

## Using the Grade Center

The Grade Center provides a secure way to inform students of their progress. The Grade Center can contain grades for assessments you create and administer in Blackboard (such as tests and quizzes), and for other assessments such as research papers, projects, etc.

### Accessing the Grade Center

1. Under **Grade Center** in the **Control Panel** select **Full Grade Center**. (*Note options to display Full Grade Center, Assignments only, or Tests only.*)
2. Notice a new feature in Blackboard 9: **Edit Rows Displayed** (bottom right). Click to adjust how many rows of students you want to show on the screen. (Maximum is 50.)

### Adding Grade Columns

1. Click **Create Column**. (*Note: The Grade Center columns are automatically added for tests, quizzes, and surveys created through the Test or Survey manager, and for assignments using the Assignment tool.*)
2. Enter a name for the item, select a display type in the menu, and enter the possible points.
3. Set the options:
  - Include this column in Grade Center calculations (if you want the item to “count” toward the course grade)
  - Show this column to Students
  - Show Statistics (allows students to see how they performed in relation to the rest of the class by showing the mean, median, etc.)
4. Click **Submit**. The item appears as a column in the spreadsheet.

### Organizing the Grade Center

Click **Manage**, then select **Column Organization** from the pull-down menu.

- **Show/Hide Columns.** Click in the box that appears before the name of the item that you want to show or hide. Select either **Hide Selected Columns** or **Show Selected Columns** from the **Show/Hide** pull-down menu. Hidden columns are indicated by grayed-out names.
- **Move / Rearrange Columns.** Place the cursor on the four-way arrow at the beginning of the row you want to move. Hold the mouse button down, drag the row to a new destination, and release the mouse button.

- **Frozen Columns.** You can “freeze” columns to prevent them from moving off-screen when you scroll to the right. For example, to make sure that your students’ names always remain in view, even when the column you wish to work on is at the right-hand side of the spreadsheet, freeze the **Last Name** and **First Name** columns. Note the “Everything above this bar is a frozen column. Drag this bar to change which columns are frozen” indicator. Drag the bar itself or drag any columns you wish to freeze above the bar and they will remain in place even when scrolling to the right. Frozen columns are shown in the spreadsheet with a light gray background.

### ***Entering/Modifying Grades***

1. Click in the cell where you want to add a grade.
2. Enter the grade, and then hit the **Enter** key. The cursor moves down one cell in the column. Continue in this manner for as many grades as you want to enter. For additional options, place the cursor over a grade and use the pull-down menu in the cell. Click **View Grade Details** to view students’ work, edit grades, and clear attempts; **Quick Comment** to send feedback to the student, and **Exempt Grade** to remove the item from the grade calculation.

Note: If you entered a grade by clicking in a cell, be sure that there is no dash before the grade. The dash will be interpreted by Blackboard as a negative sign, resulting in a very low grade.

3. To modify a grade, click to highlight the current grade. Type in the new grade and hit **Enter**. You will see an orange flag in the upper left side of the cell, indicating that the grade has been edited manually. You can clear this flag by clicking the arrows on the right-hand side of the cell and selecting **Clear Cell Modified Icon**.

### ***Calculated Columns***

You can add Calculated Columns to aid grade calculations. Options are: Average, Minimum/Maximum, Total Column, Weighted Column.

Notice that a **Weighted Total** column is included in the Grade Center spreadsheet by default. You can use this column as the Final Course Grade column, so there is no need to add an additional Weighted Column.

You can use calculated columns to perform calculations using the grades in selected columns. Results are stored in Calculated Columns and can be used for subsequent calculations. For example, say you want to add extra credit points to the final course grade. Once you have created both the **Extra Credit** column and the **Final Grade** column, create a **Total** Calculated Column named **Final Grade with Extra Credit** and select both the **Extra Credit** and **Final Grade** columns as the columns to include in the total.

## ***Weighting Grades / Dropping (Lowest) Grades***

You can use the existing Weighted Total column or add your own column for the calculation of the course grade.

- If adding your own column, click **Create Calculated Column** and select **Weighted Column**. Give the column a name, such as **Final Grade**.
- If using an existing column, select **Edit Column Information** from the drop-down menu you will see when placing the cursor over the double “down” arrows in the column heading.

You can have Blackboard calculate weighted grades using either **Columns** (individual items) or **Categories** (groupings of related items) or a combination of the two options..

