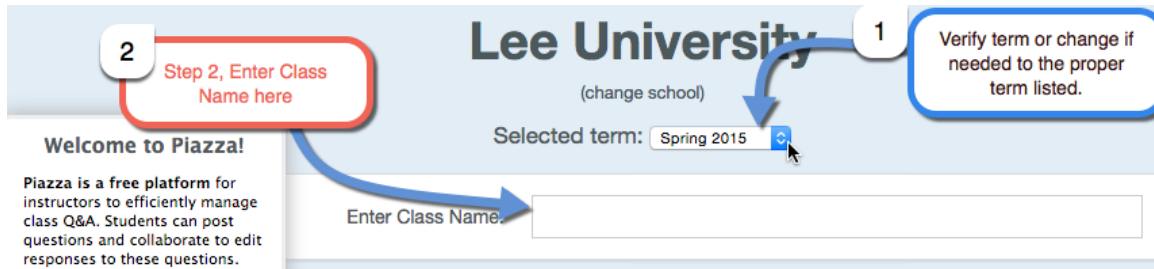


2. From there, select the proper institution. In this example I searched for Lee University. If your institution is not found, there is an option to create a new school or university in this step. However, as can be seen in the image below, Lee University was listed.

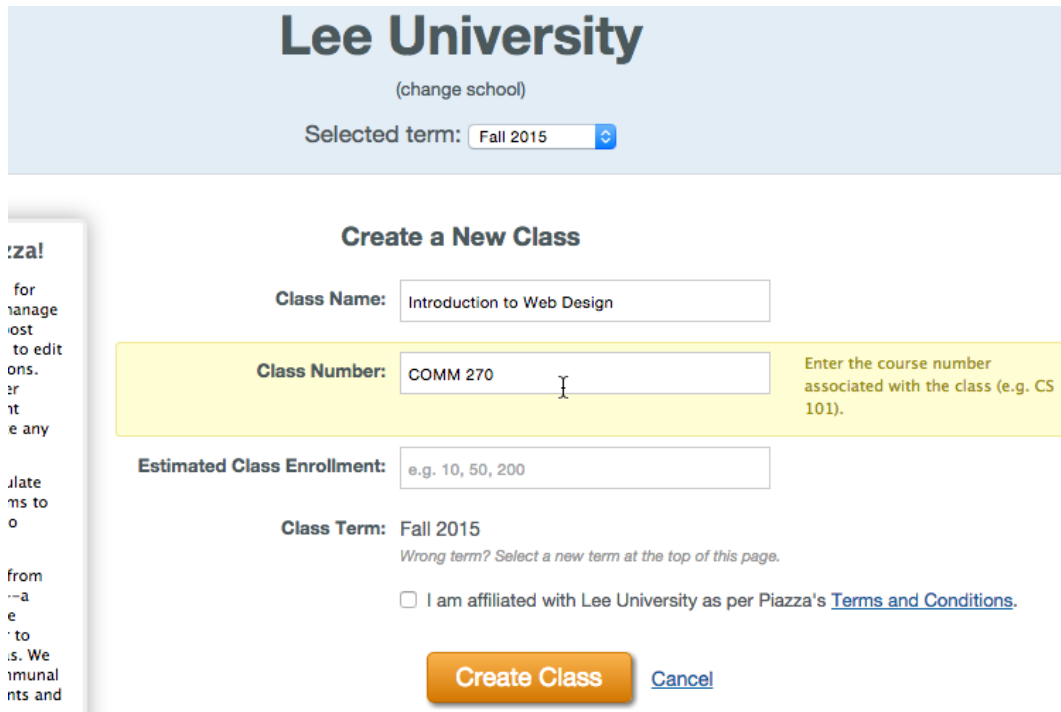


3. You will now be directed to a page with a default term selected. Verify the term is the correct one before continuing. (This image shows spring 2015 as the term)

- After verifying or changing the term, enter the class name. (i.e. “Intro to Biology”)



