

## Calculating Final Grades Using the Weighted Total Column

Once the Grade Center in your course has been set up with a column for every evaluation/ assessment/ evaluated item you can easily create a grading column to accurately calculate students' final grades. (For information about how to set up the Grade Center refer to our **Basics of the Grade Center** quick guide: [http://spsfaculty.commons.gc.cuny.edu/quick-guides/.](http://spsfaculty.commons.gc.cuny.edu/quick-guides/))

This guide explains the steps necessary to:

- Check columns in the Grade Center for accuracy (Step 2),
- Check existing Categories in the Grade Center, and create new ones (Steps 3-7),
- Map assignments to categories (Steps 8 and 9),
- Set up the Weighted Total column (Steps 10-14).

Please note the difference between a Total Column and a Weighted Total Column. A **Total Column** calculates final grades by adding up all of the points a student has earned; i.e. the weighting of assignments is done by assigning a different number of points possible per assignment. For example, a paper worth 40 points counts more toward a student's final grade than a quiz worth 10 points.

In contrast, a final grade calculated using the **Weighted Total** is based on the respective percentages you give to various columns and categories.\* When setting up the Weighted Total column, you'll determine the weight assigned to either a column (i.e. a single assignment, such as the Final Paper), or a category (i.e. a group of assignments, such as discussions or quizzes). A Weighted Total is calculated independently of the actual points an assignment is worth.

\*Note on terminology: The Grade Center makes use of Categories and Columns. **Columns** in the Grade Center correspond to each individual item in the course that will be graded. **Categories** correspond to groups of assignments of the same type, e.g. quizzes, essays, or discussions. Blackboard has a number of default categories corresponding to the different types of assessment (i.e. Assignment, Discussion, and Test categories) but you can also create your own. Both categories and columns can be used in calculating final grades using the Weighted Total Column. For example, you might group all discussion assignments into a category, but include the single column for the final exam grade.

**Important for grade display:** If you choose to display grades as letters, make sure you select "**Letter SPS**" from the menu. This ensures that letter grades will be calculated according to the **SPS undergraduate** grading point schema. If you are teaching a graduate course at SPS, do not use any of the letter schemas on Blackboard.

### Step 1

First, navigate to the Grade Center:  
From anywhere within the course, look for the Control Panel in the lower left section of the screen. Click on the arrow next to "Grade Center."



**Step 2**

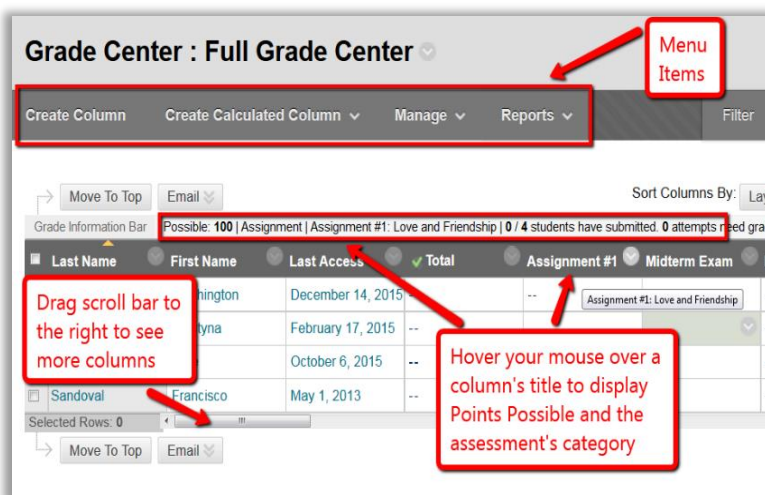
**Check for Accuracy**

This takes you to the full Grade Center. You will see some menu items on the top, and a table listing the students enrolled in your class, along with columns listing the assessed items in your course.

Scroll right to make sure each of the assessed items (i.e. discussion forums, tests, and other assignments that will receive a grade) has a column.

Hover your mouse over the title of each column to review if the correct number of points are assigned to each assignment. You can also check an item's category this way.

