



Blackboard Quick Reference Guide

Getting Started with Grade Center



Blackboard's Grade Center automatically creates columns in the Grade Center for assessments (tests and surveys) delivered through Blackboard, assignments added using the assignment feature and discussion board forums that have been setup to include grading. Items can be added to the Grade Center for scores from activities performed outside Blackboard (such as journals, final projects, extra credit, etc.) The Grade Center supports custom grading scales, item analysis, and multiple Grade Center views.

Grade Center does not display well at low screen resolutions (e.g., 800x600). For example, on a 17" monitor you need a minimum screen resolution of 1024 x 768 for proper viewing.

View the Grade Center

Step 1: From the Control Panel, click **Grade Center** in the Assessment section. Here is a sample of the spreadsheet:

Grade Center

Grades can be entered directly from the Grade Center page. To enter grades, click on the cell, type the grade value, and press the **Enter** key to submit. Use the arrow keys or the tab key to navigate through the Grade Center. Use the contextual menus to modify column properties and access grade details.

Add Grade Column Add Calculated Column Manage Email Reports Grade History

Current View: Full Grade Center Set as Default Sort Columns By: Layout Position

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Last Name	First Name	Username	Student ID	Q1	A1	Weighted Total	Total
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choke, Jr.	Artie	scstudent2		20.00 (100.00%)	20.00 (100.00%)	18.25 (91.25%)	108.00 (60.00%)

Selected Rows: 0

Grade Information Bar

Success Box

Instead of a separate “receipt page” after a task has been accomplished (as with other areas of Blackboard), Grade Center will display a yellowish box at the top of the screen, as in the following example:

SUCCESS: Successfully modified column.

Add an Item to the Grade Center

You can manually add items (grade columns) to the Grade Center for graded exercises conducted outside Blackboard. For example, you might give your students points for an in-class presentation or for attending an event.

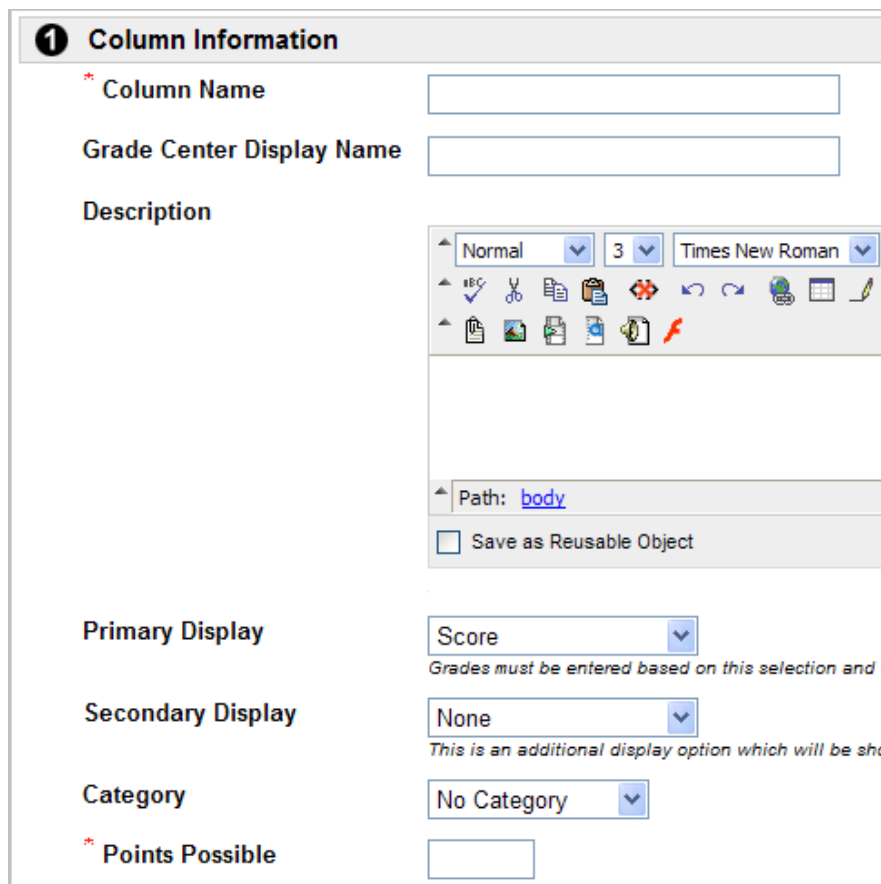
You do not need to manually add a grade column for Assignments, Tests or graded Discussion Boards – generated *within* Blackboard. These are automatically added to the Grade Center.