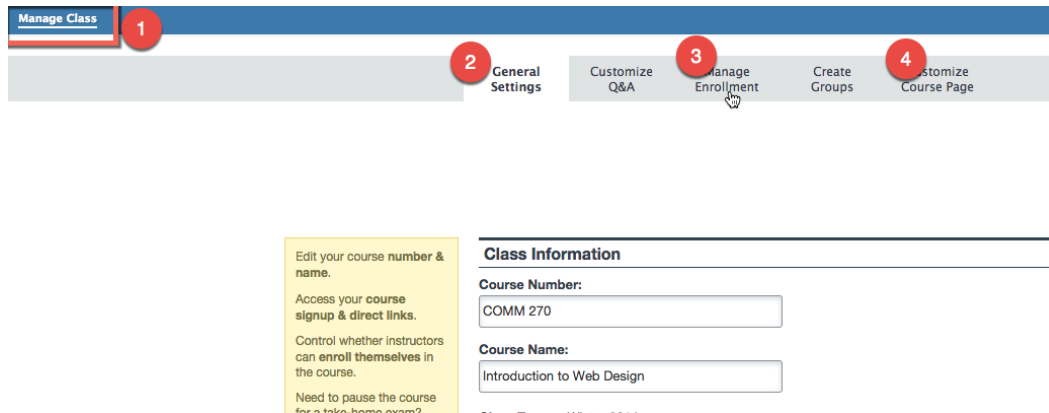
- Next, enter your course number and estimated class enrollment (don't worry about being exact ... you can increase or decrease this number later if desired) – putting in a larger number than anticipated works best, then decrease it later.



- You will now receive an email with a verification link. If you are new to Piazza, just click the link in the email to finish setting up the account. Otherwise, simply proceed to login and you will be taken to your new class.

Configure Your Class

There are a number of ways you, as the instructor, can accomplish this. Visit the “**Manage Class**” page to change or view the various settings:



1. After you select “**Manage Class**” you will see a page that appears similar to the one above. In the general settings you have simple options such as course name, instructor’s name, contact information that you may want to provide your students etc.

Step #3 (in the image above) is for Enrollment management. There is more than one way for student to enroll – they can enroll themselves by finding your class online.

2. Another procedure to enroll students is to enter students’ email addresses – this way they each will receive an email informing them that you will use this and they need to sign up for Piazza. This way their name is already verified by the system and you can avoid having Elvis or Ringo Starr in your class. 😊

Make sure all instructors are enrolled in the course. The more folks you have responding to student questions, the better!

Enroll Professors/TAs

Copy and paste email addresses in any format.
↳ Once added, they receive a Welcome email with a link to activate their Piazza account.

Add Instructors

Instructor Roster:
1 Currently Enrolled
The following instructors are enrolled in your class.
↳ Those who've activated their accounts will have names alongside their email addresses.
Order names as 'Lastname, Firstname'
 Dr. C. Michael Sturgeon msturgeon@leeuniversity.edu
Select All Select None Un-enroll selected Instructors

Have all of your students been enrolled yet? Has each activated his/her account? You can always re-send the welcome emails to students who have not yet activated their Piazza accounts.

Enroll Students

Copy and paste email addresses in any format.
↳ Once added, they receive a Welcome email with a link to activate their Piazza account.
 Enable Add/Drop

Copy and paste email addresses here (one address per line)

Add Students or upload a file

Student Roster: ...out of 20 (estimated) Edit
19 enrolled
The following students are enrolled in your class.
↳ Those who've activated their accounts will have names alongside their email addresses.
Order names as 'Lastname, Firstname'
 Alex Frye afrye001@leeu.edu
 Alonzo Atkins aatkin02@leeu.edu
 Andrew Paalnick apaalnic@leeu.edu

Contact us for any assistance in using this technology and it's many features if and when needed. Michael Sturgeon – msturgeon@leeuniversity.edu