Heuristic Evaluation: Coursera Discussion Board (Web)

Evaluator: ChatGPT UX Evaluation | Date: October 2025

The table below lists usability issues found in the Coursera Discussion Board interface, ranked from most severe (3) to least severe (1). Each issue includes the description, system location, Nielsen heuristic(s) violated, and severity rating.

Description of Issue	System Location	Heuristic(s) Violated	Severity (0–4)
Unreadable discussion thread hierarchy — replies are nested too deeply without visual indentation, making it difficult to follow the flow of conversations.	Discussion Thread View	#8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design #1 Visibility of System Status	3
No clear visual cue distinguishing instructor posts from learner posts, reducing ability to prioritize authoritative information.	Discussion List / Thread View	#4 Consistency and Standards #2 Match Between System and the Real World	3
Search bar within the discussion board returns irrelevant results or none at all when keywords are slightly misspelled, violating user control expectations.	Discussion Board Search Function	#5 Error Prevention #3 User Control and Freedom	3
When a user posts a comment, there is no immediate feedback or success confirmation message. Users may post duplicates.	Add a Reply / Post Comment Area	#1 Visibility of System Status #5 Error Prevention	3
Editing an existing comment is hidden behind a three-dot menu, which lacks tooltip text and may be unclear for first-time users.	Thread Post Options Menu	#6 Recognition Rather Than Recall #4 Consistency and Standards	2
Reply button placement under long comments makes it easy to click the wrong thread's reply option, leading to misplaced responses.	Thread Replies	#5 Error Prevention #8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design	2
Limited control to sort or filter posts (e.g., by 'Most Recent' or 'Most Upvoted'), reducing efficiency of use for active learners.	Discussion Board Header	#7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use	2
No indication of which posts have already been viewed; users may revisit the same thread unnecessarily.	Discussion List View	#1 Visibility of System Status	2
Keyboard navigation through posts is not supported; tabbing skips important interactive elements like 'Reply' and 'Like'.	Entire Discussion Interface	#7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use #10 Help and Documentation	2
Text formatting options (bold, italics, link) lack descriptive tooltips and use inconsistent iconography compared to standard web editors.	Add Post Toolbar	#4 Consistency and Standards #2 Match Between System and Real World	2
No inline preview for hyperlinks in posts; users must click blindly and risk being taken away from the course context.	Post Body / Hyperlink	#5 Error Prevention #1 Visibility of System Status	2
The 'Report Abuse' button is not prominent enough and lacks explanation of what happens after submission, potentially deterring users from reporting issues.	Post Footer Actions	#10 Help and Documentation #5 Error Prevention	1

No summary count of total replies in a thread visible from the main list; users must open each thread to check activity levels.	Main Discussion List	#1 Visibility of System Status	1
Notification settings are buried under Account Settings instead of being accessible directly from the discussion board, hindering discoverability.	User Settings > Notifications	#7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use #3 User Control and Freedom	1
Color contrast between text and background in the discussion panel is low, posing readability challenges for visually impaired users.	Discussion Thread View	#8 Aesthetic and Minimalist Design #5 Error Prevention	1