

Grading with Blackboard's Grade Center

Each Blackboard course includes a Grade Center that allows instructors to track student progress throughout the course. The Grade Center is a flexible tool that allows you to calculate running grades, add weights, provide feedback, drop lowest grades and more.

Important:



- The Grade Center is complex. It is strongly recommended that you attend a workshop or meet with Academic Computing to get oriented to the Grade Center. [Contact Academic Computing](#) to schedule a time to meet or sign up for a workshop.
- Jenzabar is the official system of record for final grades. If you calculate midterm and final grades in Blackboard, you will need to submit them into Jenzabar. [Contact the Registrar's Office](#) for assistance with submitting grades in Jenzabar.

The best practice for working with the Grade Center is to configure all grading options before the course begins. This is a great way to help your students plan for the course and receive timely feedback along the way.

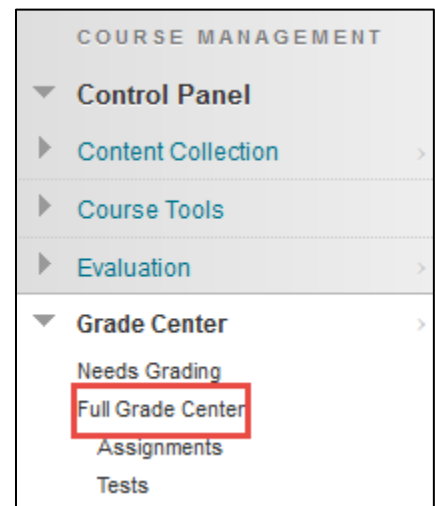
Here is an overview of how to configure the Grade Center. Detailed steps follow in the sections below.

- Develop all [course assignments](#), [discussions](#) and other graded items.
- In your Grade Center, delete or hide any duplicate or unnecessary columns (such as Student ID or Available).
- Add any additional columns you need for items that will not be collected in Blackboard.
- Set up and assign categories for your assignments.
- Configure your Total column.
- Test your settings with your Student Preview User.

Viewing and Accessing Grades

Only Instructors, Teaching Assistants and Graders have access to view and edit student grades. Students access their own information through the **My Grades** button in the course menu, or by going to **Course Tools > My Grades**. Students do not have access to view each other's grades or feedback. If your course menu does not have a My Grades button, you can add one by following [these steps](#). Select the option to add a **Tool Link**.

Instructors access the Grade Center from the Course Management panel on the lower left side. Select **Grade Center > Full Grade Center** (see image at right).



Configuring Your Grade Center

1. Free up space by hiding default columns.

The Grade Center works like an Excel spreadsheet. Any student enrolled in your course will appear in the Grade Center. Columns are added automatically when you add a graded item to your course (such as an assignment, graded discussion or journal). You can also manually add columns for items that will not be collected in Blackboard.

To free up space, allowing you to view grades with minimal scrolling, it is recommended that you hide some of the default column. Some columns you may want to hide include: username, student ID and availability.



Here are the steps to hide a column in your Grade Center:

- Click on the drop-down menu button next to a column name.
- Select **Hide from Instructor View**.

Important: Hiding a column from Instructor View means that it is still visible to students. Be sure you are hiding only student information columns (such as username, student ID or availability) and not any graded columns. If you hide a grade or assignment column, your students can still see it and it may cause errors in your grade calculation.

You will also notice that there are two default columns to calculate grades: **Weighted Total** and **Total**. If you assign weights to your course grades (e.g., Quizzes = 10%), then you would use Weighted Total to calculate your final course grades. If you add the total course points to calculate grades, then you would use Total. You can hide the column you will not be using to ensure students are viewing an accurate course grade.

Here are the steps to hide extra Total columns:

- Click on the drop-down menu button next to the column name.
- Select **Delete Column**.

If you see a green check next to the column name, this will prevent you from deleting the column. You will first need to move the green check to another column before deleting it. Here are the steps:

- Click on the drop-down menu button of a grade column you want to keep.
- Select **Set as External Grade**.

