

How Do I Use the Grade Center?

Video: http://www.cetla.howard.edu/teaching_resources/blackboard/bb8_tutorials.html

The Grade Center provides flexibility to meet the needs of basic and advanced users, institutional requirements, and a diverse student population. Instructors can easily and efficiently perform most Grade Center activities from a central view.

The Grade Center includes features to communicate and share assessment data directly with students, parents, and institutional administrators. A reporting feature can assist Instructors and other key stakeholders to understand student progress and make informed decisions to improve performance.

The Grade Center is organized around a main page that resembles a spreadsheet. Each row is populated by a user in the Course and each column is made up of assignments, tests, and other items that can be graded. Columns can also be used for calculating grades. Grades are entered directly on the Grade Center main page, the Grade Details page (where more information can be entered), or the Grade Questions page which allows Instructors to enter grades anonymously.

Grade Center data can be downloaded and worked outside of the system. This data can then be uploaded to the Grade Center at the convenience of the Instructor. Reports can be generated from the Grade Center so students, parents, and other stakeholders can examine the performance of any particular student or the entire Course.

This section is organized around the basic tasks that are performed in the Grade Center.

- [Features and Navigation](#)
- [Setting up the Grade Center](#)
- [Smart Views](#)
- [Using the Grade Center](#)
- [Saving and Reusing Grade Center Data and Settings](#)

Grade Center Features and Navigation

The Blackboard Learn Grade Center is more than just a way to record students' grades; it is a dynamic and interactive tool. The Grade Center can record data, monitor student progress, communicate information to students, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders. It is also a valuable tool to assist in making informed decisions to take action to promote student and institutional progress.

This section of the Instructor Manual summarizes how the Grade Center interacts with other Blackboard Learn systems including Observers and Email. An overview of the major features of the Grade Center is presented with links to more detailed information, as well as how to customize the Grade Center to display data in a variety of views and with color.

The following topics are available in this section:

- [Features](#)
- [Exploring the Grade Center](#)
- [Grade Details](#)
- [Customizing the Grade Center](#)

- [Grading Color Codes](#)
- [Sharing Grade Center Data](#)

Grade Center Features

The Grade Center is a central repository for assessment data, student information, and instructor notes.

Interaction with other Systems

The Grade Center interacts with many systems in Blackboard Learn. Understanding how and where these interactions happen provides a comprehensive view of the Grade Center and offers information to help users take full advantage of the functionality and features of this tool.

The following table explains Grade Center and its interaction with other Blackboard Learn systems and features:

Area	Interaction
Course Content	Assignments, Tests, Blogs, Journals, Wikis, and Discussion Board items that are set to be graded automatically generate a Column in the Grade Center. Items that have a due date are assigned a Grading Period automatically based on that date. For more information on adding graded items automatically to the Grade Center, see Adding Columns to the Grade Center . For more information on Grading Periods, see Creating Grading Periods .
Early Warning System	The Early Warning System is a rule driven communication feature that can send email messages to students and their observers when criteria of the rule are met. For example, a rule is set to send email to any student who scores below a 60 on an exam. The score entered into the Grade Center, whether automatically or manually, spawns the message.
Observers	An Observer can log in and access their Observed Student's grades as recorded and released in the Grade Center. This is enabled through Course Settings.
View Grades Tool	When Instructors release grades to students for viewing, students can access the Grade Center using the View Grades tool from the My Institution tab. A list of courses the students are enrolled in is shown. When students click the name of the course, they are taken to the course's View Grades page of the Grade Center.
My Grades Course Tool	When Instructors release grades to students for viewing, students can click the My Grades tool within their course to access the View Grades page of the Grade Center.
Report Card Module	If the System Administrator has made the Report Card Module available, students can add it to their My Institution tab. The module will display the instructor's choice of each course's grade. This is known as the External Grade in the Grade Center. A link will take students to the View Grades page of the Grade Center.
Performance Dashboard	Instructors and Teacher's Assistants can access the Grade Center through the Performance Dashboard, where grades are viewed and edited.
Email	Email is sent to selected students, all students, selected observers, or all observers directly from the Grade Center. The Email link goes to the Send Email page. For more information on sending email from the Grade Center.

Area	Interaction
	For more information on email see Sending Email from the Grade Center .
External data from other grading systems	Data is imported and exported to the Grade Center by uploading and downloading delimited files. For more information on importing data to and exporting data from the Grade Center see Uploading External Grade Center Items .