Note: In a dev course site, no students will be listed.

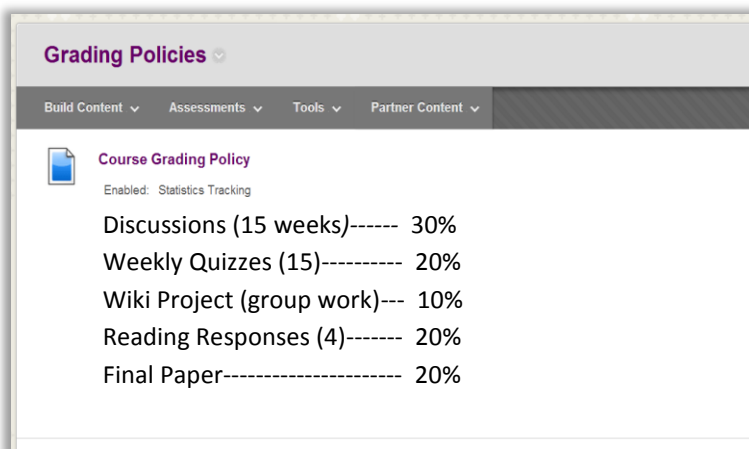


**Step 3**

**Checking / Creating Categories**

In the example to the right, there are five components to the final grade of the course: discussions, weekly quizzes, a wiki project, reading responses and a final paper.

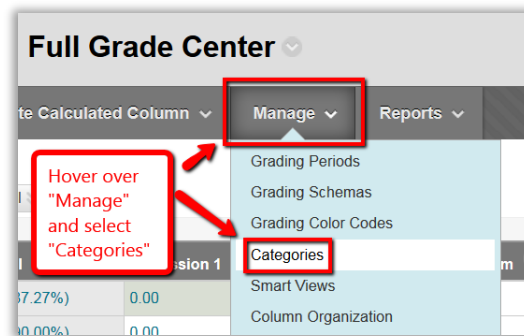
Note that some (such as discussions or quizzes) may include more than one assignment, and therefore more than one column in the Grade Center. These will need to be grouped together into a category (such as Discussion, or Tests) to include in the Weighted Total calculation.



**Step 4**

To review existing categories – and create new ones if needed – mouse over the “Manage” on top of the Grade Center, and select “Categories.”

This will open a display of all the Categories in the course and all of the assignments in each category.

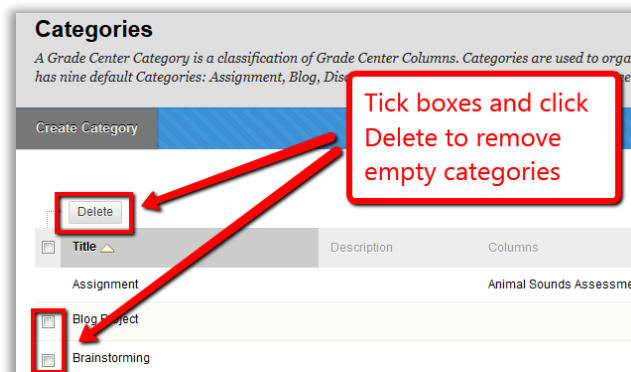


**Step 5**

Review existing categories to be sure they match the components of your final grade.

Blackboard has default categories, e.g. for Assignments, Discussions, Tests etc. which cannot be deleted.

When you inherit a course, there may be extra categories. If these are empty and unnecessary, remove them by ticking the boxes next to each and clicking the “Delete” button.



