

# Utilizing Grade Weighting in Blackboard 8

The capabilities of the Grade Center in Blackboard 8 are designed to meet all the grading needs an instructor might have, and grade weighting is no exception. The tools can have a high learning curve to the novice user, however, and it is all too easy to create a grade weighting situation in which student grades are significantly distorted. This guide is designed to introduce each function of grade weighting in Blackboard 8 by providing helpful examples and screenshots that will assist users of all levels, so that anyone can create a grade weighting system perfectly adapted to their needs.

## When Shouldn't You Use Grade Weighting?

Depending on your needs, it may not be necessary to use grade weighting in your course. If your points are distributed appropriately among your various assignments and exams, grade weighting could be an unnecessary step. For example, let's say you have 10 assignments, each worth 10 points, two tests worth 100 points each, two quizzes worth 50 points each, and a final worth 200 points, for a total of 600 points. As it stands, your 10 assignments total 100 points, altogether worth  $\frac{1}{6}$  of the final grade, or about 17 Percent. Your quizzes total 100 points as well, meaning they collectively are also worth  $\frac{1}{6}$  of the final grade. Your two tests total 200 points, as does your final, meaning each category is worth  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the final grade, or about 33 Percent. That also means that each test is worth about as much as all 10 assignments or both quizzes, and the final is worth two tests.

## Use Grade Weighting If:

### 1. You wish to drop the highest/lowest grades in a grade category

If you want to drop the 2 lowest assignments out of 12 and only count the 10 best in the final total, for example, you must use the grade weighting option

### 2. You only want to count the highest/lowest grade in a grade category

If you had your students write several papers or drafts of a paper and only want to count the best paper or draft, for example, you also must use the grade weighting option

### 3. You would like to weigh each category as a percentage of the final grade

If you have 5 grade categories in blackboard 8 such as final, tests, quizzes, homework, and attendance, and you would like to assign a specific percentage weight of the final grade to each one (i.e. final worth 30%, tests worth 30%, attendance worth 20%, and quizzes and assignments worth 10% each) then grade weighting is just what you are looking for.

## Getting Ready for Grade Weighting

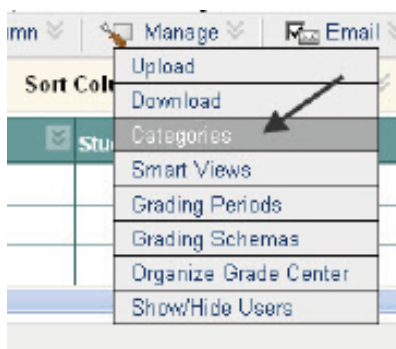
There are several things you should do before creating a grade weighting column in the Grade Center of Blackboard 8:


### 1. Decide what categories you need to create

In general, you need to create a category for each group of assignments or tests for which you would like to assign a weight. This can be done in several ways; you could group things categorically, such as all assignments, quizzes, and tests in three separate categories, for example. You could also group things temporally by units of the material, such as Unit 1, Unit 2, and Unit 3. You can have as many groups as you would like, but as you plan your groups, keep in mind that weighting works best when you keep things simple, i.e. fewer than 10 categories.


**Note: If you want to include attendance, participation, a final, or any other single grade item in the final percentage, you do not need to create a unique category for it.**

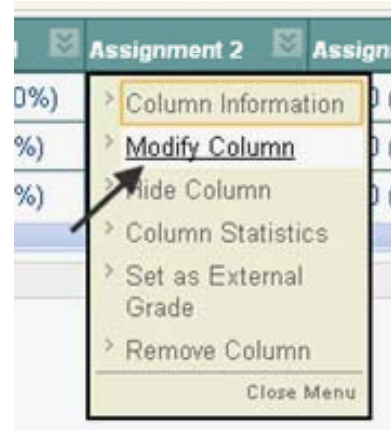
### 2. Create your categories



Creating categories is simple! To do this, go to the Grade Center from the control panel of your desired course. Mouse over Manage from your top menu and select Categories. This menu will display all the categories you currently have, as well as which columns in your Grade Center are assigned to each category. To create a new category, simply click  Add Category in the upper left of the screen. On this page, give the category a name, such as Assignments, and a brief description if you wish, and click submit. Once you have all of the categories you wish to use in your weighting, you may proceed to step 3.

### 3. Assign your categories

Once you have created your categories, you need to assign each column in your Grade Center the proper category. To do this, go to your Grade Center page, scroll to the column you wish to assign, and click  to the right of the column to pull down the menu. From this menu, select Modify Column. Under **1. Column Information**, click the arrow next to **Category**, choose the proper category, and click Submit at the bottom of the page. Do this for every column in your grade book, so that all your columns needed for weighting are assigned a category. You can verify that each column is assigned to the proper category by visiting your Manage Categories, as described in step 2. You are now ready to weight your grades!



