Quick Start Guide to

Blackboard Grade Center

About Blackboard Grade Center

The Blackboard Grade Center offers some benefits for those looking to "green" their courses, those who wish to liberate their email inboxes from student's assignments, and for those who wish to give students quick, up-to-date feedback on assignments, papers, and exams. Follow these four steps to get started using the Blackboard Grade Center.

Choosing your method

The Grade Center is flexible enough so that you can apply the grading method you already use to the columns and schemas within its interface, but it is important that you pick ONE method and apply it to every assignment in your course.

- Guiding Questions: How will I be calculating grades? Will I be grading based on a point total? Will I be showing students grades on assignments in terms of percentages or letter grades?

Below are examples of two primary methods used for calculating grades. Each has a different set of implications for the way columns are constructed in Blackboard, as well as how you will display grades to students.

Point System

15	Test 1
15	Test 2
20	Participation/Attendance
20	Midterm Exam
30	Final Research Paper
100	**Total Points**

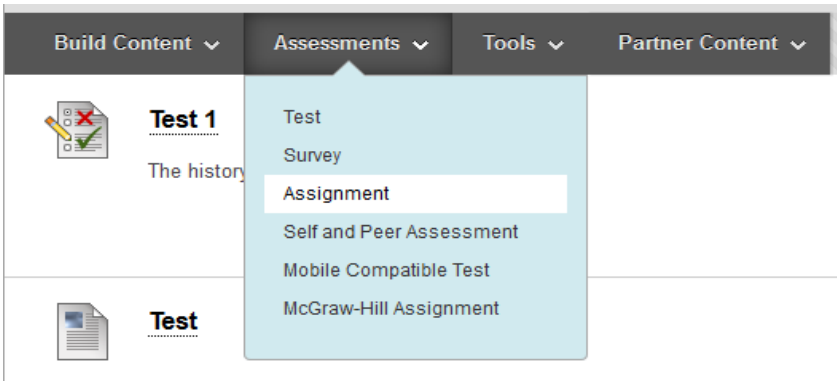
Percentage/Weighted Total

20%	Response Papers (3)
35%	Quizzes (4)
15%	Participation/Attendance
30%	Final Exam
100%	**Total**

Setting up assignments and tests

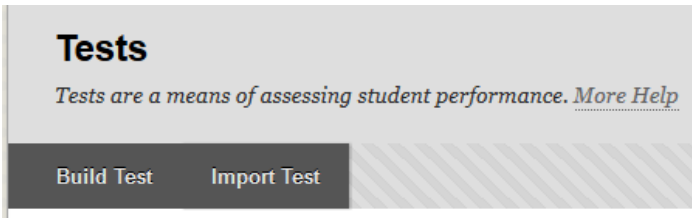
Assignments

1. Go to the Content Area where you'd like to collect your assignment (for example, a Response Paper or an Essay) through Blackboard.
2. Select the dark gray box that says **Assessments** and then select **Assignment**.

