# Blackboard Grade Center Overview

The Blackboard Grade Center is a wonderful tool full of helpful features – so full that it's often difficult to know where to start. Here's an overview of all the basics, plus some time-saving tips. The Grade Center can do everything from calculate weighted totals, to score online quizzes, to enable you to grade papers completely electronically. If you've never used the Grade Center (or if you've been using Excel all these years), take a look and see what Blackboard can do for you.

Adding a Column

The Grade Center of every course space begins with several default columns: student names, last course access date, total and weighted total, and more. Some types of assessments automatically create a grade center column for you (for example, tests, surveys, assignments, discussion boards, and more). For other types of assessments (exams, papers, participation grades, etc.), you will need to add a column to the Grade Center in order to be able to enter student grades.

Click on the Grade Center sub-menu of the Control Panel area, then click on the words "Full Grade Center" to see the Grade Center. Click the "Create Column" button.

Create Column	Create Calculated Column ⌄	Manage ⌄	Reports ⌄		Filter	Work Offline ⌄
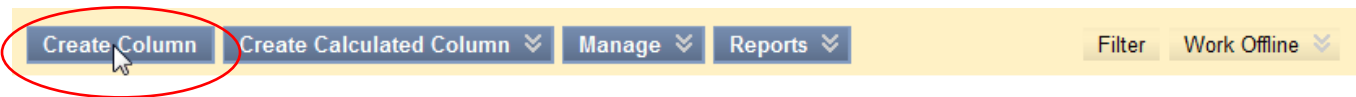
On the following page, enter the name, points possible, and any other information necessary (all options are explained within the page). Click Submit and there is your new column.

Entering Grades

There are two basic options for entering grades: fast entry using the spreadsheet view and detailed entry using the Grade Details page. If you are just entering exam grades, for example, you can use the fast entry through the spreadsheet view. Click in the cell, type in the grade, and hit the Enter key to save and advance to the next student.

☐	Last Name ▲	⌄	First Name	⌄	Final Exam	⌄	Weighted Total	⌄	✔ Total	⌄	File Response E	⌄
☐	Student		Average		75.00		-		160.00		-	
☐	Student		Bogus		-		-		75.00		-	
☐	Student		Demo		-		-		95.00		-	
☐	User		Demonstration		-		-		80.00		-	

For assignments and any type of assessment involving additional student feedback, you will need to go to the Grade Details page. Hover your mouse in the cell for a student and click the "chevron" (double-headed arrow) that appears; then select the "View Grade Details" option.

☐	Last Name ▲	⌄	First Name	⌄	Last Access	⌄	Midterm	⌄	College Life	⌄	Final Exam	⌄
☐	Student		Average		October 19, 2009		85.00 (B)		!			
☐	Student		Bogus		October 19, 2009		75.00 (C)		!		> View Grade Details	
☐	Student		Demo		November 25, 2009		95.00 (A)		!		> Exempt Grade	
☐	User		Demonstration		October 19, 2009		80.00 (B-)		!		-	

On the following page, in the "Attempts" area, look for the "View Attempt" button and click it to access student work and the grading and comment sections.

Organizing the Grade Center

Once you begin using the Grade Center, you may discover that you need to organize it differently from the default layout. Click the Manage button, the select "Column Organization":

On the next page, you can Hide columns you don't want to see or Show columns you have previously Hidden. Check the column(s) you want, then select the option you'd like. Mouse over the four-headed compass symbol, then click and drag the column to change the order in which columns appear in the spreadsheet view. In the lower part of the page, click the chevron next to any column and change the default sort order. Be sure to click Submit to save your changes.

