

Blackboard: Grade Center Management Tips

The Blackboard Grade Center can be an effective tool in keeping both you and your students up to date on their performance. Consider these best practices and tips when managing your Grade Center.

Consult with the Instructional Technology Lab (ITL). Before using the Grade Center for the first time it is recommended that you contact the ITL for training. The Grade Center is a complex tool with extensive functionality, and if you do not fully understand how it works, it is easy to make errors.

[Contact the Instructional Technology Lab:](#)

⇒ (202) 994-0485

⇒ itl@gwu.edu

Prepare ahead of time. Attempt to set up as many grade columns as you can before the class begins. Naturally, unexpected changes come up during the semester, but having most of the Grade Center ready in advance can save you time once the course is underway. When you create gradable items in your course, columns are created automatically; however, you can also manually create columns for graded activities that take place outside Blackboard, like participation.

⇒ [Learn more about grade columns.](#)

Organize Columns. Instructors can manage the order in which columns appear in the Grade Center. Use the Grade Center Organization Tool to reorder columns in a logical order, like by the due date. You can also re-assign categories and check if there are any hidden columns that could impact grade accuracy or may still be visible to students. Hidden columns are labeled as such and italicized.

⇒ [Learn more about organizing the Grade Center.](#)

Delete or hide unused columns. You have two options when hiding columns, Hide from Students (on/off) or Hide from Instructor View. You can also choose to delete any manual columns you won't need. However, graded items like assignments and tests must be deleted first to remove the column.

⇒ [Learn more about grade columns.](#)

Customize grade displays. Do you want students to see a numeric score, a percentage, a letter grade? Regardless of the display you choose, consistency provides students with a clearer understanding of their progress. Edit a column's information to set a Primary Display. A Secondary Display is also available if an additional grade view would be helpful for you, but students cannot see it. If you plan to display letter grades to students, also edit the default Letter Grade Schema to match your grading scale.

⇒ [Learn more about grading schemas.](#)

Use Categories for flexibility. Use Categories to organize grade data and group related columns. For example, if you have six quizzes cumulatively worth 30% of the final grade you can assign all the quizzes to the same Category and then, using a weighted column, apply the 30% weight to the Category. You also have the option of dropping a specified number of the highest or lowest grades in the Category.

⇒ [Learn more about categories.](#)

Determine how to calculate final grades. You must first decide whether to weight final grades (e.g., all assignments = 25%, final exam = 35%, etc.) or use a point-based schema. Your choice then determines whether you use a Weighted Total or Total column. Once you decide which total column fits your grading structure, customize it to calculate a final grade based upon assessment grades entered during the semester. To avoid confusion, remove the Total column you don't use. **Note:** *Blackboard is NOT the official system for final grades. Instructors should record final grades in the [GWeb System](#).*

⇒ [Learn more about calculating grades.](#)

Use Smart Views to filter your view. Smart views allow you to filter the Grade Center to show only the columns or students that match a set of criteria. They are especially useful when the Grade Center includes a significant number of students and columns. Some Smart Views are available by default, but you can also create your own.

⇒ [Learn more about smart views.](#)

Check the Grade Center for accuracy. To avoid miscalculation, review each column's information and use both the Primary and Secondary Displays. You can also use Student Preview Mode to add a temporary student to the Grade Center and confirm grade calculation accuracy and availability.

⇒ [Learn how to use student preview mode.](#)

Enable My Grades for Students. Make a My Grades tool link available in the course menu for students to easily access their personal grades and feedback.

⇒ [Learn more about adding links to the course menu.](#)

Provide private comments and feedback. Feedback is a great way to connect to your students and offer clarification for a particular grade. Use the Feedback to Learner textbox to provide individual feedback and attach files like a rubric or the student's document with tracked changes. You can also embed audio/video recordings with your feedback to further connect with students. Students view your comments in My Grades.

⇒ [Learn more about assigning grades.](#)

Hide student grades while grading. When grading student work, you may want to hide student's scores from them until you grade everyone. This step can be helpful if you are grading one student's work and realize you need to make changes to another student's grade. A red slash in the column header indicates students cannot see the column.

⇒ [Learn more about grade columns.](#)

Download a copy of student grades. While Blackboard is backed up regularly, it is good practice to maintain a copy of your Grade Center for your records. Blackboard generates a spreadsheet file that you can save on your computer and open in Excel or other spreadsheet programs.

⇒ [Learn how to download the Grade Center.](#)