Blackboard’s Grade Center

Blackboard’s Grade Center is an online grade book. It allows you to calculate running grades, track student progress, provide feedback to students, download grades to your computer – even create reports. You don’t have to type in student names; Blackboard does it for you. All you have to do is add assignments, which become columns. Some columns are created automatically by Blackboard when you use Blackboard features such as Tests, Surveys, Assignment Tool assignments, and graded Discussion Boards. Grades are entered directly into the cells of the spreadsheet with a simple point and click of your mouse. The Grade Center is very flexible, allowing you to drop lowest grades, weight grades, filter views, and more.

**IMPORTANT:** The Grade Center is complex. It is strongly recommended that you attend a Grade Center seminar. Please contact FCLD to find out when a Grade Center seminar is offered. Call 768-4661 or email fcld@hartford.edu or check our seminar schedule at http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/fcld/Seminars.htm

**Overview**

The Grade Center can serve as a communication tool, an evaluation tool, and a timely feedback mechanism. To achieve any of these, the best practice is to add all Grade Center items, grading schema (letter grade settings), weights, and other options before the semester begins. By finalizing your Grade Center early, students who click on their own Grade Center View at the beginning of the semester can see all assignments, tests, graded forums and other items along with the descriptions, points possible, due dates, etc., giving them a great overview of the course and an extension to your syllabus. You will also avoid inadvertent grade changes caused by last minutes changes.

**Basic Steps**

- Enroll your test student into your course.
- Add columns, descriptions, points possible, due dates, and finalize all options.
- Add other columns via deployment of tests, surveys, assignment tools, and discussion board grading, then modify those columns as necessary.
- Add/modify calculated column(s), i.e., running weighted totals, mid-semester grade column, and extra credit or hide them if you do not want to use Grade Center’s calculations.
- Enter some comments and test scores for you as your test student as if the semester were over.
Log in as this test student and click on My Grades from the Tools Menu. Check to make sure grades are reporting properly, descriptions are clear, comments look okay, tests and surveys work properly to avoid errors during the semester. (Remember, though, that including the test student skews class averages slightly).

**IMPORTANT:** You will need to submit your final grades for the semester using Banner Self-Service. Blackboard will not do this automatically. Please call your department if you need help submitting grades.

**Viewing and Accessing Grades**

Instructors, TAs, and Graders are the only roles in Blackboard that can edit and view the full Grade Center. This view includes all assignments, menus, and student grades. Students can only view and access their own grades and related information. They are never able to see another student’s grades.

Instructors access the Grade Center from the Control Panel. Select Grade Center → Full Grade Center.

Students access their grades from the Tools menu → My Grades. Many instructors add this to their course menu.

**Accessing the Grade Center**

**Grade Center Basics**

**Step One: Make the Most of your Space**

The grade center is a spreadsheet, comprised of columns and rows. To conserve space and avoid having to scroll to see grade items, it is recommended you hide some of the default columns included in every grade center. These include: Username, Student ID, Last Access, and Availability.

In addition, you should remove one of the default ‘final grade’ columns, Weighted Total or Total. Which one you remove will depend on how you decide to calculate grades. Weighted total is used if you weight grades, Total is used if you just want a simple points total.
Student Rows

Students are automatically listed in the Grade Center, appearing as rows, when they are enrolled into your Blackboard course.

NOTE: Manually removing a student from a Blackboard course removes all data for that student, including grades. You can avoid this by having the student drop the course officially and allowing the automatic add/drop process remove the student from your Blackboard course.

Step Two: Creating Columns in the Grade Center

You have the option of creating columns either manually or automatically.

1. To create an item manually, select Create Column (see image below).
2. Fill in column name and description (what was the assignment?)
3. Assign it to a category (used for weighting grades by category, for example, all tests = 20%)
4. Assign points possible (100 point totals are easiest and recommended)
Grade Center columns are added automatically whenever you add a tests or surveys, Assignment Tool, SafeAssignment, and graded Discussion Board forums, Wikis, Blogs and Journals. Typically, the column information is added when you deploy the tool, but you should check each column carefully to be sure all information is correct.

**Step Three: Checking or Editing Grade Center Columns**

To edit or find out information about a column, select the chevron icon next to a column heading. A menu opens with the following options:

- **Quick Column Information** shows information about the column.
- **View and Add Rubrics** shows any rubrics associated with the column.
- **Edit Column Information** allows you to go back into the column to modify.
- **Column Statistics** shows statistics for that item such as grade distribution.
- **Set as External Grade** allows one grade to show outside of Grade Center (this feature is disabled).
- **Show/Hide to Users** allows you to hide the column from students – or show it if it has been hidden.
- **Sort Ascending/ Sort Descending sorts** the column by grade. Note that when you select this, all other information will be carried with that particular sort. To resort by last name (default view), click on the **Last Name** column heading.
- **Hide Column** hides the column from your view only. Students can still see the item unless you have hidden it using the **Show/Hide to Users** option.
- **Delete Column** allows you to remove a column. Be careful! Deleted grades cannot be restored.