Note: to delete a column, click the chevron next to the column name. This menu contains many useful options, including the "Edit Column Information" to use for modifying an existing column.
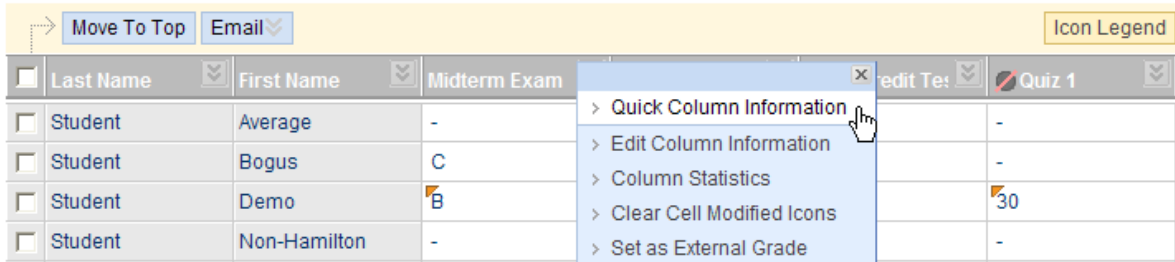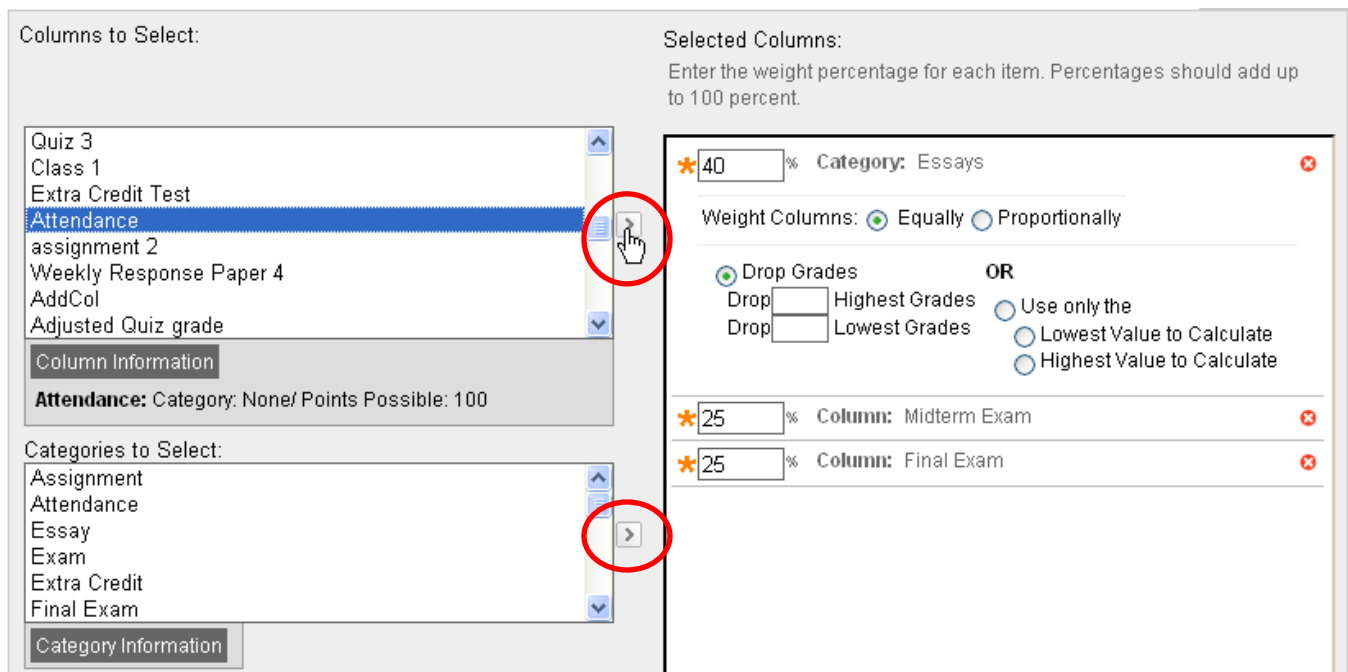
Weighting Grades

Before starting to set up the weighting scheme, it's a good idea to make sure that all of your grade center items have a category associated with them. This will give you additional options when setting up the weighting. Click the "chevron" for each item and select "Quick Column Information" to check whether there is a category. If not, then select "Edit Column Information" and add an appropriate category (you can also define your own in Manage --> Categories).

You should have a column called "Weighted Total" in your grade center (if not, create one by clicking the "Create Calculated Column" button and selecting "Weighted Column"). Click the "chevron" for the Weighted Total column and then select "Edit Column Information." You will see an area which is unique to the weighted column and this is where you will set up your grade weighting scheme. Select an item and click the arrow to move it to the "Selected" area.

