

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

FACULTY CENTER FOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Blackboard's Grade Center

Blackboard's Grade Center is an online grade book. It helps you calculate running grades, track student progress, provide feedback to students, download grades to your computer – even create reports. You do not have to type in student names; Blackboard does it for you. All you have to do is add columns. Some columns are created automatically by Blackboard when you use Blackboard features such as Tests, Surveys, Assignments, and any other items you create with a 'graded' status. The Grade Center is quite flexible, allowing you to drop lowest grades, weight grades, filter views, and more. Students cannot see Grade Center but they can see their grades in a tool called My Grades.

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 (860) 768-4661 or email fclid@hartford.edu. You may check our seminar schedule here: <https://www.hartford.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/fclid/seminars-workshops/default.aspx>

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 grade center view, My Grades, 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.

Basic Steps (Detailed Steps Follow)

- Design and build your course.
- Delete unnecessary columns such as extra student information and duplicates.
- Add columns via deployment of tests, surveys, assignment tools, and discussion board grading, then modify those columns as necessary.
- Add any other columns you will need.
- Set up a calculated column, i.e., running weighted total.
- Use the Student Preview Mode to check to make sure grades are reporting properly, descriptions are clear, comments look okay, and that any assignments, tests and surveys work properly to avoid errors during the semester (see page 7).

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

Viewing and Accessing Grades

Instructors, Teaching Assistants, 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**, and then select **Grade Center** → **Full Grade Center** (see image at left).

NOTE: Students access their grades from within each course via **Tools** → **My Grades**. Many instructors add this tool to their course menu. Here's how:

- Make sure **Edit Mode** is set to ON.
- Point to the 'plus sign' icon on the upper left of the course menu and click **Tool Link**.
- Type in a name, such as 'Check Your Grades'.
- Change 'Type:' to **My Grades**.
- Click **Available to Users**.
- **Submit**.



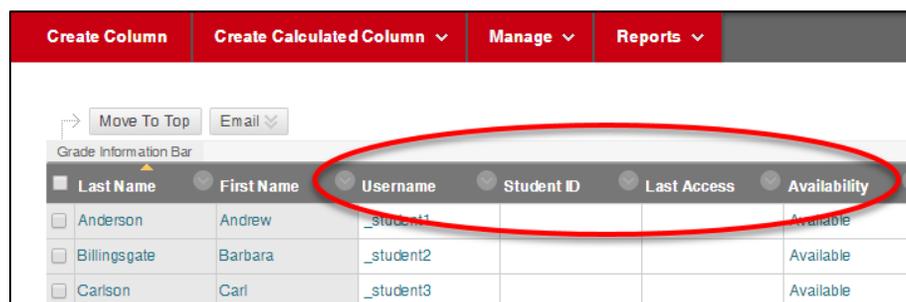
Full Grade Center

Grade Center Basics

Step One: Make the Most of your Space

The grade center is a spreadsheet comprised of columns and rows. Students are listed automatically in the Grade Center, appearing as rows, when they are enrolled into your Blackboard course. Columns are manually added by you or automatically added when you add an item to your course with a graded component.

To conserve space, it is recommended that you hide some of the default columns included in every grade center. These include: Username, Student ID, Last Access, and Availability.



Hide extra default columns

Here is how to hide student information columns:

- Point to the column heading such as ‘Username’ and click the arrow to reveal the drop-down menu.
- Click **Hide Column**.

It is important to hide only student information columns (see them circled above) as opposed to hiding any of your graded columns. Using ‘Hide Column’ for graded columns only hides the columns from you; your students can still see them in their ‘My Grades’ and it may cause confusion.

To further save space and reduce confusion for your students, it would be best to remove the extra ‘final grade’ columns that appear such as **Weighted Total** and **Total**. You may find several of these since they are duplicated by course copying and by the Blackboard system course creation process. These columns help you set up your final grading scenario, so you only need to keep one. Use **Weighted Total** to help you set up grading if you weight grades to arrive at a final grade, and use **Total** to help you set up grading if you add points to arrive at a final grade.

Here is how to hide extra **Weighted Total** and/or **Total** columns:

- Point to the column heading such as ‘Weighted Total’ and click the arrow to reveal the drop-down menu.
- Click **Delete Column**.