Communication and Informed Decision Making

Instructors can take advantage of the many interactive features in the Grade Center to help them stay on track and keep students informed of their progress. Grade Center data is used to identify students and direct them to appropriate instructional activity such as remediation or enrichment. The communication tools help students become more fully engaged in academic studies and get needed help by alerting them to areas of poor performance. The reporting features facilitate more comprehensive student and institutional assessment by displaying student data that is meaningful to evaluating outcomes.

The following example illustrates how the different features of the Grade Center come together:

An Instructor has scheduled a unit test to be given to the class at a specific day and time. This test is part of a standard curriculum for the subject matter and has been used in past courses as a benchmark for evaluating student progress through required material. Students must receive a score of 70 or better to be successful in subsequent course material.

In this class (section), the instructor has created a group of students who are not native speakers of the language the class is taught in. The instructor has also created a group of students who have transferred to the institution and may not have mastered all the prerequisites for the material. These groups of students have been added to two Smart Views in the Grade Center so that their data is viewed separately from the entire class.

The instructor has made the unit test, and decided not to immediately display the score to the students in the course to ensure that the release of scores for the class occurs at a set time. After the scheduled time for the test has past, the Grade Center signifies to the instructor that the unit test has been submitted by the students and needs to be graded (this is not a fully automatically scored online assessment). For each submission, the instructor is able to write comments. Some comments are released to the students with their grades and some comments remain in the Grade Center for the instructor's use. This is a direct and personal form of feedback that the students can receive on a specific item.

As the instructor adds grades to the Grade Center for the unit test, students who scored below 70 and their Observers are sent a personalized email in the Grade Center, indicating that they need to make an appointment to discuss the grade. One student who transferred to the course from another section had already taken the unit test and was marked Exempt. (Students who are exempted from a grade do not have that item grade figured into their final grade.)

After all grades have been recorded, the instructor opens the Smart Views containing grouped students in the Grade Center. The information the Smart Views provide is used to recommend targeted language remediation if necessary for non-native language speakers. It is also used to gauge the pre-requisite knowledge of transfer students and make recommendations for remediation or acceleration. This information is written in the comments section of the Grade Center for future reference and is eventually passed on to the department administration to be used for additional outcomes Tests.

A week after the unit tests are submitted and scored, the grades are released to students. A student who received a personally unsatisfactory grade communicated concern to the instructor. As a result of this conversation, the instructor changed the student's grade and several other students' grades as well. The

Grade Center recorded the grade changes in the Grade History, leaving a record that details when and who changed a grade.

Students and Observers who received email notifications of low grades had follow up tasks to ensure material was mastered and future success in the course.

Exploring the Grade Center

<http://library.blackboard.com/ref/a86c3648-80a5-43cc-8fed-b3f5d24518ce/index.htm>

The Grade Center is made up of rows and columns of Student information and items. Cells in the grid contain data specific to corresponding Students. All cells and column headings contain menus for various actions. The user can access information or navigate to other pages to interact with the Grade Center.

When the bottom and right scroll bars are used to navigate through the Grade Center columns, the view remains if the user navigates to another course area and then returns to the Grade Center. The user sees the column from the last visit and can continue from that spot in the Grade Center.

The appearance of the Grade Center is completely configurable. For more information on customizing the Grade Center, see [Creating Smart Views in the Grade Center](#) and [Sorting the Grade Center](#).

The Grade Center page contains the following areas:

- [Action Bar](#) – Row containing a set of tools with their respective options.
- [Grade Information Bar](#) – Row of dynamically generated information about a selected Column.
- [Icon Legend](#) – Information on the meaning of icons that appear in spreadsheet cells, located on the bottom right corner of the page.
- [Grade Center Accessibility](#)– Select the screen reader view for a more accessible view of the Grade Center.

Note: New Courses or Restored Course will contain two created columns: a Total column and a Weighted Total column. The user must configure the settings of these two columns. For more information about Calculated Grade columns, see [Calculating Grades](#).

Action Bar

The following icons are located on the Grade Center action bar

- **Create Column:** Used to create a Grade Column in the Grade Center. For more information on creating Columns, see [Adding Grade Columns to the Grade Center](#).
- **Create Calculated Column:** A drop-down list with options for creating Calculated Columns in the Grade Center:
 - [Average Column](#) displays the average for any number of quantities
 - [Minimum/Maximum Column](#) displays either the minimum or maximum grade for a selection of Columns.
 - [Total Column](#) is a grade based on the cumulative points received, related to the points allowed.