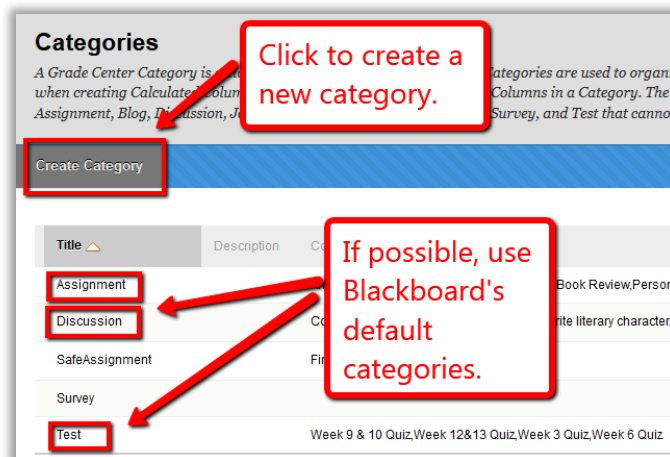
Note: To delete categories that are not empty, you must first remap the associated Grade Center columns to a different category (see Step 7-8).

**Step 6**

For our example, we will use existing default categories for Discussion and Test (for quizzes) and only create an additional category for the “Reading Responses.”

To create new category, click the “Create Category” button on the top.

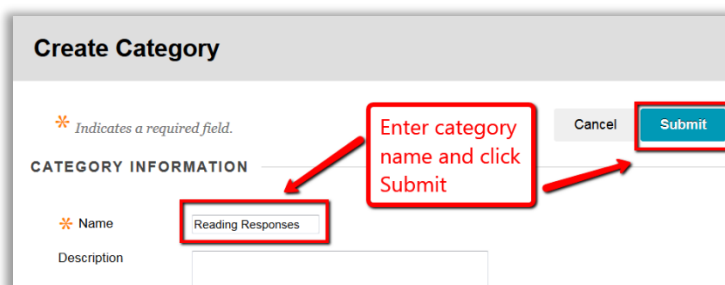
Note: Whenever possible, use the default categories in Blackboard; this way, new assessed items created will be automatically mapped to the correct category.



**Step 7**

On the “Create Category” screen, enter a name (e.g. “Reading Responses”). A description is not necessary. Then click Submit.

Repeat Steps 6-7 for each new category you need to create.

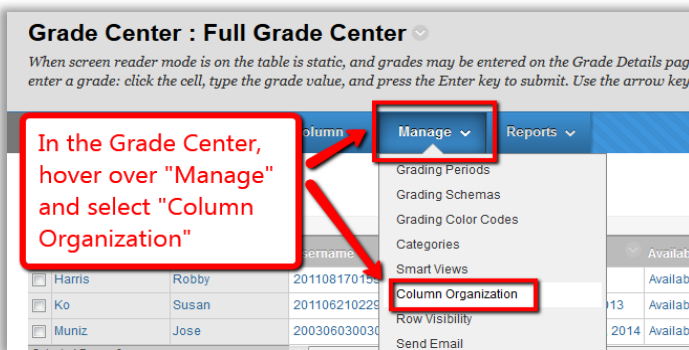


**Step 8**

**Mapping Columns to Categories**

Now we will map the respective columns in the Grade Center to their correct category.

In the Grade Center, hover over "Manage," and select "Column Organization" from the drop-down menu.