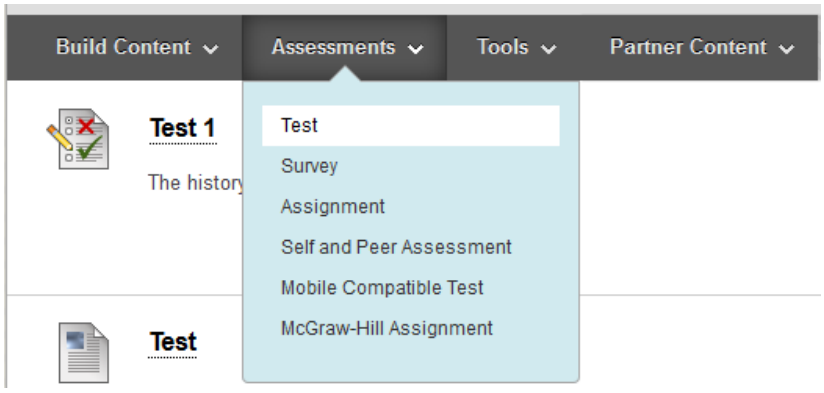


3. Enter the assignment name, instructions to students, and attach any assignment files.
4. Set the **Due Date**.
    - Note: Students will still be able to turn the assingment in after the due date, however, the Grade Center will mark that the assingment was turned in past due.
5. Enter the **Points Possible**.
6. Set the **Submission Details** for this assignment.
    - Do not edit Assignment Type, as you'll typically be gathering assignments from individual students.
    - Number of Attempts – we suggest allowing multiple attempts and grading only the last, as studnets might have technological issues as they try to submit.
    - Select SafeAssign if you plan on using this anti-plagiarism tool.
    - Grading Options – decide if you'd like to grade anonymously.
    - Display of Grades – decide how you'd like students to see their grades in the My Grades area.
    - Availabililty – the item is available to students by default, however, you can edit these options if you choose.
7. Click **Submit**.

Tests



1. Go to the **Control Panel**, click on the **Course Tools** menu link, and then select **Tests, Surveys and Pools**.
2. Click **Test** and then **Build Test**.
3. Give the test a name, and fill in all other pertinent information that you wish, including detailed instructions for your students (e.g., "This quiz is open book and timed.")
4. Click **Submit** to create your new test. You will be brought to the Test Canvas area, where you will be able to build questions and create an answer key.
5. To create a question, hover over the **Create Question** button. There are several options for question types, such as multiple choice, true/false, and short answer. As you create each question, make sure to identify the correct answer out of the options given.
6. After you've built the test, click the **OK** button at the bottom right-hand side of the page.
7. To deploy the test into one of your course's content areas (so that students can access it), navigate to the appropriate content area, hover over the **Assessments** button, and select **Test**.



8. Select the test you've just created and click **Submit**.
    - Note: You'll notice here that there's an option to create a new tests; this is an alternative method to navigating to the test creation tool.
9. Fill out the test options on the next page according to your preferences (similar to those in Assignments, above).
10. Check the box next to **Make the Link Available** and click **Submit**.

Creating new columns

If you require a column in your Gradebook for which there isn't already an associated test, quiz, or assignment in Blackboard (such as Participation or Attendance), you will use the **Create Column** tool in the Grade Center.

1. Click on the **Grade Center** menu link and click **Full Grade Center**.
2. Click on the first gray button on the upper left-hand side that says **Create Column**.
3. Select an option for the **Primary Display**. Options include Score (number), Letter (based on Blackboard's editable letter grade schema), Text (any alphanumeric text you manually enter), Percentage (points earned divided by points possible), Complete/Incomplete (for completion only).
4. Set Points Possible based on the grading system you chose in the section above.
    - If using the Point System outlined above, enter number of points associated with that particular assignment.
    - If using the Percentages/Weighted Total option, enter 100.
5. Edit the **Due Date**.
    - Disregard for columns where students are not turning in a physical assignment through Blackboard.
6. Click **Submit** to create your new column.

Enabling other tools for grading

Blogs, Journals, Discussion Boards and Wiki pages can also be enabled for grading. When you are setting up these tools, you'll have the option of including them in the Grade Center calculations. You will treat them the same as any other column in your Grade Center.

Keep in mind that grading for Tools takes place within the Tool itself, instead of in the Grade Center.

Calculating the grade (Total Points or Weighted Total)