## Weighting Your Grades

### 1. Create your grade weighting column

Creating your Grade Weighting column is easy; simply navigate to your Grade Center, mouse over Add Calculated Column, and select Weighted. From this menu, give your weight column a name, and a shorter display name if necessary. You may provide a description if you like. Next, select the primary and (if desired) secondary display; using Percentage or Letter is most appropriate, as Score for a weighted calculation does not accurately represent the total.



### 2. Select columns and categories to include in weight calculation



Next is grouping together all of the categories and columns you want to include in your weighting calculation. To do this, scroll down to **3. Select Columns**, highlight the category or column you wish to add, and click the

right arrow next to it, as indicated by the blue arrow in the picture. You should add categories if you want to include groups of assignments you have already created as a single entry in the weighting calculation. If you have single columns in your grade book you would like to include as a single entry in your weighted total (such as a final, an attendance/participation grade, etc.), add these from the **Columns to Select:** section. Once this is complete, verify that you have all of the categories and columns you wish to include by scrolling through them under the **Selected Columns:** heading.

**Note:** You can remove columns from your Selected Columns list by clicking  at the top right of the category or column heading.

### 3. Enter a weight percentage for each category and column

Put the percentage weight you wish to assign to each category or column in the box to the left of each Selected Column heading. Your percentages, as always, must add up to 100. It is recommended that you also select Yes under the column selection box next to **Calculate as running total**. This will exclude columns in your grade book from the weighted calculation; selecting no will count columns without entries as 0 in the weight calculation.



### 4. Fine tune your grade weighting setup

There are several more features in the grade book that will allow you to further regulate your grade weighting. First, we will discuss the Category features. If you are including categories as your weights, you will see several options below each Category heading in the selective columns box.

\*20 % **Category: Assignment** ④

Weight Columns:  Equally  Proportionally ①

Drop Grades OR  Use only the

② Drop  highest grades ③  Lowest value to calculate

Drop 1 lowest grades ③  Highest value to calculate

### ① Weighting each column:

If you look next to number 1, you will see an option to weight columns equally or proportionally within the category. If each column (in this picture, each assignment) has the same number of points possible, this option does not affect you. If your point values differ, however, this option is important. Weighting each one **equally** means that the **columns worth more points will contribute to the weight as much as the columns with less points**; in essence, this makes the columns with lesser point values have a magnified effect in the percentage, while those worth more points have a reduced impact. If, however, you select **proportionally**, those assignments worth more points will be worth **proportionally more** than the lesser point valued assignments. This is more advisable if you would like the columns with **more points** to be worth **more of the overall grade**, and is typically what most professors look for.

### ② Dropping grades in a category:

Here, you have the option of **dropping the highest or lowest x number of grades from the weight calculation**. For example, if you gave your students 13 quizzes, but only the best ten should count for a grade, you can select the circle next to **Drop Grades** here and put a 3 in **Drop \_\_\_ lowest grades**. It is more likely that you will drop the lowest grades than the highest grades, so just make sure if you utilize this option that you select the right criteria.

### ③ Using only one value in a category:

This is similar to dropping high or low grades, except that you count only the single highest or lowest. This works well if you have provided students with several essay assignments, but want only **their best grade to be included in the weight**. You can also use this option if the students were **only responsible for completing 1 out of x number of assignments or topics**. To use this option, click the empty circle next to **Use only the**, and select either Lowest value or Highest value. Again, it is more likely that you will use the highest value, so if you use the lowest, be sure to select the correct option.

### ④ Remove the category from the list:

If you no longer wish to include this category in your weight calculation, simply click the red x at number 4. This will erase all your settings for this category, so be sure you wish to remove it before clicking the red x.

## 5. Select other options

There are three other options at the bottom of the page, all of which are rather self-explanatory. The first is whether or not to include this item in grade center calculations; it is recommended that you do not. Usually your weighted total is the final calculation and should not be included in others. The next option is whether to show this column in the student gradebooks; select yes if you want your students to see the weighted total, and no if you are only calculating the total for your own purposes, meaning you don't want your students to see it. If you select yes for the final option, the students will be able to see the column statistics for the class in their own **My Grades** pages. The choice is up to you.

## 6. Click submit and then that's it!

You have now successfully created a weighted column using the Blackboard 8 grading center! We hope you found this guide helpful. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to send an email to [Blackboard@case.edu](mailto:Blackboard@case.edu). You can also call (216) 368-HELP to reach our support team by phone.