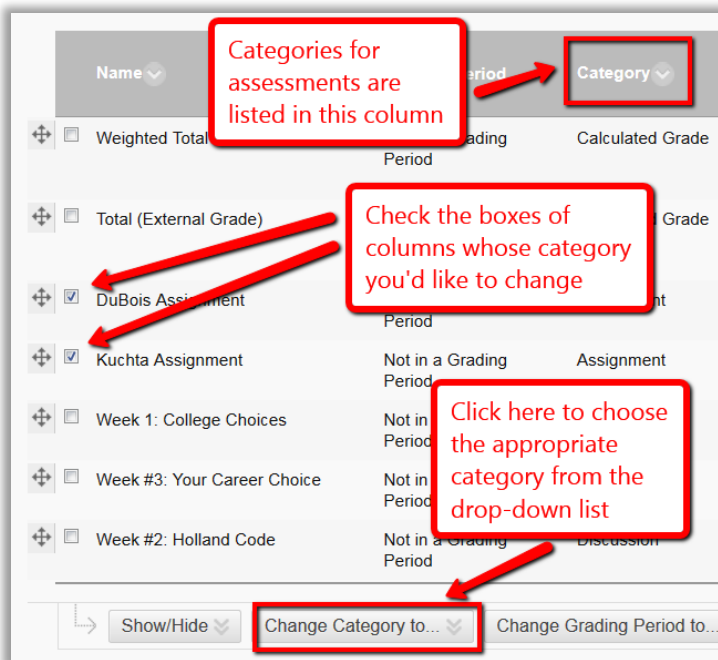


**Step 9**

On the next page, all the columns found in your grade center will be listed. You can also see to which category each of your columns is mapped.

To change the category of a column or a set of columns, check the box next to their names, click on the "Change Category to" button at the bottom of the list and select the appropriate category from the drop-down menu.

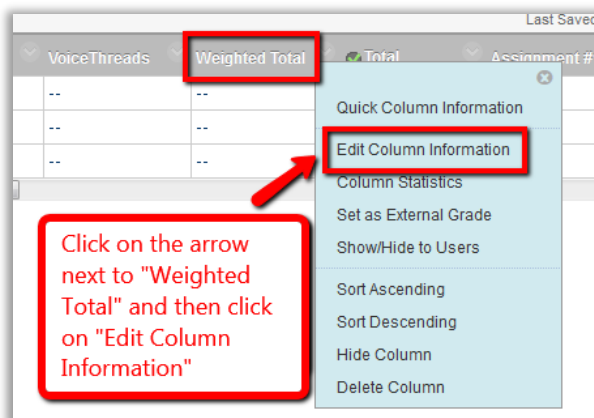
**Important: When done, click "Submit" to save all changes.**



**Step 10**

**Setting Up Weighted Total Column**

All courses at SPS include a "Weighted Total" column by default. To set yours up, go back to the Grade Center. Find the "Weighted Total" column, click on the downward arrow next to its name, and select "Edit Column Information."

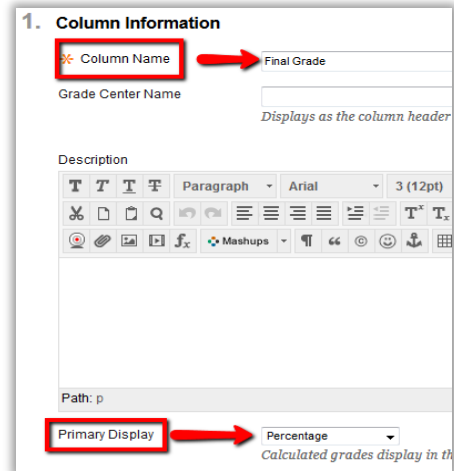


**Step 11**

You may change the title of your weighted column, or leave as is. Select the way grades will be displayed to students from the “Primary Display” drop-down list.

Note: We recommend choosing “Percentage” or “Letter SPS”\*, even if you used points for all the assessments in your course.

\*Letter SPS is for undergraduate courses only.

