The New Blackboard Grade Center
Formerly Gradebook

This manual will introduce you to the new Blackboard Grade Center

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Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 3

A Brand New Interface .................................................. 4

   Accessing the New Grade Center
   Ease of Use

Some Basic Tasks ......................................................... 6

   Enter or Change a Grade (p. 6)
   Should I Use the Enter or the Tab Key? (p. 8)
   Group Grade Columns into Categories (p. 10)
   Edit or Delete a Column (p. 12)
   Print the Grade Center (p. 13)
   Clear an Attempt (p. 14)
   Hide a Column (p. 16)
   Display Information about Your Column (p. 17)
   Send Email to Your Students (p. 19)
   Drop a Student’s Lowest Grade (p. 24)
Introduction

The Blackboard grade book has a new name. It is now called the *Grade Center*. Blackboard gave it a new name because it has been completely redesigned.

What’s new in Blackboard’s *Grade Center*?

- **It has a new easy-to-use web interface.** It’s a lot easier to get around in the new Grade Center!
- **Easy grade entry.** You can enter grades, exemptions, and comments all in one place.
- **Directly communicate with students.** You can email students directly from the Grade Center.
- **Create calculated columns.** The new Grade Center allows you to create a *calculated column* and even drop grades!

After you have finished reading this manual, you will be able to:

- Describe the Grade Center’s ease-of-use features.
- Identify the *Action Link* and describe how it functions in the spreadsheet.
- Decide which key you should use to enter information in a cell (the *Tab key* or the *Enter key*).
- Perform basic tasks in the Grade Center.
A New Name and a New Design

Accessing the new Grade Center

When you access the new Grade Center, you will notice that it takes a few seconds to load. You will see a message like the one in the image below:

![Loading Grade Center](image)

Blackboard loads a lot of information in the Grade Center spreadsheet. In doing so, it creates a spreadsheet-like environment in which you can work with a wealth of grade information (without having to navigate to another page).¹ You will have to navigate to other pages to perform certain tasks, however. We will be looking at some of these tasks in this manual.

¹ The length of time it takes for the Grade Center to open depends on the number of students enrolled in the course. The more students, the longer it will take for the Grade Center to open. Even with a lot of students, however, the Grade Center should only take a few seconds to open.
Ease of Use

In the new Grade Center, it is easy to associate all the grades with each student. In the old Gradebook, it was difficult to keep track of students while scrolling across grades.

In the image below, the instructor is using the navigation bar (item number 1 in the image below) to scroll across the page and find a particular grade column. Notice that the student last and first name columns remain stationary (item number 2 in the image below).

This makes it a lot easier to keep track of an individual student’s grades as you scroll across the page.
Some Basic Tasks

Here are some directions for performing basic tasks in the new Grade Center. A list of the tasks (and page numbers) follows:

- Enter or Change a Grade (p. 6)
- Should I Use the Enter or the Tab Key? (p. 8)
- Group Grade Columns into Categories (p. 10)
- Edit or Delete a Column (p. 12)
- Print the Grade Center (p. 13)
- Clear an Attempt (p. 14)
- Hide a Column (p. 16)
- Display Information about Your Column (p. 17)
- Send Email to Your Students (p. 19)
- Drop a Student's Lowest Grade (p. 24)

**Enter or Change a Grade**

To enter or change a grade on the spreadsheet:

1. Click the grade cell on the spreadsheet. An entry field will appear.
2. Enter a new grade or edit the existing grade and press the Tab key.

To change a grade on the Grade Details page:

1. Click the Action Link in the grade cell.

   What is the Action Link?
   The Action Link appears when you let the cursor hover over a grade cell. The link looks like this:

   This is what the Action Link looks like in a grade cell:

   | 83.00 | 82.00 |
   | 89.00 | 87.00 |
   | 99.00 | 99.00 |
   | 100.00| 90.00 |
   | 98.00 | 100.00|
   | 100.00| 100.00|

   Clicking the link will open a drop-down window.