Total Points Method

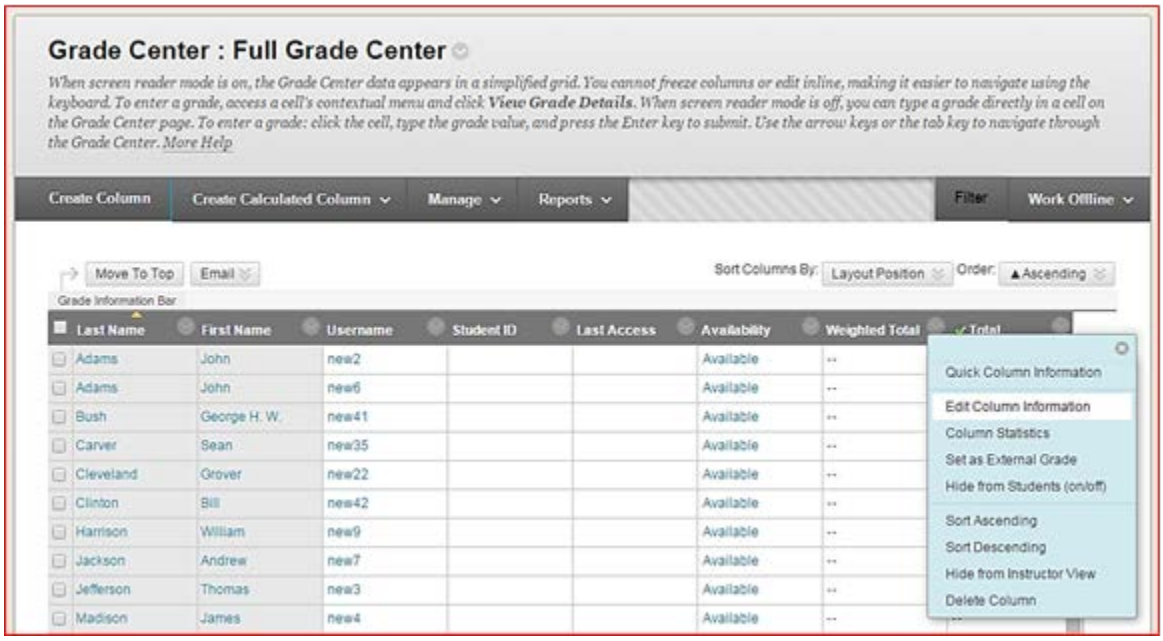
The Total column in the Grade Center automatically calculates a student's total grade based on each column in the gradebook. By default, this column collects all assignments that you've entered into Blackboard and counts them toward the total grade.

1. To change which columns are counted in the Total column calculation, click on the arrow that appears as you hover over the name **Total** and choose **Edit Column Information**.
2. In the third section, **Select Columns**, toggle the **Selected Columns and Categories** option.
3. In the **Columns to Select** box (NOT Categories to Select), choose a column to highlight it, then click the right-pointing arrow to move it from the Columns to Select box to the **Selected Columns** box.
4. Repeat steps _____ to select all columns that you'd like to include in the Total grade calculation.
5. Click **Submit**.

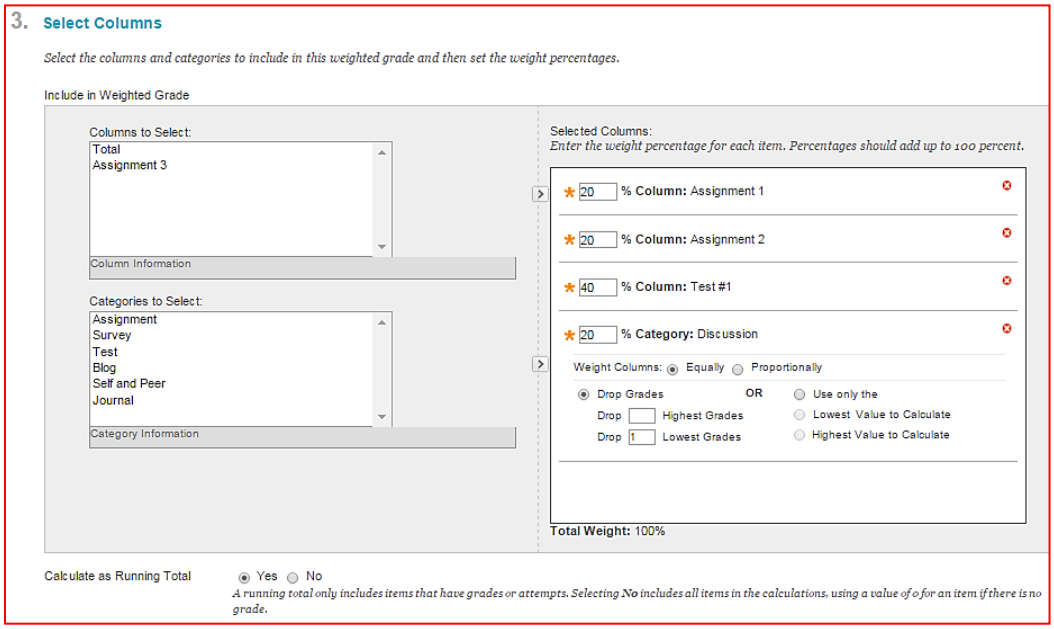
Weighted Total

The Grade Center is set up so that you can apply any weighting plan that you already use. For example, if you had three assignments during the whole semester that individually were graded on a scale of 1-100, but altogether the combined grades of the assignments were worth 30% of the final grade, you would follow these steps.