You can now delete the column(s) that you do not want to keep.

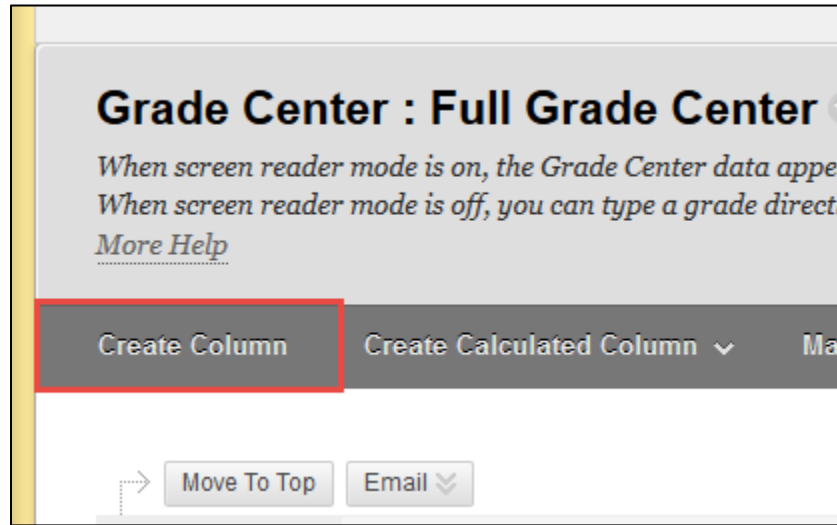
2. Add Columns to Your Grade Center

Columns are added to your Grade Center in two ways. For any assignments, discussions, tests or other tools that can be submitted and graded in Blackboard, those columns will be created automatically. You can then add columns for the items that will not be graded in Blackboard, such as class participation.

First, create any assignments you would like to be collected and graded in Blackboard. Academic Computing has [written tutorials](#) on adding assignments, discussions and more in Blackboard. The columns will be added to the Grade Center automatically.

To add columns for items that will not be collected in Blackboard:

- Click on **Create Column** in the upper left corner of the Grade Center.



- Enter a short name for the column, and an optional description.
- Assign the total possible points for the assignment. 100 points is recommended, even if you grade by letter.
- Click **Submit**.

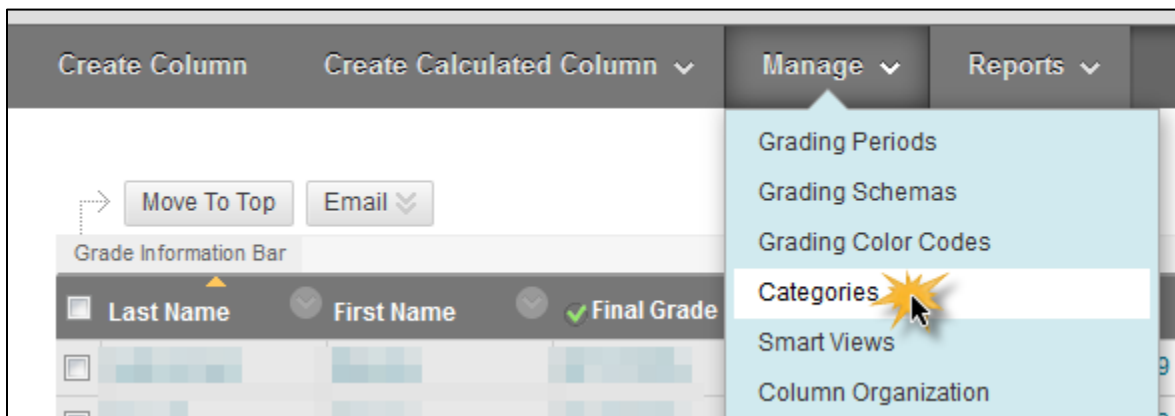
3. Create and Assign Categories to Your Columns

If you grade based on a points total (e.g., students can earn a possible 1000 points in the course), then you do not necessarily need to assign categories to your assignments. However, if you are grading with weights, then you would need to ensure your assignments have categories. When Blackboard calculates a weighted total, it will automatically average the grades for all columns assigned to a particular category.