2. In the drop-down window, select Grade Details.
3. On the *Grade Details* page, click the *Override* button and enter a new grade.

![Image of Grade Details page]

**Should I use the *Enter* key or the *Tab* key?**

After an instructor types a grade in a spreadsheet cell, he/she can click either the *Enter* key or the *Tab* key to submit the information. Hitting one or the other will have different effects.

- **Clicking the *Enter* key submits the grade and then opens the next cell (the one immediately below) for editing.**

  In the image below, (1) the instructor entered a grade of 50 into a cell and clicked the *Enter* key; (2) the next cell (immediately below) then opened for editing.
This is a good method when a series of cells needs to be edited.

- **Hitting the Tab key submits the information but does not open the next cell.**

In the image below, the instructor entered a grade of 50 in a cell and clicked the Tab key. The cell immediately below did not open for editing.
This is a good method when only one cell needs to be edited.

**Group Grade Columns into Categories**

You can create categories to organize the Grade Center and run reports on specific types of grades. Default categories include *assignments*, *discussion*, *survey*, and *test*.

**Best practice:** Plan and create your categories before creating your grade center items.

To create a category, follow these directions:

1. Click *Manage* and click *Categories*. 
2. On the **Categories** page, click the **Add Categories** button.

3. On the **Add Category** page, add a name and description and click the **Submit** button.
Edit or Delete a Column

You can modify column properties or even delete a column, including all its grades and associations.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Deleting a column is a final action and cannot be undone.

To modify a column, follow these directions:

1. Click the *Action Link* in the column header. This will open a drop-down menu.
2. Select *Modify Column or Remove Column*. REMEMBER: Deleting (removing) a column is a final action and cannot be undone.

![Modify Column or Remove Column](image)

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**Print the Grade Center**

There are two ways you can print grades from the Grade Center.

Follow these directions to print the spreadsheet view:

1. Go to the *Action Bar* and click the *Manage* option. On the drop-down menu, click *Download*.
2. Download the report and open it in Excel.
3. Format the data in Excel and print.

Follow these directions to print the Report view:

1. Go to the Action Bar and click the Reports option.

2. On the Generate Reports page, generate a report and view it.
3. Select the Print option.

Clear an Attempt

At times a student’s connection to the Internet is broken and he is not able to finish an exam. Clearing the attempt allows the student to take the test again.

Here is how you clear an attempt:

1. Click the Action Link in the grade cell.

   NOTE: The Action Link appears when you let the cursor hover over a grade cell. The link looks like this:
This is what it looks like in a grade cell:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score 1</th>
<th>Score 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98.00</td>
<td>688.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.00</td>
<td>623.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.00</td>
<td>482.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.00</td>
<td>595.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>379.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clicking the link will open a drop-down window.

2. In the drop-down window, select *Grade Details*.

On the *Grade Details* page, click the *Clear Attempt* button.
Hide a Column

You can hide unnecessary columns.

In the image below, the instructor wants to hide the Student ID column. She clicks the down arrow button as pictured:

This opens a drop-down window with a Hide Column option (see image below). Clicking this option will hide the column. You can always make columns visible again later if you wish. A future manual will show you how to do this.
### Display Information about Your Column

You can perform other column-related tasks from the spreadsheet.

Some columns give you several options in the drop-down menu (see image below).
Notice in the above image that you can view information about the column, modify the column’s properties, hide the column, and perform several other tasks from this one drop-down window. We’ll look at how you can display information about your column.

When you click the *Column Information* option, a pop-up window provides information about the column:
In the above image, the pop-up Information window provides the column’s full title (World of Christianity Exam – Part 2); the category of this assignment (Exam); and the due date (February 28, 2007). You do not need to navigate to another web page to find all this information!

**Send Email to Your Students**

You can send email to one student or to a select group of students.