1. Hover over the the assignment name at the top of the column in the Grade Center. A downward arrow will appear. Click it, then click **Edit Column Information**.



2. Scroll down to **Category**. Make sure that the assignment in question is actually in the **Assignment** category.
3. Scroll down to **Points Possible** and type in 100, then click **Submit**.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 for all assignments.
5. Back in the Grade Center, choose the downard pointing arrow next to **Weighted Total** and choose **Edit Column Information**.
6. Scroll down to the third section, **Select Columns**.
7. In the **Categories to Select** box (NOT Columns to Select), click **Assignments** to highlight it, then click the right-pointing arrow to move it from the Categories to Select box to the **Selected Columns** box.



8. After Assignments has been moved over to the Selected Columns box, type in a percentage of the final grade that all assignments are worth together (i.e., 30%).
9. Keep adding categories using steps 7-8 and assigning the other percentages until you reach 100%.
    - Note: You will need to have all of your Categories set up before you weight your grades (see below). This is because Blackboard requires all categories to add up to 100% before saving this step.
10. Scroll down and click **Submit**.

Categories

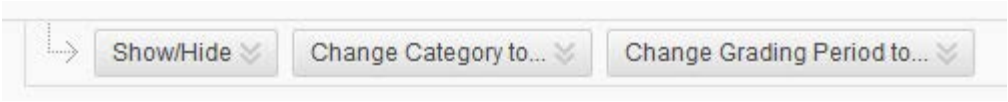
Categories can be used to group several similar Grade Center columns (e.g., Quizzes) so that the entire sum total can be weighted as part of the total grade. Follow the steps below to create a new category.

1. Click on the **Grade Center** menu link and click **Full Grade Center**.
2. Click on the third gray button across the top of the page that says **Manage**, then click **Categories**.
3. On the Categories page, click the large gray **Create Category** button.
4. Type the category name and an optional description.
5. Click **Submit**.

You can assign your grade columns to Categories at two different points in time: a) as you first create a new column or b) after columns have already been created.

6. To assign a newly created column to a Category, use the **Create Column** button in the **Full Grade Center** to make your column. Then change the **Category** option to the desired category (e.g., Tests).

7. To assign an existing column to a Category, click the gray **Manage** button from the **Full Grade Center**, and then click **Column Organization**. On the Column Organization page, click the check box next to the name of the columns you'd like to assign to a Category. At the bottom of the page, click the **Change Category to…** button and choose the category you'd like the columns to be assigned to. Click **Submit** to save your changes.

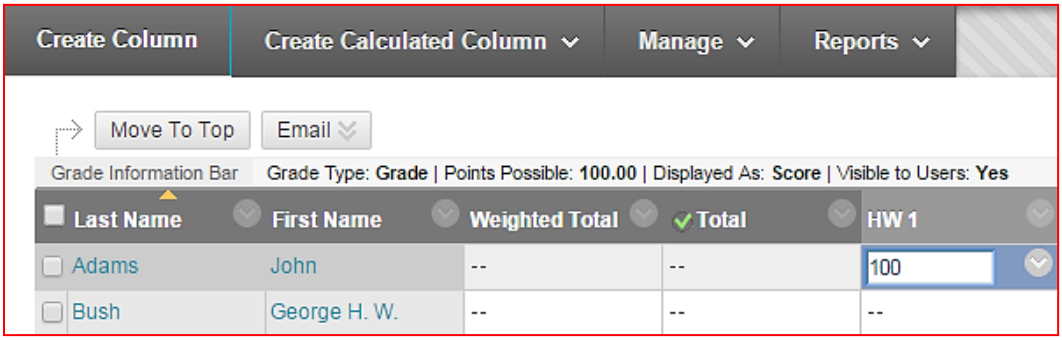


Adding grades to the Grade Center

There are two options for entering grades in the Grade Center. Option A allows you to enter or change a grade on the Grade Center spreadsheet. This option is recommended if you're entering grades for an entire class at once. Option B allows you to enter a grade for one student at a time, and view the Grade History.