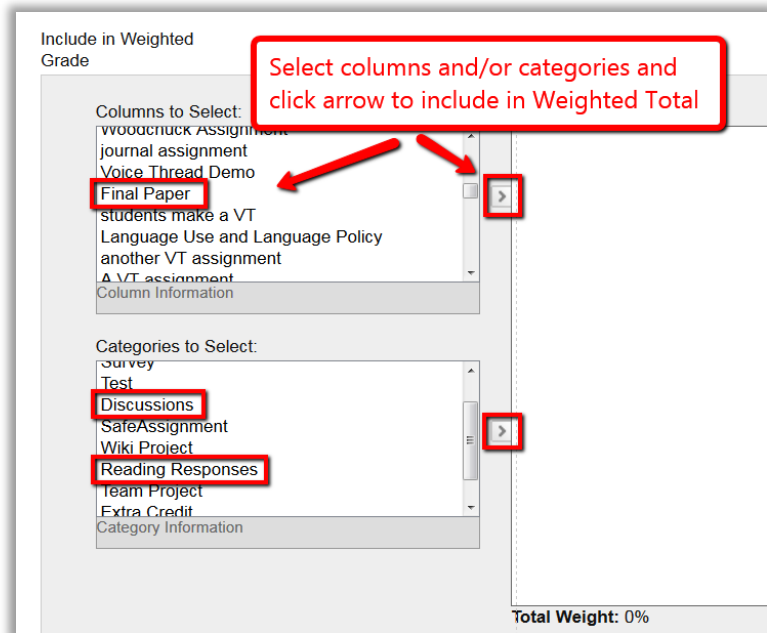


**Step 12**

Scroll down to the “Select Columns” section of the page. Here, you’ll add columns for single assignments (such as the final paper or the wiki project for our example), and categories for a group of assignments (such as discussions, quizzes, and reading responses) to the weighted total.

To add a column or category to the calculation window on the right, click on its name to select it and then click on the right-facing arrow.

Repeat this step for each column or category you wish to add.



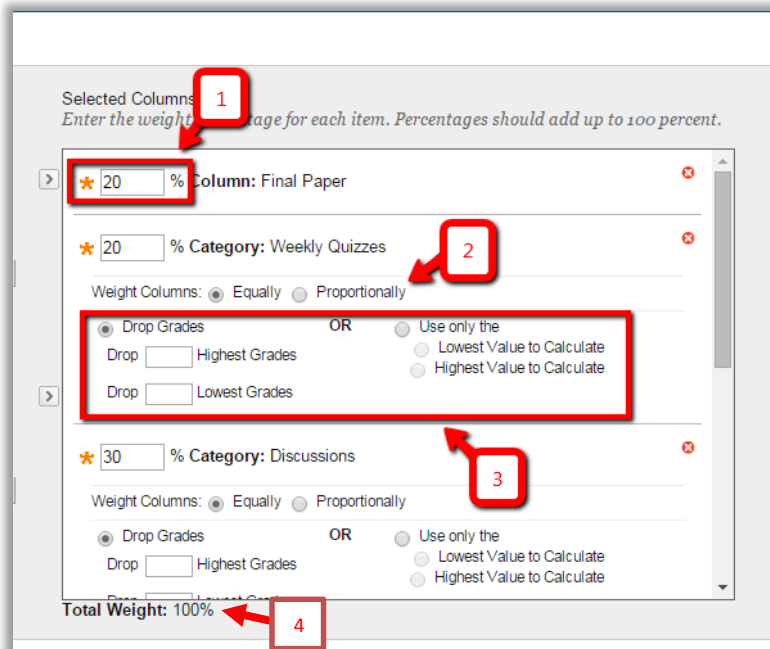
Step 13

In the “Selected Columns” box, define the following parameters:

1. The weighted percentage as a component of the final grade (e.g. Final Paper is worth 20%).

For Categories only:

2. **Weight Columns:** You may select how to weight columns within each category: Equally (recommended) or Proportionally. This option only matters if assignments in this category have different point values. Example: if two reading responses are worth 20% of the final grade, and one is assigned 5 points and the other 15, this option affects how they are counted toward the final grade. When choosing “Proportionally” the 15 point paper would count 15 % of the final grade and the 5 point paper 5%. Choosing “Equally” applies equal value to all columns within a category. Selecting this would make each paper worth 10% of the final grade despite their point values.
3. **Drop Grades or Use Only:** You may choose to drop any number of the highest / lowest grades, or to use only the highest / lowest grades within each category.
4. **Total Weight:** Must add up to 100% in order to submit and create the weighted total column.



Step 14

Keep the defaults for “Calculate as Running Total” and the option for including the column in the Grade Center. Decide whether to show the column and statistics to students.

Click “Submit” to save.

**Important reminder for grading:** When calculating the final grade as a running total, you must enter a value (such as 0, or another number) for any missing work before it will be factored into a student’s final grade. If you enter no grade at all the assignment will be regarded as not submitted (and graded) yet.

