

## Using the Grade Center

The Grade Center provides a secure and relatively easy 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.

### Adding Grade Columns

1. Click the **Control Panel** button.
2. In the Assessment menu, click on **Grade Center**. The gradebook spreadsheet view appears.
3. Click **Add Grade Column**. (*Note: The gradebook columns are automatically added for tests, quizzes, and surveys created through the Test or Survey manager, and for assignments using the Assignment tool.*)
4. Enter a name for the item, select a category, enter the possible points, and select display type in the menu. Note that you can assign a Grade Center Display Name and a Secondary Display option.
5. Set the options:
  - Include this column in Grade Center calculations
  - Show this column in My Grades (makes the item visible to students)
  - Show Statistics
6. Click **Submit** and **OK** when prompted. The item appears as a column in the spreadsheet.

### Organizing the Grade Center

Click **Manage**, then select **Organize Grade Center** from the pull-down menu.


#### Show/Hide Columns

Click in the box in the second column of the row(s) 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 light gray names.

#### Move / Rearrange Columns

Place the cursor on the gray box at the beginning of the row you want to move. (The cursor changes to a vertical double arrow.) Hold the mouse button down, drag the row to a new destination, and release the mouse button.

↑↓	Name	Grading Period	Category
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weighted Total	Shown in Selected Views only	Calculated Grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	Total (External Grade)	Shown in Selected Views only	Calculated Grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1	Shown in Selected Views only	Lab
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 2	Shown in Selected Views only	Lab
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 3	Shown in Selected	Lab
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Lab 1	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Lab 2	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Lab 3	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Lab 4	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Lab 5	


 Drag Lab 4 over Lab 5 to change Order.

### 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. In the Grade Center Spreadsheet view, 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. Here you can clear attempts, add comments (including feedback to the student), and exempt the grade.
3. To modify a grade, click the current grade. It will be highlighted in grey. Type the new grade. You will see an orange Modified indicator in the upper left side of the cell. You can clear this Indicator by clicking the arrows on the right-hand side of the cell and selecting **Clear Modified Indicator**.

## **Calculated Columns**

Blackboard 8.0 allows you to add Calculated Columns to aid grade calculations. Options are: Weighted, Total, Average, Minimum/Maximum.

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

1. Click **Add Calculated Column** and select **Weighted**. Give the column a name. Examples of column names include:

**Final Grade** (if weighting grades for the entire semester)

**Grading Period #1** (if weighting grades for a defined grading period)

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

- **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**
  - You can add your own **Categories** if the ones provided do not meet your needs (click **Manage**, then **Categories**, then **Add Category**).
  - **Columns** is the best choice if you have items not assigned to categories.
2. Enter percentages for each category or column. (They must total to 100 percent.)
  3. Click **Submit** and **OK** when prompted. To review your weightings, find the weighted column you added in the spreadsheet, click the arrow on the right, and select **Modify Column**.

### **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)

### Selected Columns:

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

* 60 %	Category: Lab	✕
Weight Columns: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Equally <input type="radio"/> Proportionally		
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Drop Grades <b>OR</b> <input type="radio"/> Use only the		
Drop <input type="text"/> highest grades <input type="radio"/> Lowest value to calculate		
Drop <input type="text"/> lowest grades <input type="radio"/> Highest value to calculate		
* 10 %	Column: Exam 1	✕
* 10 %	Column: Exam 2	✕
* 20 %	Column: Research	✕

Total Weight: 100%

### Using Letter Grades

Should you wish 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.

To change the numerical ranges for letter grades (for example, from 93-100 is an “A”, etc.), click **Manage**, then **Grading Schemas**, then **Modify**. 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%.

### 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 **Add 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.

### ***Saving Your Blackboard Gradebook by Exporting it to Microsoft Excel***

You can save a copy of your Blackboard gradebook in a format that can be opened by Excel and other spreadsheet programs. (*We strongly recommend doing this every time you add grades to your Gradebook. Not only does this give you a backup during the semester, but you also have a copy of your Gradebook for the course when the old course site is removed from the Blackboard server.*)

1. Click **Manage** then select **Download**.
2. Select the data to download and choose the type of “delimiter” (usually *Comma* is a good choice) and click **Submit**.
3. Click **Download** and **Save to disk** to save the file to your computer.
4. You will now be able to open (and print) the file in Excel or another spreadsheet program. (If you click on the file’s icon it will open automatically in Excel.)

## **Early Warning System**

The Early Warning System (available in the **Control Panel**) allows you to identify students who do not meet criteria that you specify for attendance, grades, or assignment due dates. Once you identify these students, you have the option of sending them e-mail messages. To

### **Example : Grade Rule**

Send an e-mail message to students who scored less than 70% on Lab 1.

#### **Set up the criterion**

1. Click **Grade Rule**
2. Name the rule (Lab 1 70% or under) and click **Yes** to make it Available
3. **Select a Grade Center Item:** select Lab 1
4. **Define Criteria:** select less than or equal to
5. **Score:** 70

#### **Identify students who meet the criterion**

1. The name of the Rule is now a link. Click this link.
2. In the **Display** pull-down menu, select **Meets Criteria**, then click **Go**.
3. Select individual students by clicking in the box next to their names, or, to send an e-mail to all students who meet the criterion, click **Go** next to **Select All**.

#### **Send an e-mail to these students**

1. From the Notify menu, select **Student Users Only** and click **Go**.
2. You can add additional recipients by entering their complete e-mail addresses (blind carbon copies).
3. Change the default Subject, enter your message to replace the default message, and click **Submit**.

### **Example 2: Last Access Rule**

Send an e-mail message to students who have not entered your course site for the past 5 days.

1. Click **Last Access Rule**
2. Name the rule (Last access 5 days) and click **Yes** to make it Available
3. **Days Since Last Course Access: 5**

Continue as above to identify students who meet the criterion and send them an e-mail.

### **Example 3: Late Assignment notification**

Send an e-mail message to students who do not submit an assignment (set up using the Assignment tool), take a test, or complete a survey by the specified due date.

1. Be sure that the assignment in the Grade Center includes a Due Date.
2. Click **Due Date Rule**
3. **Select a Grade Center Item:** select the assignment from the menu
4. **Define Criteria:** select later than
5. **Date Offset:** Do not apply offset

Continue as above to identify students who meet the criterion and send them an e-mail.