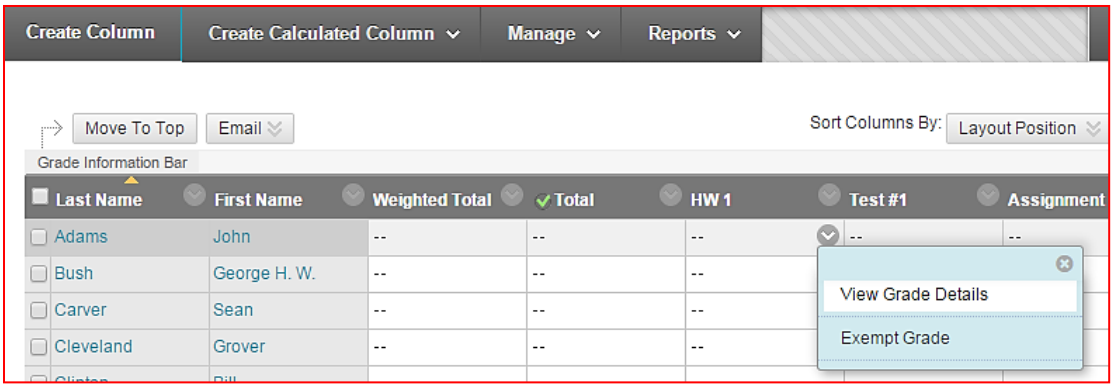
Entering grades directly on the spreadsheet

1. In the Full Grade Center, click on the first cell in the column for the assignment you'd like to grade.
2. Enter a new grade or edit an exisiting grade into the text box and press Enter. This saves the grade and moves your cursor to the cell below.
    - Note: any changes made to a grade are recorded and shown in the Grade History.

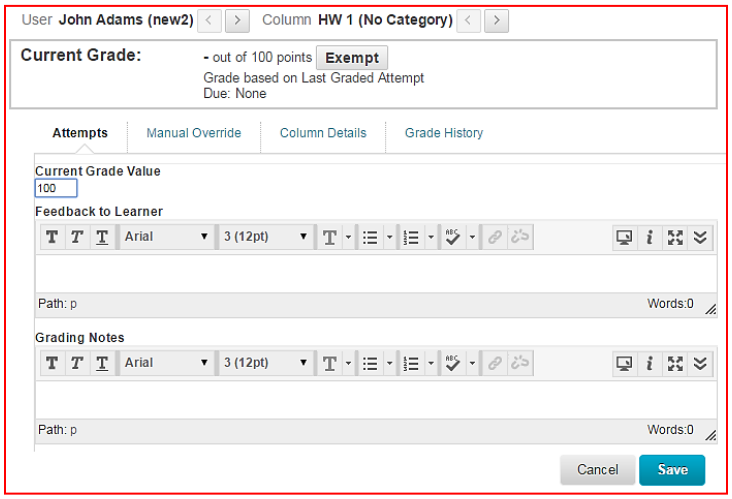


Entering grades using Grade Details

1. From the Full Grade Center, mouse over the grade cell in the column you'd like to grade and click on the arrow that appears in the grade cell. Select **View Grade Details**.



2. Click the box under **Current Grade Value** and enter a grade. Enter any feedback in the **Feedback to Learner** area and enter other grading comments in the **Grading Notes** area. Click **Save** to post the grade.



To learn more about the Blackboard Grade Center

1. Visit the Blackboard Help website: https://help.blackboard.com/.
2. Attend a workshop offered by the E-Learning Support Services staff. For information about upcoming opportunities or to request a group training session, contact our office or visit our website: http://www.american.edu/library/technology/blackboard/.
3. Contact us for immediate live support or to schedule a one-on-one consultation at (202) 885-3904 or blackboard@american.edu. We are available from 9:00 am until 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, in Room 321 of AU's Bender Library.