You should be able to replicate the weighting scheme on your syllabus in the "Columns/Categories to Select" area. As you can see, we can mix categories (quizzes, essays) in with individual columns (exams, attendance). You can also select calculated columns (total, average, min/max or weighted) which you have created to reflect specific grading needs.

As long as each essay-like item has the category "Essay," it doesn't matter how many there are; Blackboard will calculate the grade for this category based on however many items are in the category and weight them equally (each one has the same number of points possible) or proportionally (each one has a different number of points possible). You can also choose to drop the X number of lowest (or highest!) grades or use only the lowest or highest value of the group.

A Few Tips and Tricks

1) **Shorten column title by adding a Grade Center Display name**. This is a handy option if you use long assignment names. The descriptive assignment name remains in the content area; you see a name not longer than 15 characters in the Grade Center. Click the "chevron" next to the column title and select "Edit Column Information."

2) **Use the navigation tools on the Grade Details page to jump from one student to the next or one assignment to the next without reloading the Grade Center page**. This will allow you to go directly from one student to the next while grading assignments without the extra step of reloading the Grade Center when you don't need to do so.

Click here for a list of students

Click here for the list of grade center items

Jump to...   View Rubric

User: -Select-   Column: -Select-   Cancel   Go

User **Average Student (astudent)** < >   Column **College Life (Assignment)** < >

Click these buttons to go to the next or previous students

Click these buttons to go to the next or previous columns
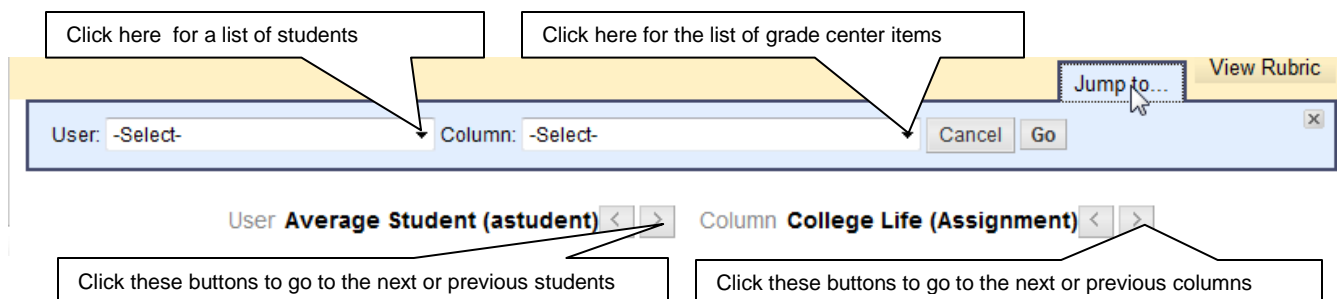
3) **Email students directly from the Grade Center**. Just check the boxes next to their names and click the "Email" button directly above the name columns.

4) **Add a Quick Comment to a student's grade**. Once a grade has been entered for a student, you should see the option "Quick Comment" in the menu that pops up when you click the "chevron" next to the individual student's grade. When you select this option, an entry box will pop up with two fields, one for feedback to the student and one for notes to yourself. This is faster for quick comments than selecting the "View Grade Details" option.

5) **Exempting a single grade from a student's total grade**. This is another option you will see on the menu that pops up when you click the chevron in a grade cell. Selecting this option will cause the grade for that student to not be included in that student's totals. Once created, it can be cleared if necessary.

6) **Overriding Grades**. You also have the ability to override a given grade with an updated grade. Click the "View Grade Details" option and look in the series of tabs beginning with "Edit." Click the "Manually Override" tab and enter a new grade along with comments to the student or notes to yourself.

7) **Changing the category of a number of items at once**. Go to the Manage menu and select "Column Organization." Select the columns whose category you need to change and then pick the new category from the list under the "Change Category to …" button.

8) **Visual Cues for Grade Center statuses**. One may set up a Color Code to set background and text color of Grade Center items based on grading status or grade range.

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