- Certain Categories are included by default and certain item types are placed in specific categories by default. You can add your own **Categories** if the ones provided do not meet your needs. Click **Manage**, then **Categories**, then **Create Category**.
  - **Category** is a good choice if you are not yet sure how many assessments of a certain type you will have by the end of the semester. (For example, if you weight the **Quiz** category at 25%, all quizzes together will account for 25% of the course grade, regardless of how many quizzes you finally give.)
  - **Category is also the best choice** if you want to drop some of a student’s grades (usually a defined number of lowest grades) or use the highest or lowest grade to calculate. Enter the number of grades you wish to drop. Select **Weight Columns Equally** if all items in the category are based on the same number of possible points; **Weight Columns Proportionally** if some of the items in the category are based on a different number of possible points than others.
  - Weighting **Columns** is the best choice if you have items not assigned to categories.
- To place an item into a category for the first time, or to edit a default category placement, select **Edit Column Information** from the drop-down menu to the right of the item’s name in the column header, and then select the appropriate category from the **Category** menu. Click **Submit**.

Click Columns and/or Categories on the left (**Control**-click to select multiple items), then click the arrow to move your selections into the **Selected Columns** area.

Enter percentages for each category or column. After entering the weight for the final item in the list, hit the **Tab** key instead of **Enter**. (The total must be 100 percent.)

Click **Yes** for **Calculate as Running Total**.

Set the options:

- Include this column in Grade Center calculations (if you want the item to “count” toward the course grade)
- Show this column to Students
- Show Statistics (allows students to see how they performed in relation to the rest of the class by showing the mean, median, etc.)

Click **Submit**. To review your weightings, find the weighted column you added in the spreadsheet, click the arrow on the right, and select **Edit Column Information**.

### Example:

The final grade in the course illustrated below was comprised of:

- **5 Labs**, 4 of which counted toward the final grade (lowest grade was dropped by setting up a **Lab** category, assigning a weight of 60%, and using the Drop Grades option)
- **2 Exams** (each 10%, not placed into a category)
- **A research paper** (20%, not placed into a category)

The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Selected Columns:" with the instruction "Enter the weight percentage for each item. Percentages should add up to 100%." It lists four items with their weights and categories:

- \*60 % Category: Lab
- \*10 % Column: Exam 1
- \*10 % Column: Exam 2
- \*20 % Column: Research

Below the list, there are options for "Weight Columns:" with "Equally" selected and "Proportionally" unselected. There are also options for "Drop Grades" (selected) and "Use only the" (unselected). The "Drop Grades" section has a dropdown menu set to "1" and options for "highest grades" and "lowest grades". The "Use only the" section has options for "Lowest value to calculate" and "Highest value to calculate". At the bottom, it says "Total Weight: 100%".

### Using Letter Grades

To change the numerical ranges for letter grades (for example, from 93-100 is an “A”, etc.), click **Manage**, then **Grading Schemas**, then select **Edit** from the pull-down menu to the right of **Letter**. To avoid any omissions, the upper limit of a range must be equal to the lower limit of the range directly above. Thus, a range of 80 to 90 includes all grades *up to, but not including* 90. The highest range does, however, include 100%.

To use letter grades, select **Letter** in the Primary Display pull-down menu when first adding a Grade Column or modifying an existing Grade Column.

### **Smart Views**

Smart Views of the Grade Center data are customized views which match criteria that you define.

1. Select **Smart Views** from the **Manage** menu.
2. Click **Create Smart View**.
3. Define the criteria and click **Submit**.
4. To view the Smart Views you have created, select **Smart Views** from the **Manage** menu or click **Filter** and select the Smart View that you wish to use from the **Current View:** menu.

### **Downloading Your Blackboard Grade Center for Backup and Printing**

You can save a copy of your Blackboard Grade Center in a format that can be opened and printed with Excel.. *(We strongly recommend doing this every time you add grades to your Grade Center. Not only does this give you a backup during the semester, but you also have a copy of your Grade Center for the course when the old course site is removed from the Blackboard server a year after the end of the semester in which you taught the course.)*

1. Select Download from the **Work Offline** pull down menu.
2. Select the data to download and choose the type of “delimiter” (usually Tab, the default, is a good choice) and click **Submit**.
3. Click **Submit**, then **Download**, then save the file to your computer.
4. You will now be able to open (and print) the file with Excel. (If you click on the file’s icon it will open automatically in Excel.)