- [Weighted Column](#) displays the calculated result of quantities and their respective percentages.

For more information on creating Calculated Columns, see [Calculating Grades](#).
- **Manage:** Displays the Grade Center management options when the action link is triggered. Selections include options for:
 - [Grading Periods](#) user-defined segments within the Grade Center that are defined as Terms, Semesters, Quarters, Years, and so on.
 - [Grading Schemas](#) map scored items into a user-facing display.
 - [Categories](#) classifications of Columns of items such as "Test" or "Assignment".
 - [Smart Views](#) custom made views of Grade Center data created by Instructors and saved for continued use.
 - [Column Organization](#) allows Instructors to change the order and visibility of Columns as well as assign Columns to Grading Periods and Categories.
 - [Row Visibility](#) allows Instructors to hide or show users in the Grade Center views.
 - [Send Email](#) displays the Email options when the action link is triggered.
- **Reports:**
 - Select **Create Report** to access a page from which Reports for the Course are created. For more information on Reports, see [Creating Reports](#).
 - Select **View Grade History** to access a page where the Grade History of any selected students is displayed. For more information on Grade History, see [Grade History](#).
- **Work Offline:** Access features that allow Instructors to work with Grade Center data outside Blackboard Learn:
 - [Upload](#) data into the Grade Center from an external source file.
 - [Download](#) data from the Grade Center in a delimited file format.
- **Sort Columns By:** A drop-down list that displays possible column sort options:
 - Layout Position (default)
 - Categories
 - Due Date
 - Date Created
 - Points Possible
 - Display Name

See [Customizing the Grade Center](#) for more information on sorting columns.
- **Order:** Toggle the data display in **Ascending** or **Descending** order.
- **Move to Top:** Select the check box next to a user and click **Move to Top** to move that row to the top of the Grade Center.
- **Email:** Select the check boxes next to users in the Grade Center and click [Email](#) to display the Email options.
- **Edit Rows Displayed:** Click to enter the number of rows to display in the Grade Center.

Grade Information Bar

The Grade Information Bar row displays the pertinent information of the selected Grade Column cell in the Grade Center. Depending upon the pertinent or entered information the Grade Information Bar displays some or all of the following fields:

- The type of grade of a specific cell is one of the following:
 - Weighted Grade
 - Total Points
 - Average Grade
 - Minimum/Maximum
- Override: If an Override Grade is entered, it will take precedence over all Column types, and will display in the Grade Information Bar.
- Grade: For more information on Grade Types see [Adding Grade Columns to the Grade Center](#) and [Calculating Grades](#).
- The points possible for an item
- The format of the grade. For more information on Grade Display see [Creating Grading Schemas](#).
- If the Column is shown in the Student View. For more information see [Sharing Grade Center Data](#).

Icon Legend

Click **Icon Legend** to display the definition of the icons viewed in the Grade Center cells.

Grade Center Accessibility

In order to make the Grade Center accessible to as many people as possible, the Grade Center is accessible by a Screen Reader.

The **Screen Reader Mode** displays the Grade Center data in a simplified grid. There is no inline editing and no ability to freeze columns, making it easier to navigate by keystroke and to accommodate screen readers. When the Grade Center is first accessed by users with screen readers, users are immediately given a choice whether to enter Non-interactive view before progressing any further.

Both the Screen Reader Mode and the Interactive mode can move the mouse pointer from Column to Column using the Tab key. Cells within the Grade Center are navigated by using the up, down, left, and right arrows on a standard keyboard in both views.

The Interactive mode allows columns to be frozen, and has inline editing capabilities.

To manually change the Interactive mode of the Grade Center to the Screen Reader Mode, click **Screen Reader mode** in the help text displayed at the top of the Grade Center page. Click **interactive mode** to return to the default mode.

This setting is not saved across sessions (persistent). It will last only as long as the current session. Once the browser is closed, the view will default back to the Interactive mode.

Setting Up the Grade Center

Instructors invest a great deal of time planning and creating lessons, matching lessons with learning objectives and then assessing whether those objectives have been met. Assessing learning objectives is

done in many different ways, through exams, projects, papers, participation and more. Assigning value to those individual Tests and configuring a grading schema to display grades to students for a marking period or course is unique for every Instructor and for every course.