NOTE: If you see a green check in the column heading, it will stop you from deleting the column. To continue, move the green check to a column you will be keeping. Here is how:

1. Click the arrow of a column you want to keep.
2. Click **Set as External Grade**.

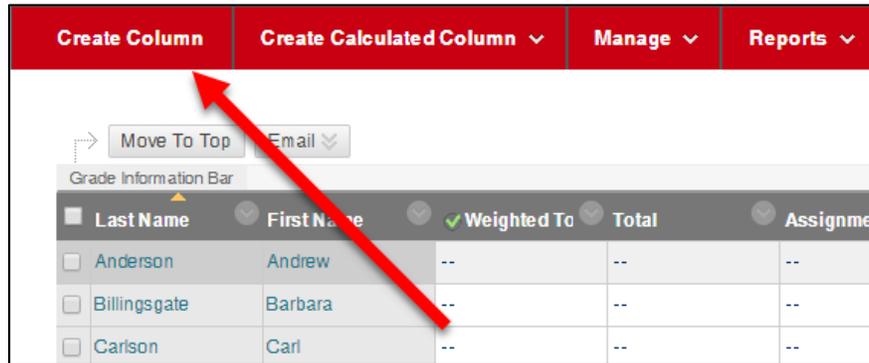
The green check will move to that column and allow you to delete the columns you do not want to keep.

Step Two: Creating Columns in the Grade Center

You have the option of creating columns either manually or automatically. Automatic columns will appear linked to any item you add to your course that has an automatic grading option (such as Assignment, Discussions, Blogs, Wikis, Journals, or Tests) and those items that you have chosen the option of grading within Blackboard. It is best to create your course fully, then add any columns manually that have not been already added.

1. To create a column in Grade Center, select **Create Column** (see image below).
2. Fill in the column name and description.
3. Assign it to a category, which will use weighted grades by category (for example, all items with the category of ‘Test’ are weighted at 20%).

4. Assign points possible (100 point totals are easiest and recommended).



Creating a Column in the Grade Center

Grade Center columns are added automatically whenever you add Tests or Surveys, Assignments, Discussions, Journals, Blogs, Wikis, and any graded activity to Blackboard.

Step Three: Checking and/or Editing Grade Center Columns

To edit or find out information about a column, click the arrow next to a column heading. A drop-down menu opens. Some of the options you may see are as follows:

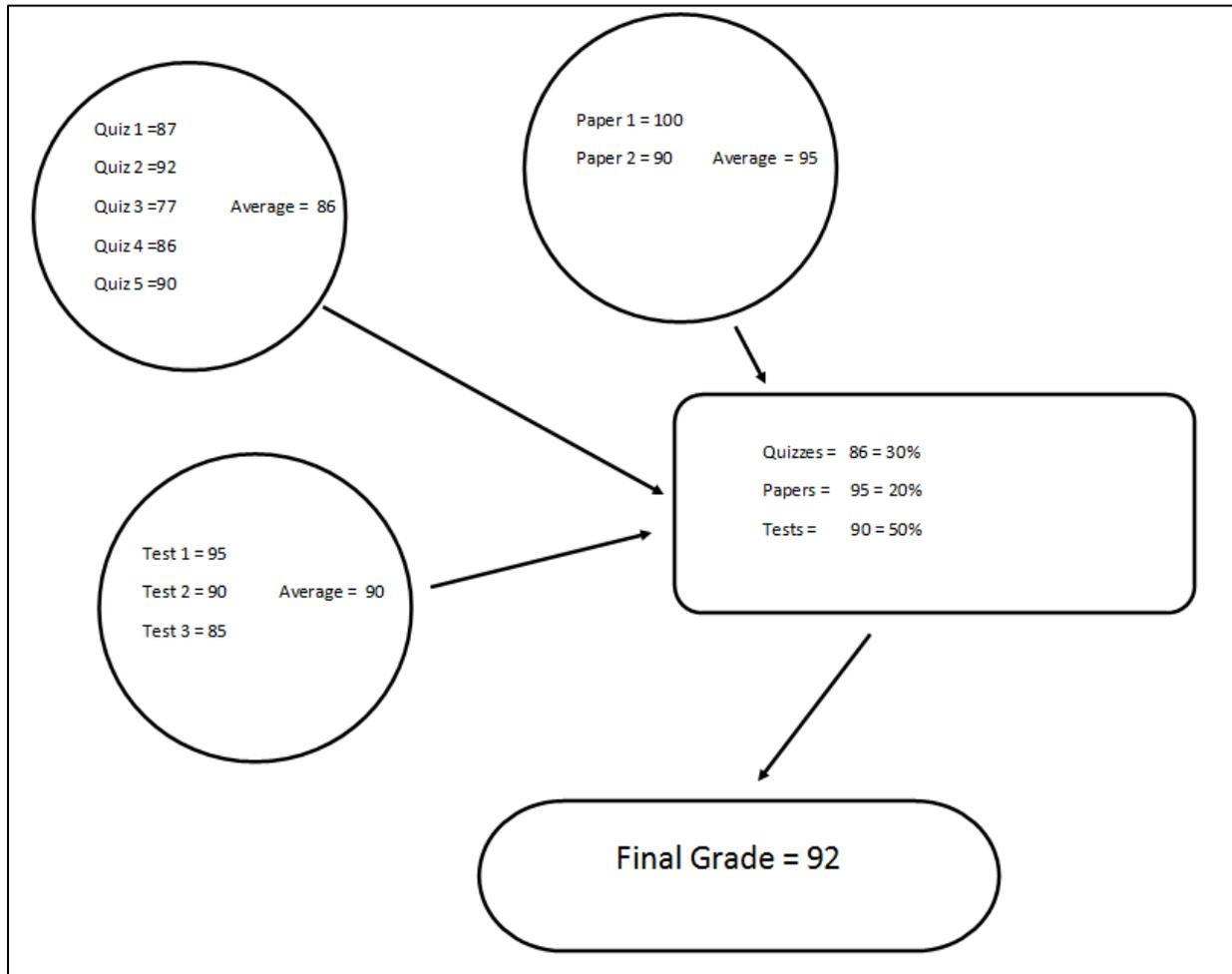
- **Quick Column Information** shows information about the column.
- **View and Add Rubrics** shows any rubrics associated with the column.
- **Edit Column Information** allows you to go back into the column to modify it.
- **Column Statistics** shows statistics for that item, such as grade distribution.
- **Set as External Grade** allows one grade to show outside of Grade Center (this feature is disabled in Blackboard at the University of Hartford).
- **Show/Hide to Users** allows you to show the column to students or hide the column from students.
- **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.

