Blackboard Grade Center

At A Glance – The Grade Center

- Initially, the Grade Center is created with the following columns: Last Name, First Name, Username, Student ID, Last Access, Availability, Total, Weighted Total.
- Use the *Manage > Column Organization* to hide or reorganize columns in the instructor view.
- Use the column's settings menu to change column settings or hide from student view.
- Creating an assignment or posting a test automatically creates a column in the Grade Center (usually at the end).
- Use the Create Column button to create a place to record assignments that happen outside of Blackboard.
- Always take the time to add descriptions to the columns you create. The student will see those descriptions in their My Grades area.

Setting up your Grade Center

Step 1 – Start with Your Syllabus

How do you calculate grades? A Running Total? A Weighted Average? If you use Weighted Average, what categories do you use?

Running Total

You are in luck! Blackboard creates a Total column for you that automatically maintains a running total of all graded items. We still need to do some tweaking to the column settings.

1. Click the settings arrow in the column heading and *Edit Column Information*.
2. Copy/Paste your grade scale from your syllabus into the description area for easy reference for students.
3. Change *Secondary Display* to be *Letter*.
4. Make sure that under *Options* you have "Show this column to students" set to *Yes*.

Weighted Average

We will need to hide any columns that might confuse students and create categories to make our lives easier.

1. Click the settings arrow in the column heading and *Edit Column Information*.
2. For the Total columns that came by default, scroll down to *Options* change "Show this column to students" set to *No*. (Hiding it in your Grade Center doesn't hide it from students.)

Now let's review the categories you use to calculate a student's grade. Below is a sample structure we will use for this instruction:

> Homework – 30%
> Classwork – 20%
> Tests/Quizzes – 30%
> Project – 20%

Blackboard has some categories built in but we will need to create our own.

1. Click *Manage > Categories* in the bar just above the Grade Center Grid and review the built-in categories.
2. We can use "Assignment" and "Test" but we will need to create "Classwork" and "Project" to accommodate our structure above.
3. Click *Create Category*
4. Enter the Category Name and a brief description then **Submit**.
5. Repeat as needed.

Now we have our categories let's examine how they are used in Blackboard.

When we create an assignment in the Course Content area or post a Blackboard test, grade columns are automatically created with those categories. You can always change the category in the Grade Center if these defaults are not what you need.

For this example, let's assume we've created an assignment, *Project 1* as a part of the Project so I need to change the category.

1. Find the Project 1 grade column in the Grade Center.
2. Click the settings arrow in the column heading and *Edit Column Information*.
3. Scroll down to the Category drop-down arrow and change the selection from Assignment to Project and **Submit**.

Remember to do this whenever you create a new assignment or test is Blackboard that you don't intend to be in those categories.

Step 2 – Create the Weighted Average Column

Remember when we create new columns, Blackboard drops them at the end. If you are creating this Weighted Average column after creating several grade columns, it might be easier to use the *Manage > Colum Organization* to move this new column up to the beginning.

1. Click *Create Calculated Column > Weighted Column*
2. Give your column a clear name like "Course Grade" and copy/paste your category weights from your syllabus into the Description.
3. Scroll down and change *Secondary Display* to "Letter" so students can easily see their course letter grade.
4. Scroll down to the *Select Columns* area and look in the *Categories to Select* box.
5. Select your categories and use the arrow to move them into the *Selected Columns* box.
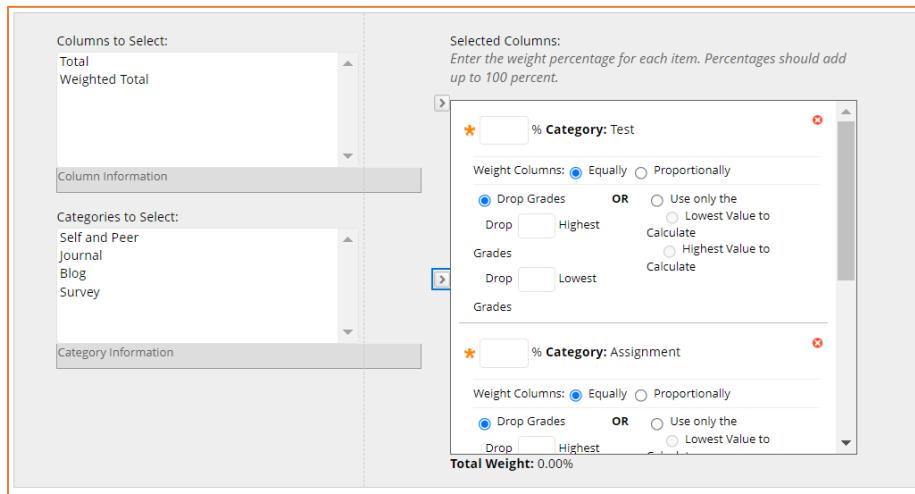
You'll notice right away you have a lot of options here. You can determine right here if you want to drop the lowest grade in any of the categories or even weight different items within a category differently (i.e. make a final exam weighted more than a regular chapter exam). The only thing you must enter is the weight of each category.

6. Enter the percentages for each of your categories – they must add up to 100%.

Calculate as Running Total

Right below the category box you will notice a Yes/No option to calculate as a running total.

Yes – will only include columns that have grades in them in the calculations. If a student hasn't turned in an assignment, that will be ignored in the Course Grade calculation.

No – will calculate the empty columns as zeros.

- If you build out a complete course at the beginning or copy a course from a previous term, choose **Yes** or students will think they are failing no matter what they do. You will need to regularly go in an enter zeros for students who have skipped assignments, or they will think they are fine – even though they aren't.
- If you build as you go you can use **No** if you wish.
- If you use publisher integrated assignments and those grades are set to automatically load to your Blackboard Grade Center, those grades will not override a zero that you have entered into that grade column. You can always look at the grade in the publisher's courseware and transfer it over manually if the student does the assignment late.

Now you are ready to click *Submit*!