Blackboard Learn includes a default Grading Schema with initial installation. The System Administrator may edit this schema to reflect a general grading schema used at the institution. A copy of the Institutional grading schema is included in all Course sections of Blackboard Learn. Instructors can edit the pre-defined Grading Schema and save changes within their Course sections. Instructors also have the ability to create additional Grading Schemas within their Course sections.

Individual grades, Grade Columns and Calculated Columns can always be changed within the Grade Center during an ongoing Course; though by planning out all Tests, attributing value to them, and using those values to create a Grading Schema beforehand, Instructors can spend less time editing and reconfiguring individual grades, and Students and other interested people receive consistent grading information.

This section contains the following topics:

- [Grading Schemas](#)
- [Categories](#)
- [Grading Periods](#)
- [About Grade Center Columns](#)
- [Adding Columns to the Grade Center](#)
- [Editing Columns in the Grade Center](#)
- [Adding Students to the Grade Center](#)

About Smart Views

Smart Views are views of the Grade Center based on a variety of student criteria. This enables Instructors to create certain views of the Grade Center—based on performance criteria for items such as Tests or Assignments—that quickly track Students.

There are four different Types of Smart Views that specify the Student information:

- **Course Group** allows the Instructors to select a Group, which was created in the course. Groups are subsections created in the User Management Area of the Control Panel. They are a collection of students selected by the Instructor.
- **Performance** allows the Instructor to select Students based on performance
- **User** allows the Instructor to select individual Students
- **Category and Status** allows the Instructor to select from a full list of Student attributes; this is a combination of the options of the other three Smart Views.
- **Custom** allows the Instructor to create a query based on user criteria.

Once built and saved, Smart Views become a selectable list item on the **Current View** drop-down list of the Grade Center page, enabling easy navigation from one view to another. Any Smart View is saved as the default view of the Grade Center. The current default view can be changed at any time.

Tasks associated with Smart Views

- [Favorites](#)
- [Creating a Smart View](#)
- [About the Formula Editor](#)
- [Editing a Smart View](#)
- [Deleting a Smart View](#)
- [Viewing a Smart View as the Main Grade Center View](#)

About Favorites

Any Smart View can be tagged as a Favorite to display in the **Course Menu** under the **Grade Center** heading. Select **Favorite** when creating a Smart View to make the Smart View a Favorite.

When a Favorite is selected, the title of the Grade Center page includes the name of the Favorite.

How to Create a Smart View

1. Point to **Manage** on the Action Bar and select **Smart Views**.
2. Click **Create Smart View**.
3. Type a **Name** for the Smart View. This is a required field and is shown in the Current View drop-down list on the Grade Center page. It is also shown as a link to the Smart View on the Manage Smart Views page.
4. Type a **Description** of the Smart View. The description is shown on the Manage Smart Views page.
5. Select **Add as Favorite** to make the Smart View a Favorite.
6. Select the **Type of View**.
 - **Course Group**: Subsections of students. Course Groups must be created before they can be used as selection criteria.
 - **Performance**: Student performance on a single item such as a mid-term exam.
 - **User**: Individual Students.
 - **Category and Status**: Create a Smart View based on Categories and Grade Status.
 - **Custom**: A query for selecting students using a combination of attributes.
7. Select the appropriate **Criteria**.
 - **Course Group**: Select the groups to include in this Smart View.
 - **Performance**: Select the user criteria to include in this Smart View.
 - **User**: Select the users and columns to include in this Smart View.
 - **Category and Status**: Select the category and users to filter by status.
 - **Custom**: Select the user and their grade criteria to include in the Smart View.
8. Click **Submit**.

Note: See [Creating Custom Smart Views](#) for more information.

About the Formula Editor

When building a Smart View using the Investigate type, multiple user criteria can be used. Criteria are added as AND statements. As each criteria is added, it is assigned a number. This number is reflected in the Formula Editor, which appears below the criteria. Each criteria that is added can have a condition such as equal to, greater than, and less than. Each condition requires a value to compare with the condition.

After all the criteria have been entered, the formula for the query appears. The formula can be manually edited to change the operators and to insert parentheses to change the way the formula is completed.

How to Edit a Smart View

1. Point to **Manage** on the Action Bar and select **Smart Views**.
2. Select the Smart View to change and select **Edit** from the contextual menu.
3. Make the desired changes.
4. Click **Submit** to save changes.