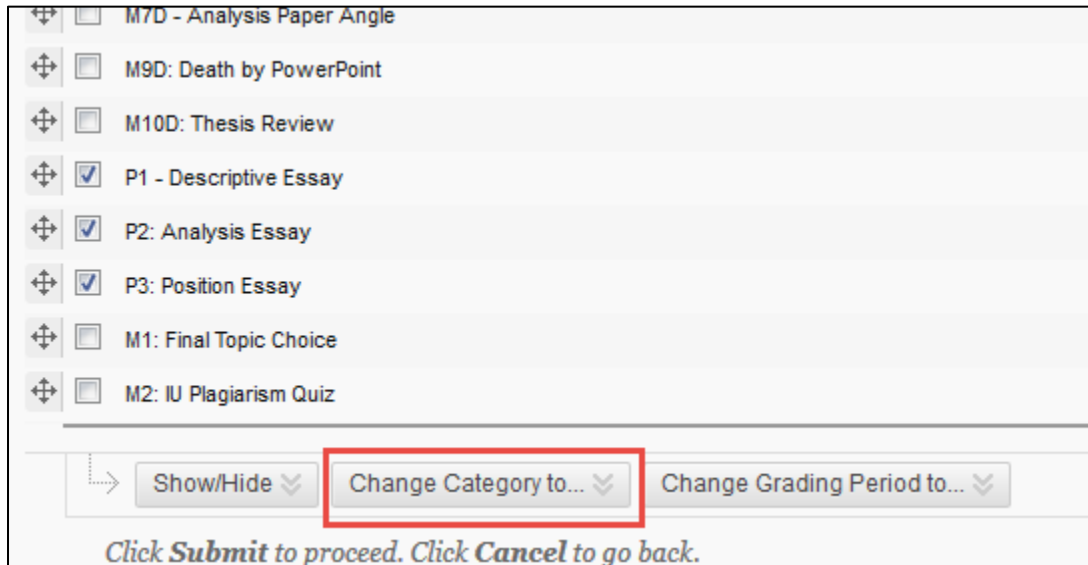
When you create assignments, discussions, tests, blogs, wikis or journals in Blackboard, the Grade Center will automatically assign those as the categories for those columns. You can, however, create new categories and assign your columns accordingly.

Here are the steps to create and assign categories:

- In the Grade Center, click on the **Manage** button, then select **Categories**.



- Click on **Create Category**.
- Type a name for the category, then click **Submit**.
- Once you have created your categories, click on **OK** in the lower right corner to return to the Grade Center window.
- Click on **Manage** again, then select **Column Organization**.
- To assign columns to a category, click on the box next to each column name you would like to assign to the category.



- Once you have selected your items, click on **Change Category to** on the lower left side.
- Select the category you would like to assign to these items.
- Repeat the process to assign the remaining categories, then click **Submit** on the lower right side.

4. Setting Up Your Total Column

Once you have created all of your columns and assigned categories, you can configure your Total column to calculate final grades for the course. Depending on the way your course is graded, you will use either the **Weighted Total** or the **Total** column to do this. The Weighted Total column allows you to assign weights to different categories or columns (e.g., Quizzes = 10%, Final Exam = 25%). The Total column allows you to calculate a running total for the course (e.g., students earn a possible 1000 points for the course). Select one of the options below to create your Total column for the course.

Option 1: Weighted Total Column

In your Grade Center, click on the drop-down menu button next to the **Weighted Total** column and select **Edit Column Information**. You may wish to give your column a new name (such as "Final Grade") here.

Edit the **Primary Display** to reflect how you want students to see their grade. It is recommended that you choose **Score**, **Percentage** or **AIC Letter**.

Under #3, **Select Columns**, you can select a mix of categories or columns to include in your weighted total.

3. Select Columns

Select the columns and categories to include in this weighted grade and then set the weight percentages.