Step 1: Click  **Add Grade Column** .

Step 2: In the *Column Information* section, enter a **Column Name** for the Grade Center item.



Grade Center Display Name allows for an alternate, perhaps shorter label in the Grade Center spreadsheet.



Step 3: Enter a description of the grade item in the **Description** field.

Step 4: Choose a **Primary Display** option from the drop-down list. **Score** is recommended.



Secondary Display allows for alternate display (shown in parentheses) in the spreadsheet cells.

Step 5: Choose a **Category** from the drop-down list. (You can add custom categories through the Manage menu.)

Step 6: Enter a number in the **Points Possible** field for this item.

Step 7: In the *Dates* section, indicate a **Due Date**.



Due dates are helpful when defining date ranges in the Grading Period feature. They're also useful with the Early Warning System (from the Control Panel).

Step 8: In the *Options* section, choose either **Yes** or **No** for the following items.

3 Options

Select **No** for the first option to exclude this Grade Center column from calculations. Select **No** for the second option to make this Grade Center column unavailable in My Grades. Select **Yes** for the third option to display column statistics in My Grades.

Include this column in Grade Center calculations Yes No


Show this column in My Grades Yes No

Show Statistics (average and median) for this column in My Grades Yes No

Step 9: Click **Submit**.

Manage Grade Columns

To modify a grade column's settings:

Step 1: In the spreadsheet, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the column heading to pull-down the menu.

Step 2: Click **Modify Column** from the menu.


To re-order grade columns:

Step 1: From the  **Manage**  menu, click **Organize Grade Center**.

Step 2: Point to the gray, hash-mark box (extreme left side of table) of the column to be moved, then drag up or down.

Step 3: Click **Submit**.

To delete a grade column:

Step 1: In the spreadsheet, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the column heading to pull-down the menu.

Step 2: Click **Remove Column** from the menu. You are asked to confirm that the column – along with any grades for that item – will be deleted.



Assignments and tests linked to a content area cannot be removed from the Grade Center, but rather from the content area in which they are deployed.

Step 3: Click **OK**.

Enter Grades

To enter a grade:

Step 1: Click the spreadsheet cell for the student and grade item.

Step 2: Enter the student's score, then press **Enter**. The score is saved and you are moved to the cell below.




Be careful not to have a blinking cursor after the “-“ sign; otherwise, you'll get a negative number when you press enter.

Step 3: Continue entering student scores.





If you don't enter the score and move to a different cell, you'll receive a warning box to confirm the saving of the grade.

To change a grade:

Step 1: Enter the student's score, then press **Enter**. The score is changed and a  symbol appears in the upper left corner of the cell to indicate the change.



To remove the  symbol, click the down arrow  symbol for the cell, then choose **Clear Modified Indicator**.


To delete a grade:

Step 1: Click the spreadsheet cell for the specific grade score to remove.

Step 2: Press **Delete** key, then **Enter**.


Step 3: Click **OK** to null the grade. The cell re-displays the dash symbol.

To exempt a grade:

Step 1: In the spreadsheet, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the grade item to pull-down the menu.

Step 2: Click **Exempt Grade** from the menu. The grade is no longer included in any statistical or graded total calculations.



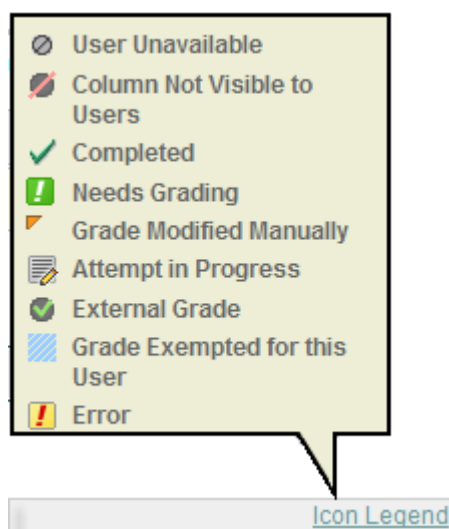
To clear the exemption, click the down arrow  symbol and choose **Clear Exemption**.

To view Grade Information Bar and Icon Legend:

When a cell is selected, the points possible (as well as other information) displays below the spreadsheet, as in the following example:

Grade Information Bar Grade Type: **Grade** | Points Possible: **25** | Displayed As: **Score** | Visible to Users: **Yes**



When clicked, the Icon Legend shows the following:

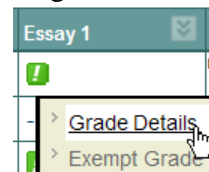


Click the box to remove it.