You can send email to a single user from the spreadsheet. Here is an example:

In the image below, the instructor wishes to send an email to the student William Shakespeare. She lets the cursor hover over Mr. Shakespeare’s First Name field (this works for the Last Name field, as well) until the Action Link (the down arrow button) appears.
Clicking the down arrows button opens a drop-down menu that lets the instructor send an email to the student (see image below).

You can send an email to a group of students by following these directions:

1. In the spreadsheet, select the students to whom you wish to send an email message (see image below).
2. In the Action Bar, select Email and choose the Email Selected Users option (see image below).
You can send an email to all students by following these directions:

1. In the spreadsheet, let the cursor hover over the checkmark in the upper left-hand corner of the spreadsheet (see image below).

The checkmark will convert into an *Action Link* (see image below).
2. Click the Action Link to open a drop-down window. In the drop-down window, choose Select All.
This will place a checkmark next to every student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>Samuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austen</td>
<td>Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens</td>
<td>Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>Robert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>Arthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinbeck</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>Jack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donne</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In the *Action Bar*, select *Email* and choose the *Email Selected Users* option (see image below).
Drop a Student’s Lowest Grade

You can now drop a student’s lowest grade(s). Just follow these directions:

1. Make sure your columns are properly categorized. (See the section Group Grade Columns into Categories above).
2. Let your cursor hover over Add Calculated Column on the Action Bar. A drop-down window will appear (see image below). In the drop-down window, choose the Weighted option.
3. Give the column a name and description. Then choose how you want the grade to display (as a score, percentage, etc.).

NOTE: The Grade Center Display Name field allows you to create a short column title for display within the Grade Center. For example, if your
official column name is *Life of Shakespeare the Playwright Exam*, then you can create a short title (e.g., *Playwright Exam*) that will display neatly at the top of the column in the Grade Center spreadsheet.

4. Scroll down the page to the *Select Column* section (section 3). In this section, we will select the categories that we want to include in our calculated column. We will then move the categories over to the *Selected Columns* box.

In the *Categories to Select* box, choose the categories that you want to move (step 1 in the image below). To move multiple items, select them with your cursor while keeping a finger pressed down on your keyboard’s *Ctrl* key. Now click the arrow link (step 2) to move the categories over to the *Selected Columns* box.

In the image, notice that both the *Assignment* and *Discussion* categories have been selected and are ready to be moved over to the *Selected Columns* box.
5. Look at the image below. Notice that both the Assignment and Discussion categories have been moved over to the Selected Columns box.

You must now enter a weight percentage for each item. In the example, the instructor has granted the Assignment category 40% of the student’s total grade and the Discussion category 60% of the total. Next, enter a number reflecting how many lowest grades should be dropped. In the example, the instructor has chosen to drop the lowest score in the Assignment category.

![Selected Columns](image)

NOTE: You can decide whether or not you want your column to calculate grades as a running total.²

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² A running total only includes items that have grades. If you decide to not calculate as a running total, the column will include all items in the calculations, using a value of 0 for the items if there is no grade.
6. In accordance with the parameters that we set, the following calculations will occur:

   a. For each student, the lowest Assignment grade will be dropped. The dropped grade will not count toward the final grade.
   b. 40% of the total grade will come from the Assignment category (minus the lowest grade).
   c. 60% of the total grade will come from the Discussion category.

Notice that you can drop more than one lowest grade. For example, in another scenario you could drop the two lowest grades of 5 assigned quizzes.

The image below shows you how this weighted column works. The weighted column is the column titled Drop Grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Unit 1 Exam</th>
<th>Unit 2 Exam</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Drop Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>330.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that the student’s Assignment 2 grade has been dropped because it is the lowest grade. Since the student has scored 100 in all her other assigned tasks, her final grade is 100 (as reflected in the calculated column Drop Grade).

These are just some of the many enhancements you will discover in Blackboard’s new Grade Center.