

Using the AACTE Online Community to operate your TAG

Revised 12/1/2014

AACTE has contracted with an outside online community provider to host our online community network. However, the online community platform is accessible from the AACTE website. Each group/topic that requires online community space to conduct business has an online community “forum” established for its use. Therefore, each TAG has its own forum within the online community. Examples of other groups/topics for which online community space has been allotted include: AACTE events (such as Annual Meeting); JTE; Holmes Scholars; ACSR; PEDS; Networked Improvement Community (NIC); TAGs; and others. Individuals belonging to or affiliated with more than one AACTE group/topic that utilizes an online community forum space will see and be able to access all the forums on their Index page when they log in to the online community.

What are the benefits of the online community for my TAG?

- 1. Instant access to your most current membership.** New members are constantly joining TAGs, while other TAG members find they need to discontinue membership. Members join and withdraw from groups via the online community, which is AACTE’s official TAG membership platform. Therefore, this platform contains the most current membership roster for any TAG. Trying to maintain a current membership list outside of this platform requires constant checking of the online community, manual updating and sharing with other TAG members - and is therefore very difficult to do effectively. Conducting all online communications via the online community ensures that you are reaching all current members of your TAG, and not bugging those members who might have withdrawn membership.
- 2. Secure environment limited to AACTE member access only.** TAG membership is restricted only to individuals affiliated with AACTE member institutions. The online community is a password-restricted environment that only enables AACTE members to log in, and only grants TAG forum access to those that have been officially accepted as members of that TAG (via the Staff Administrator). This means that your group can communicate confidentially amongst its own members.
- 3. IT support provided by AACTE staff.** The online community is the only online platform for which TAG members can obtain free and ongoing staff support.
- 4. Provides TAG member communication freedom and AACTE oversight.** AACTE provides oversight and ensures continuity over time for each TAG group, regardless of changing leadership or membership. The online community platform is the only platform that grants each TAG group the ability to freely communicate with its members while enabling AACTE to perform these two important functions.
- 5. All TAG content kept in one place.** Short- and long-term continuity is important for longevity and effectiveness of all TAGs. Common use of the online community despite changing membership or leadership over time ensures that documents and communication are available to current and future members and leaders.

How do I access the online community?

First, you need to become a registered user of the online community (PLEASE NOTE: this is a **separate registration process from becoming an AACTE website user.**) If you are not a registered user of the online community, go to www.aacte.org and click on the “AACTE Tools” button in the upper right corner. From the pop-up choices, click on the yellow “OC” (online community) button then click “Register” at the top of the page. Follow the prompts.

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Once you are a registered user of the online community, you can log in at any time by clicking AACTE Tools/OC link. Once you log in to the online community, you will see all the forums to which you have access. Click on any forum to access it.

OK, I'm logged in. Now what?

Once you log in, you will see four links in the orange header at the top of the page. Here's an overview of the features of each.

Board Index: Think of this as the main dashboard to all the online community forums to which you have access. You can click on any topic within the index page to view or contribute post. This includes viewing/contributing/editing documents, videos, discussion threads, or polls.

User Control Panel: This is the main point of access to your personal user settings and personal message management. The specific sub-controls that are most important for TAG operation are explained later in this document.

FAQ: This list of frequently asked questions and answers will contain helpful information regarding how to use the online community. Consider this your first "go to" if you get stuck or have questions. If you aren't able to find the answers to your questions in the FAQ, contact Kim Murray, AACTE TAG Staff Administrator, at kmurray@acte.org or (202) 478-4598.

Logout: click this to log out of the online community.

How do I access a membership list of the TAG I belong to?

To access this list, you will follow the steps to edit memberships – but instead of editing, you'll just view the list. Follow the steps at the very end of this document under the section **User Groups/Edit Memberships**.

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How do I send a message to all the members of my TAG?

Rather than sending an email, we strongly recommend that you send messages via your online community platform which will keep track of responses and store the communication for you in a single place that all members of your group can access. To send a message to your TAG through the online community, follow the steps at the bottom of page two under **Forum Navigation/Start a discussion**.

Why do I have access to online community forums that I didn't sign up for?

AACTE uses the online community to engage individuals at Member institutions on a variety of topics. Many of these topics are valuable to all individuals at AACTE Member institutions and are open to all members of AACTE. Therefore, as an individual employed at a Member institution, you will be granted access to any forums related to these "open" topics and can visit the forums to view or contribute comments at any time.

Once I have registered for and logged in to the online community, how do I access my TAG forum(s)?

Click the Board Index. Then, scroll down to your available group forums and click on the name of the group that you wish to access (any TAGs of which you are a member of will be listed here towards the bottom of the list). Once you click on the forum link for your TAG, you will access the main forum page for this group. Any posts (including discussion threads, videos, documents, polls, etc.) for this TAG that have been initiated thus far will be listed here. Click on any you wish to access.

At the bottom of the forum main page there's a "subscribe forum" option. What does this mean?