Enter Grades for Assignments & Tests

A test may have subjective questions (e.g., short answer) or you may want to review objective questions (e.g., fill in the blank). Or you need to review and grade an item using Blackboard's Assignment feature. In these cases, follow these steps.

Step 1: Where the  (needs grading symbol) appears, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the grade item.



Step 2: Click **Grade Details** from the drop-down menu.

Step 3: On the Grade Details page, click **View Attempt**.

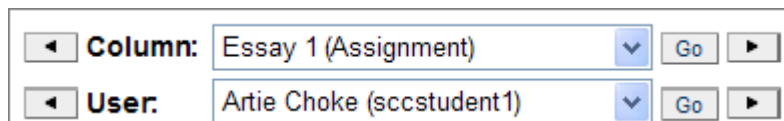
Step 4: This step depends on the grade item:

- For a test, review answers to subjective questions and enter grades.
- For an assignment, review the student's submission under the User's Work section, then enter a grade and optional comments.

Step 5: Click **Submit**.



You can use these controls (upper right corner of Grade Details page), to quickly move to another student or another grade column:



Step 6: Click **OK** when finished entering grades.



Manually overriding a grade **does not** score the student's assignment or test attempt. Even though you enter a score and that score appears on the students' view of My Grades, the attempt has not been graded.


If you enter a score of zero for an item using the spreadsheet view, students will still be able to submit that assignment or test. To keep a student from being able to submit an assignment or test after your desired deadline either score the attempt using the "view attempt" feature or use date restrictions on the item.

To override a grade AFTER the original score is entered:

Step 1: From the Grade Details page, click **Override**.

Step 2: Enter the value and click **Save**. This is the score that will show in the student's view of grades and in the Grade Center spreadsheet.

Clearing a Test or Assignment Attempt


The  icon ("attempt in progress") in a student's grade cell may indicate one of the following:

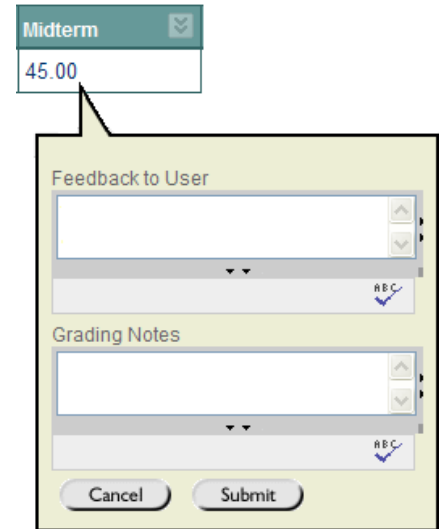
- A student is still working on an item (check Grade Details to be sure).
- A student clicked Save instead of Submit for an assignment or a test. You may need to remind the student that Submit is required for completion.

- A student had technical problems while working on an exam. You may need to clear the attempt (through Grade Details). Caution: clearing an attempt is final and all student work will be lost!

Add Comment to a Student's Score

Instructors can add comments to student scores in the Grade Center. These comments will be visible to the students when they review their grades. Comments may be added for Assignments and Assessments once they have been completed and submitted by the student. For items the instructor adds manually to the Grade Center (through Add Column), the grade must be entered before the comment feature will become available. For the later, follow these steps:

- Step 1:** In the spreadsheet, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the grade item to pull-down the menu.
- Step 2:** Click **Add Comment** from the menu.
- Step 3:** In the *Feedback to User* box, enter a comment to the student.
- Step 4:** Optionally, you can enter a note to yourself in the *Grading Notes* box.
- Step 5:** Click **Submit**.



The screenshot shows a grade entry for 'Midterm' with a score of 45.00. A dropdown menu is open, and the 'Add Comment' option is selected. The 'Feedback to User' and 'Grading Notes' boxes are visible, along with 'Cancel' and 'Submit' buttons.

Student View of Grades

Here's a sample of what a student sees when choosing the **My Grades** link:

View Grades						
Your grades for this Course						
Item Name	Details	Due Date	Last Submitted, Modified, or Graded	Grade	Points Possible	Comments
Essay 1	Details		Dec 22, 2008 3:35 PM	23	25	Good content, just a few grammar problems.
Quiz 1	Details		Dec 22, 2008 3:36 PM	19	20	
Midterm	Details		Dec 22, 2008 3:05 PM	45	50	
Final Exam	Details			-	100	
Weighted Total	Details			-	0	
Total	Details			87	95	


[Icon Legend](#)



You, as instructor, cannot access the My Grades link. You can enroll a “fake” student in your course, then log in as that student to see this screen. (See your campus Blackboard support personnel for assistance.)