Include in Weighted Grade

Columns to Select: 1

Categories to Select: 2

Selected Columns: 3

Enter the weight percentage for each item. Percentages should add up to 100 percent.

* 20 % Category: Discussion

Weight Columns: Equally Proportionally

Drop Grades OR Use only the

Drop Highest to Calculate Lowest Value

Grades Drop 1 Lowest to Calculate Highest Value

Grades

* 5 % Category: Summaries

Weight Columns: Equally Proportionally

Drop Grades OR Use only the

Drop Highest to Calculate Lowest Value

Grades Highest Value

Total Weight: 100%

1. **Columns to Select:** This section lists all of the columns in your Grade Center. If you have a single assignment, such as a Final Exam, that does not require a category, you can select it here. Click on the small arrow button to right of the box to move it into the **Selected Columns** area.
2. **Categories to Select:** If you have assigned categories to your items, you can select them here. Click on the small arrow button to the right of the box to move them to the Selected Columns area. This will average all items assigned to a category. It is not necessary to create a “Quiz Average” column or figure out weights for individual assignments, since Blackboard will work that out automatically.
3. **Selected Columns:** In this area, enter the weight for each column or category you have added. You will see the **Total Weight** at the bottom of the box. If you are weighing categories, you also have the option to drop the lowest grade in a category.

Once you have chosen your weights, scroll down and click **Submit**.

Option 2: Total Column

In your Grade Center, click on the drop-down menu button next to the **Total** column and select **Edit Column Information**. You may wish to give your column a new name (such as “Final Grade”) here.

Edit the **Primary Display** to reflect how you want students to see their grade. It is recommended that you choose **Score, Percentage** or **Letter**.

Under **Select Columns**, you can choose whether you want all Grade Center columns to be included in the total, or only selected columns. Usually, you will want to leave it with **All Grade Columns**. If you choose **Selected Columns and**

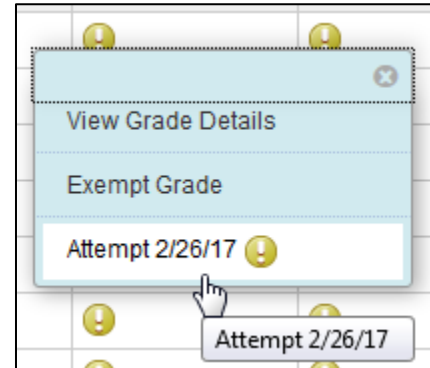
Categories, you will have an option similar to above to choose the columns and categories you would like to factor into your total.

Once you have chosen which columns to include, scroll down and click **Submit**.

5. Entering Grades

To enter grades, you can simply click into a cell and type in a grade. For items that students submit into Blackboard, you will see a yellow exclamation point icon in the cell to indicate that the student has submitted something. To view the work and add annotations, hover over the cell and click on the drop-down menu button that appears. You will have the option to view individual attempts and add grades and comments.

If you created a test in Blackboard, the test will be graded automatically. You can follow the same steps to view the student's submitted test and award any partial credit as needed.



For more information on grading Assignments and Discussions in Blackboard, view our written tutorials on myAIC:

- [Grading Assignment Submissions](#)
- [Grading Discussions](#)

If you would like to preview how grade submissions will look from a student view, click on the [Student Preview button](#). This allows you to submit assignments from the student view, then return to the Instructor view to grade them.

Tips and Troubleshooting

1. If you can't find a column in your Grade Center, go to **Manage > Column Organization**. This will give you an overview of all the columns your course. If a column is greyed out, it is hidden from students. You can rearrange the columns here in an order that makes sense to you. Many instructors group the columns in chronological order, or by type of assignment.
2. If you do not want your students to see your Total column until you have configured it, select the option to hide it from students.
3. If your totals do not seem to look accurate, check the points possible you have given to each assignment. If you have assigned the column 10 points, for example, but have graded it out of 100, you might see unusual numbers in the Total column for the course. We recommend using 100 points as a default, even if you use letter grades.