If you wish to receive email notifications each time a post is made to your TAG forum, **you must click the "subscribe forum" box option underneath the discussion topics (strongly recommended)**. If you DO NOT subscribe to the forum, you will only be aware of posts to this forum if you log in to the online community. If you don't log in to your TAG forum regularly and do not subscribe to the forum to receive email notifications of posts, you risk missing a timely message from the TAG staff administrator or fellow TAG members. If you DO subscribe, you will receive email notification each time a new post is made to any topic within this TAG's forum (you must subscribe to the forum for each TAG for which you wish to receive email notification of postings).

You can subscribe to forums and also to topics. If you subscribe to the forum, you will be notified when any posts occur within any topic. If you subscribe to just a topic, you will be notified only when posts occur within this topic.

Forum Navigation

Once you enter your TAG forum, you may wish to do the following:

Start a discussion:

1. Click "post a new topic".
2. Enter a subject heading, and explanatory text in the main text box.
3. In the main text box, ask a question, post comments, etc.
4. Click "submit". Alternatively, click "save draft" if you would like to finish this post and submit it at a later date.

Conduct a poll of TAG members:

1. Click "post a new topic".

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2. Enter a subject heading, and explanatory text in the main text box.
3. Click “poll creation” at the bottom of this page.
4. Select the number of “options per user” – how many responses should they be able to choose?
5. Select the number of days you wish the poll to run. You may wish to include a cut-off date in the main text box to alert users.
6. In the middle of the page, click “submit”. Alternatively, click “save draft” if you would like to finish this post and submit it at a later date.

Post a link for TAG members to view:

1. Click “post a new topic”.
2. Enter a subject heading, and explanatory text in the main text box.
3. Click “URL”. Two bracketed “bookmarks” will appear in the main text box.
4. Copy the url you wish to post from a separate browser page.
5. Paste the url between the “bookmarks”.
6. Click “submit”.

NOTE: You can also enter a url link into the main text of a post using the same steps.

Upload a document:

1. Click “post a new topic”.
2. Enter a subject heading, and explanatory text in the main text box.
3. At the bottom, click “upload attachment”.
4. Using the “browse” link, choose the file you wish to upload. Click “attach the file”.
5. When the file has been selected, click “submit”. Alternatively, click “save draft” if you would like to finish this post and submit it at a later date.

Upload a video: Videos hosted on Vimeo or Youtube can be uploaded to the online community.

1. Click “post a new topic”.
2. Enter a subject heading.
3. Select “vimeo” or “Youtube”, depending on the format of your video file. Two bracketed “bookmarks” will appear in the main text box.
4. Access the video you wish to upload through Vimeo or Youtube via a separate browser page. Copy the video code for this specific video from the url.
5. Paste the video code between the two “bookmarks”.
6. Click “submit”. Alternatively, click “save draft” if you would like to finish this post and submit it at a later date.

Delete any post:

1. Open the post by double-clicking on it from the forum home page.
2. Click the “edit” button.
3. Select the “delete post” option box.
4. Click “submit”.

Navigating the “User Control Panel”

Not every feature within the user control panel is essential for TAG functioning. Here I will list just those setting that are most important.

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Overview

Manage subscriptions: the term “manage” is a bit misleading; this area only allows you to see which forums/topics you have subscribed to. If it’s not listed here, you have not subscribed to it. You must follow the instructions under subscribing to a forum.

Manage bookmarks: Bookmarking in AACTE Online Community is much like bookmarking in your web browser. You aren’t alerted when there’s an update, but you can come back to the topic later. Subscribing, however, will notify you when there is an update to the topic or forum on the board via your preferred method or methods.

Manage drafts: any draft posts/messages you previously created can be accessed for continued editing here.

Manage attachments: any documents you have previously attached to a post/message can be accessed here.

Board preferences

Edit posting defaults: Here, you can manage automatic signature attachment, reply notification, etc.

Private Messages

This is one of the features you will use most frequently. This is where you will compose, manage, and access messages. This is one of the places through which you can send and access private messages. You can send a private message to anyone who is subscribed to the online community, whether or not they are subscribed to the TAG forum.

Compose Message: click on this link to compose a message. You can choose an entire group from the “Group” box (search for the name of your TAG and click on it to send a message to your entire TAG group), or address the message to individuals by typing the addresses manually or by using the “find a participant” features (please note: only registered users with the online community can receive these messages).

Manage PM (private message) Drafts: access and edit any private message drafts here.

Inbox: any recent posts/messages will show up here.

Outbox: This contains messages you have sent that have not yet been read by the recipient.

Sent Messages: This contains messages that you have sent, and that have been read by the recipient.

User Groups

Edit Memberships: click on this link to see the entire roster of current TAG members. You can click on any member to view their basic information. You can see how many posts they have contributed, and the date they joined the TAG.

Manage Groups: This function is disabled for institutional members of a TAG as only the staff administrator (the online forum “leader”) has the ability to delete or add individuals to a TAG.