Step Four: Setting up a Calculated Grade Column

After you have created your Grade Center columns and are ready to set up the calculated column to possibly select **Create Calculated Column > Weighted Column** or **Total Column**. After providing the column name and description, you have the ability to select columns and/or categories that will make up the final grade. As most faculty weight by category, we will show that here.

When you use **Categories for Weighted Grades** with columns equally graded, Blackboard takes the grades from each category and comes up with a grade for that category. Blackboard will then take all the grades for each category and put them together. Next, it will take into account how much each category is weighted. You will then get your final weighted grade total.

If you selected to weight some columns proportionally, then assignments with more points will be allocated a higher proportion. So, for example, if I had 5 homework assignments and 4 were worth 20 points, but 1 was worth 100 points, the 100 point homework assignment would be weighted more towards calculated the overall grade.



3. Select Columns

Select the columns and categories to include in this weighted grade and then set the weight percentages.

Include in Weighted Grade

Columns to Select:

- Exam 1
- Exam 2
- Exam 3
- Quiz 1
- Quiz 2
- Quiz 3
- Quiz 4
- Quiz 5
- Quiz 6
- Quiz 7
- Quiz 8
- Quiz 9
- Resume
- Apple v. PC
- Column Information

Categories to Select:

- Assignment
- Survey
- Blog
- Journal
- Self and Peer
- Wiki
- Wiki
- Category Information

Selected Columns:

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

- * 5 % Category: Quizes
- Weight Columns: Equally Proportionally
- Drop Grades OR Use only the
- Drop Highest Calculate Lowest Value to
- Grades Calculate Highest Value to
- Drop Lowest Calculate
- Grades

- * 90 % Category: Test
- Weight Columns: Equally Proportionally
- Drop Grades OR Use only the
- Drop Highest Calculate Lowest Value to
- Grades Calculate Highest Value to

Total Weight: 100%

Calculate as Running Total Yes No

A running total only includes items that have grades or attempts. Selecting No includes all items in the calculations, using a value of 0 for an item if there is no grade.

Weighting Columns and/or Categories in the Weighted Total Column

Columns to Select: These are all the columns in the Grade Center. You can add *Columns to Select* and they can be added to the *Weighted Grade* total. This could be for a single assignment that is due that does not require a Category.

Categories to Select: These are Assignments/Assessments that are *Categorized* together.