Running Total

The Total column can be set to only count points for those assignments that have been graded. If you need to verify or change that setting, follow these instructions:

Step 1: In the spreadsheet, click the down arrow  symbol to the right of the column heading to pull-down the menu.


Step 2: Click **Modify Column** from the menu.

Step 3: If necessary, make a change to the running total option and click **Submit**.




In order to project the most accurate picture of how the student is doing when using Running Total, you should enter a zero for any assignment that is not turned in by the due date. Otherwise, student grades will be inflated.

Grade History

Step 1: Click  **Grade History**. The changes to grades display in reverse chronological order. A pull-down menu at the bottom right corner of the screen allows you to adjust how many entries to display at a time (14 days is the default).

Step 2: Click **OK** to return to the normal spreadsheet.



Grade history can be displayed for a specific student by clicking the down arrow  symbol for the given grade, then choosing **Grade Details**.

Back Up Grades

It is a good idea to make a backup copy of your Blackboard Grade Center periodically throughout the semester and also to make a final backup of the entire Grade Center at the end of the semester to file away as a permanent electronic copy. You can do this by downloading the Grade Center as a tab-delimited file, which can be opened in Microsoft Excel.

Step 1: From the  **Manage** menu, click **Download**. The Download Grades page displays.

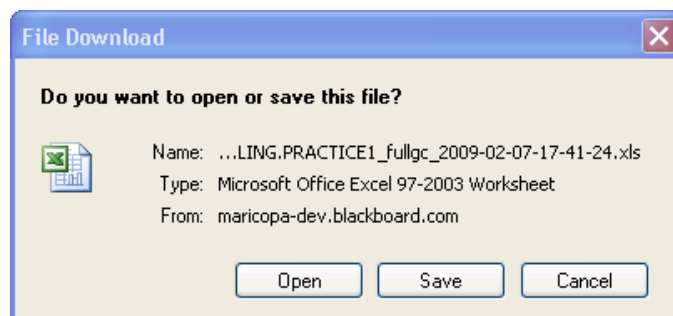
Step 2: Choose whether to download all grade information or just a selected grade item (latter available with default view – “Full Grade Center”).

Step 3: In the Options section, leave the **Tab** radio button selected for *Delimiter Type*.

Step 4: In the Save Location section, leave it set for *My computer*.

Step 5: Click **Submit**.

Step 6: Click **Download**. The following dialog box appears:



Step 7: Click **Save**.

Step 8: In the *Save As* window, select where you wish to save the Grade Center file.

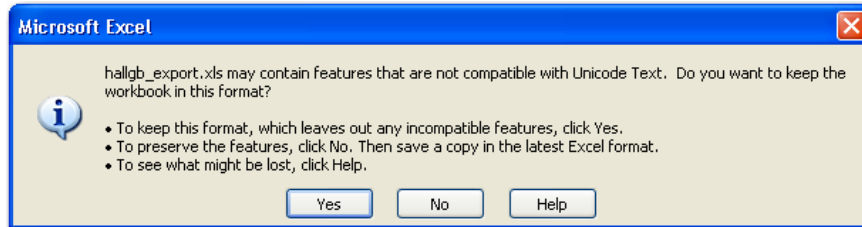


You may want to change the default name to better identify the course to which this Grade Center belongs, but **keep the .xls extension** at the end of the filename. This is so you will be able to open the file with Microsoft Excel.

Step 9: Click **Save**.



This exported Grade Center file may be opened and edited in Microsoft Excel. Even though the file has the .xls extension, it was actually saved in Unicode Text format when you downloaded from Blackboard. When you save the file from within MS Excel, you will see the following prompt:



You should click **Yes**.

Create an Extra Credit Column

There is no specific extra credit feature in Grade Center, but you can use the following steps to set up a regular grade column for assigning extra credit points for students.

Step 1: Click  **Add Grade Column** .

Step 2: As described in the “Add an Item to the Grade Center” section, enter a name and other pertinent information.

Step 3: For the *Points Possible*, enter “.0001”. This adds 1/1000th of a point to all student’s scores. But it’s necessary so that Blackboard knows that any extra credit points given to selected students need to be included in the Total column.

Step 4: Click **Submit**.



If you modify the Extra Credit column later, you will notice the Points Possible field reverts to 0 (zero) points. Be sure to re-enter .0001 for Points Possible before clicking Submit.