How to Delete a Smart View

Removing a Smart View does not delete any data from the system.

1. Point to **Manage** on the Action Bar and select **Smart Views**
2. Select the Smart View to remove and click **Delete**.
3. Click **OK** to delete the Smart View.

How to View a Smart View as the Main Grade Center View

Grade Details Page

Access the Grade Details Page from the contextual menu for any graded item listed in the Grade Center.

Note: To view the Grade Details page, a grade must be entered in the cell. If there is no grade, the option to view Grade Details will not appear.

This page also serves as the main location for users with assistive technology such as Screen Readers. All of the information associated with an item is viewed on the Grade Details page. Changes are made where appropriate.

The following features are available from the Grade Details Page:

- [Navigation](#)
- [Grading Tests by Question](#)
- [Current Grade](#)
- [Edit](#)
- [Manually Override](#)
- [View Column Details](#)
- [Grade History](#)

- [Icon Legend](#)
- [Next Steps](#)

Navigation

The current **User** and **Column** are displayed at the top of the page. Use the left and right arrow buttons to scroll through all of the users in the Course or all of the columns in the Grade Center.

Click the **Jump to** button to use **Column** and **User** drop-down lists.

Click **Return to Grade Center**, located at the bottom of the page, to display the Grade Center page.

Grading Tests by Question

The **User** and **Column** navigation features on the Grade Details page is useful when entering or changing grades question by question. Instructors can examine and grade all the responses to a single question for a test using this method.

See [Entering Grades](#) and [Changing Grades](#) for more information on this method of grading.

Current Grade

Current Grade displays the current score. Click **Grade Attempts** to edit the current grade or grade another attempt.

Instructors can access all the attempts associated with this grade by clicking **Grade Attempts**. See [Entering Grades](#) for more information.

Edit Tab

View date submitted or saved, feedback and grading notes.

Use the View Attempt, Clear Attempt, and Edit Grade buttons to change grade and grading information. Use the Delete drop-down menu to delete attempts.

Manually Override Tab

Use this tab to enter a new grade for the item. Type a new grade in the Override Grade field. **Feedback to User** and **Grading Notes** may also be entered here.

The grade can be exempted from this tab by selecting the **Exempt user from this item** checkbox.

View Column Details Tab

This tab presents information about the Grade Center column where this grade resides:

- Column Name
- Column Description
- Primary Display
- Show to Users

- Included in Calculations
- Average Score
- Median Score

Grade History Tab

The Grade History tab displays all of the changes that have been made to this item. A message is displayed if there is no Grade History information available.

Icon Legend

Click **Icon Legend** to display the definition of the icons viewed in the Grade Center cells.

Next Steps

For more information, see the following topics:

- [Calculating Grades](#)
- [Changing Grades](#)
- [Typing Grades](#)
- [Grade History](#)

Customizing the Grade Center

All the Grade Center functions are initiated from the Grade Center page. This view is customizable, giving Instructors the ability to sort items in ways to maximize efficiency and to view student information with a minimum of scrolling.

Columns can be selected to be shown or hidden from the Grade Center to reduce scrolling. Columns are categorized in order to filter or sort them together. Columns can also be assigned a Grading Period to sort them together. Defining Categories and Grading Periods is discussed in [Setting Up the Grade Center and Planning Assessment](#).

The Grade Center, by default, lists Students' First and Last Names first. Students may be listed by Username or Student ID as well, depending on how the Grade Center has been organized. Columns for items and calculations of sets of graded items appear across the page. Icons appear in cells to signify the availability of students, the visibility of items to students, and the status of Gradable Items, providing a current view of the state of the Grade Center.

The ability to configure the Grade Center view, and the ability to manage columns and cells are available through the Grade Center page, within the Action Link that corresponds to each cell and column header.

The following customization options are available:

- [Customizing the Grade Center Workflow](#)
- [Sorting the Grade Center](#)
- [Showing and Hiding Users](#)
- [Organizing the Grade Center](#)
- [Showing and Hiding Grade Center Columns](#)
- [Making Columns Visible to All Views of the Grade Center](#)

- [Freezing and Unfreezing Panes](#)
- [Editing Column Categories](#)
- [Editing Grading Periods](#)

Customizing the Grade Center Workflow

The following diagram illustrates a typical workflow an Instructor can undertake to customize the Grade