Teaching with Technology Tip
Calculating Grades in Blackboard’s Grade Center
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Keep students apprised of their academic performance by posting grades in Blackboard’s Grade Center, which offers them an anytime, anywhere status check of their progress. In the Fall 2013 End of Semester Survey, 90% of students reported that Blackboard allows them to receive instructor feedback and access their grade to keep on track in their courses.

Faculty who use automatically graded quizzes or tests and integrate grading of student interactions such as discussion boards, blogs, journals and wikis find that Blackboard conveniently links and calculates their student grades into their course totals. Major projects and papers, or instructor-graded tests can be linked in Blackboard so that students receive feedback inside their course, where there is less risk of the feedback being lost than when it is included in a long list of email headings or stuffed into a textbook or folder. An added benefit of providing feedback in Blackboard is that student work is retained for four semesters, and can be quickly downloaded, if desired, for longer storage.

The main feature of Blackboard’s Grade Center, however, is how it provides different options for calculating and displaying grades. Blackboard offers different views such as score, percentage, letter grade, text or complete/incomplete. Every course is created with a Total Column and a Weighted Total Column, and you can customize the way these columns calculate student assessments. The options are similar to the format of an Excel spreadsheet in that you can create new subtotal columns, and add weighting for specific assignments or categories of assignments such as quizzes, tests, and homework. The categories offer the added benefit of automatically dropping lowest grades (or highest), which is used by faculty who offer many quizzes during the semester with the plan to drop the lowest one.

Because there are so many options for calculating grades, choosing the correct settings may seem confusing. Below are common settings to check to make sure the calculations are correct.

1. All columns are set to **Include this Column in Grade Center Calculations**. (Check with **Quick Column Information**.)

2. Columns with category names have the same name as that used in the Total or Weighted Total column. (Check with **Manage > Column Organization** or **Categories**; Check total columns with **Edit Column Information**.)

3. There are no duplicate category names (check with **Manage > Categories**, then delete extras)

4. There are no hidden columns that may still have a category assignment or points that calculate into the total. (Check with **Manage > Column Organization** to make the column visible, then follow steps 1 and 2 above.)

5. The Weighted Total Column setting for Running Total is set to **Yes** or **No**, per your specifications. Note that is you use the **Yes** setting, any empty cells for missed work will not be calculated as zero—you must enter a score into those cells. Some faculty use the Yes setting early in the semester, and switch to the No setting at the end of the semester. (Check using **Edit Column Information** and scrolling to section 3.)

6. Extra Credit columns are not included in Weighted Totals, but are added to the Weighted Total column in a new Final Grade column.
Note: For those of you who like to keep your grades in Excel, it is possible to set up the Grade Center for uploading an Excel file with student scores.

See more information about grading in these Teaching with Technology Tips:

- Blackboard Discussion Board Forums, Posts and Replies
- Grading Blackboard Tests and Reviewing Test Statistics
- Groups: Large and Small
- Inline Grading in Blackboard without Downloading Student Files

If you have questions about calculating grades using Blackboard’s Grade Center, please contact a CILT instructional designer or the UND Tech Support staff.