**NOTE:** If you do not see a **Delete Column** button, you are probably trying to delete a quiz, survey or other content that was created automatically. Deleting these is a two step process. First, delete the link to it in a content area (e.g., Assignments). Next, delete the column. Be very careful, as removing a column removes all submitted files and grades! Once deleted, it cannot be restored. It may also alter final grade calculations.

**Step Four: Weighting Grades**

After you have created your Grade Center columns and are ready to set up the calculated column to weight grades, select **Create Calculated Column, Weighted Column** (see image below). After providing the column name and description, you have the ability to weight whatever columns you wish by either item or category or a combination of both, and can consider dropping lowest grade or taking only the highest grade, for instance.
To set up your weighted grade column, choose an item or category by selecting columns and/or categories, then clicking the triangle-within-a-circle icon to bring it to the right so you can add percentages. In the sample below, grades are weighted by the following categories: Assignment, Test, Attendance and Participation, Presentation, and Forum Grade. All the percentages must add up to 100.
Step Five: Entering Grades

To enter grades:

- Click into a row cell
- Type the grade
- Hit Enter.

Alternatively, you can enter grades in a different view (see below). To get there, click any cell within the column that needs grading and select View Grade Details from the drop-down menu. In this view, you have several tools and views available; two of the most useful allow you to move from student-to-student within the same column or from column-to-column for the same student. You can also view the student’s work (if it was submitted via Blackboard), enter a grade and comment, or revise a grade.

Working in the Grade Details View of Grade Center
**Downloading Grades**

To download grades, point your cursor over **Work Offline** and select **Download**.

![Downloading Grades](image)

**General Tips and Tricks**

Feedback is one of the most important tools in teaching and learning. Using Grade Center affords many feedback pathways: grades, anonymous surveys (input from students, results for you!), comments to students, printable reports, email, and benchmarks such as a mid-semester grade.

Here are a few tips and tricks that may help you take full advantage of Blackboard’s Grade Center.

1. Not all Grade Center items need to report a grade but can be used as great assessment opportunities regardless. Think: survey, complete/incomplete, extra credit, progress report, and attendance/participation.

2. See your course from a student’s point of view! Enroll yourself using the test student (username = _smith if your username is Smith, password = the last four digits of your University ID).
   - Take tests, surveys, do assignments and monitor how Grade Center performs so you have a good idea of what to expect during the semester.
   - Check out the Grade Center from a student’s point-of-view by logging in as a student, going into the Tools menu, and selecting My Grades.

3. Make adjustments as necessary before the semester begins to avoid frantic emails from students when changes may affect grades negatively.

4. Grade Center offers tools for analyzing and reporting on your Grade Center data. For instance, you can set up a couple of short surveys at the beginning and middle of your course, and then use results to adjust content and delivery if necessary.

5. Hide your final total columns if you do not want students to see Grade Center’s calculations.

6. If your Running and Weighted Totals do not seem to be adding up correctly, check the Points Possible you have given to each assignment. We recommend using 100 points as a default, even if you use letter grades.
More...
Additional documentation is available by selecting Guide from the Help button in the Control Panel of courses, from FCLD’s website, and from Blackboard’s OnDemand website. These sources cover more advanced features such as Smart Views, filters, and other options not covered in this document.

Getting Help with Technology at the University of Hartford

Faculty Center for Learning Development (FCLD)
FCLD provides consulting and instructional support to faculty and staff who are using technology in teaching and learning. The FCLD Faculty Lab in Mortensen 203a is available for faculty support and use and is equipped with instructional technology-related equipment including: PCs, Macs, scanners, and projectors as well as support staff. Faculty wishing to use the lab may contact FCLD.
Phone: (860) 768-4661
Email: fcld@hartford.edu
Website: http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/fcld/

Information Technology Services (ITS)
ITS Help Desk – Computing Center
For general computer and Internet/network support questions (not directly related to the classroom but rather passwords, Internet/email problems, printer not working, Banner, Facebook, and grades).
Phone: (860) 768-5999
Email: its@hartford.edu
Website: http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/its/

Media Technology Services (MTS) – Harry Jack Gray Center E113
MTS maintains and installs classroom equipment, such as projectors, Sympodiums, and interactive white boards, delivers and sets up technology needed for classes such as laptops, overhead projectors, microphones, sound systems, DVD/VCRs, digital cameras, etc., and provides instruction on its use. MTS is also responsible for overseeing ECHO360 Lecture Capture classrooms and administers WebEx web conferencing accounts.
Phone: (860) 768-4643 (Main) or (860) 768-4662 (Tech Line)
Website: www.hartford.edu/mts