Selected Columns: This is where the Columns and/or Categories are weighted.

Step Five: Entering Grades

To enter grades in Full Grade Center:

- Click into a cell for a graded column.
- Type the grade.
- Hit **Enter**.

Depending on the type of column, e.g., Assignment Tool, Graded Discussion Board, etc., you have other choices for viewing work, adding comments, and grading. Click the arrow associated with each cell to use other tools such as **View Grade Details**, or **Grade User Activity**, etc.

Downloading Grades

To download grades or print a roster in Full Grade Center, point your cursor to **Work Offline** located in the upper right and select **Download**. Fill in information for “. Data” based on what you want to download, leave “2. Options” as set, click **Submit**, and then follow your browser’s cues to download.



Downloading Grades in Full Grade Center

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.

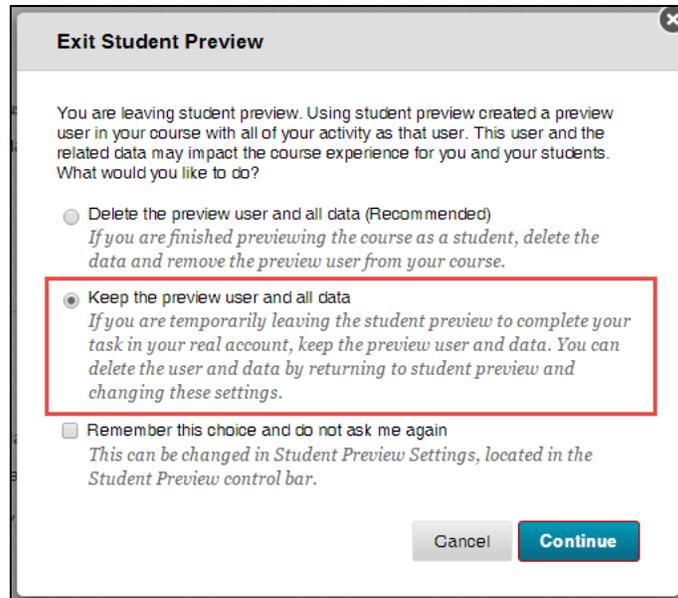
1. A great view of your Grade Center is available from Full Grade Center by clicking **Manage** → **Column Organization**.
2. See your course from a student’s point of view. Here’s how: click the **Student Preview** icon in the upper right corner of your Blackboard course. A yellow banner will appear saying “Student Preview Mode is ON.”



- Take tests and 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.
- When done, click the **Exit Preview** button on the yellow Student Preview banner.



- To check grades as the instructor that your “Preview User” has just done, select “Keep the preview user and all data.” Then click **Continue**.



Keep the preview user and all data

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 the 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 Total columns 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 instructions, how-to videos and other documentation is available in the following locations:

Select **Help → Blackboard Help for Instructor** under the Control Panel of Blackboard courses or click this link: <https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor>

Visit FCLD’s website and click the “Teaching with Blackboard” menu item or click this link: <https://www.hartford.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/fclد/teaching-blackboard/>

Visit Blackboard’s On Demand Learning Center website: <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/>

Since Blackboard's learning management system (LMS) higher Ed market share is about 50%, 'Google' your inquiry and you'll find plenty of university-based instructions.

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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 and Staff needing support with Blackboard or other instructional technologies, should contact FCLD.

Phone: (860) 768-4661 **Email:** fclد@hartford.edu

Website: <http://www.hartford.edu/fclد>

Student Blackboard Support

The following is student support for Blackboard only. All other support technical support issues need to be addressed to the Office of Technology Services (below).

Phone: (860) 768-4636 **Email:** bbsupport@hartford.edu

FAQ/Submit a Ticket: <http://www.hartford.edu/studentbbsupport>

Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk

For general computer and Internet/network support questions (not directly related to the classroom but rather passwords, Internet/email problems, Banner/Self-Service, campus Facebook).

Phone: (860) 768-4357 **Email:** helpdesk@hartford.edu

Website: <http://hartford.edu/ots>

Media Technology Services (MTS)

Faculty should contact MTS for assistance scheduling or implementing classroom technology (2-Way interactive video classrooms, Smart Podiums, laptops, etc.), for setting up WebEx accounts, or for scheduling and instruction for a wide variety of media equipment and resources like LCD data projectors, CD/cassette players, TVs and VCRs, digital video, and more.

Phone: (860) 768-4357 **Website:** <http://www.hartford.edu/mts>