

## Organizing the Grade Center

Using the Grade Center has many advantages for you and your students. It keeps all of your grades in one place, and automatically interacts with various graded items (assessments) in your course so that you don't have to input grades twice. It also calculates students' final grades (weighted total) for you. For your students, it allows them to keep track of their progress in the course under "My Grades" at any point.

If you have already created Assignments, Discussion Boards, Tests, and other **assessed items** in your course, then much of the Grade Center will already be set up. Whenever you create a new graded item and assign a point value to it, Blackboard **automatically** creates a new column for the item in the Grade Center and assigns it to one of the default categories.\* Although you can create Grade Center columns manually, we recommend you use grade center integration for all the assessments (assignments, tests, quizzes, etc.) that you create within Blackboard, and only create manual columns for ePortfolio or other off-Blackboard assignments.

Although much of the Grade Center is automatically set up through the process described above, you will most likely need to make some adjustments. This guide assumes that you have already created all of the assessed items that students will complete during the semester, and walks you through the process of organizing the Grade Center. You will learn how to add and re-arrange columns, create categories, map assessed items to categories, and calculate a weighted average (i.e. final grade).

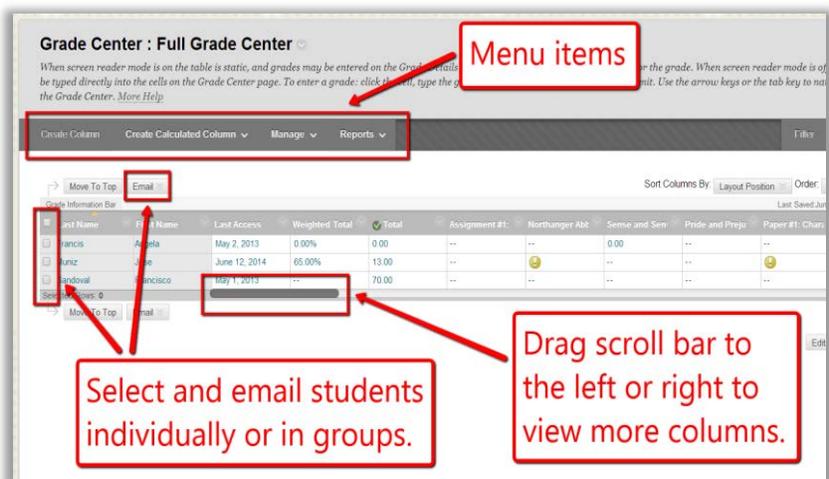
\* *Note on terminology: The Grade Center makes use of Categories and Columns. **Columns** in the Grade Center correspond to each individual item in the course that will be graded. **Categories** correspond to each of the major components of the final grade, e.g. quizzes, essays, discussions, midterm, or final paper. Blackboard has a number of default categories corresponding to the different types of assessment (i.e. Assignment, Discussion, and Test categories). In order for any graded item to be included in the final grade, its column must be associated with the appropriate category.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 1</u></p> <p>First, we need to get 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 right-facing arrow next to "Grade Center."</p>	
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### Step 2

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, which you can view by scrolling to the right. Note that you can easily email students, either individually or in groups, by ticking the boxes to the left of their names and clicking the "Email" button.

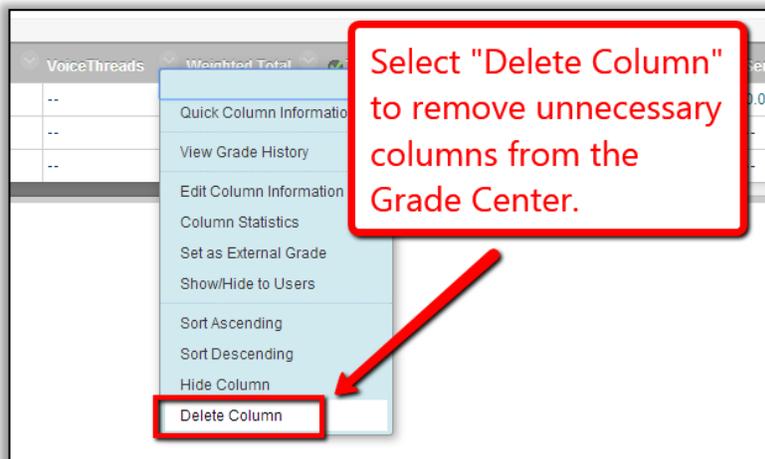
Note: In a dev course site, no students will be listed.



### Step 3

First, scroll to the right to see if there are any columns listed for items you won't use in your course (e.g. if you inherited the course from a previous instructor).

Remove any unnecessary columns by clicking the downward facing arrow next to the column title, then select "Delete Column." Some columns, like "Student ID," cannot be removed, but you can hide them from view without removing them entirely from the Grade Center by selecting "Hide Column" from the menu instead.



Note: If the "Delete Column" option is not available it means the column's corresponding assignment still exists somewhere in the course. In this case, before being able to delete the column, find and delete the associated assignment first.

If you cannot find the assignment, and "Delete Column" remains not an available option, you may elect to hide the column instead.

If you choose to "Hide" a column instead of deleting it, be sure to:

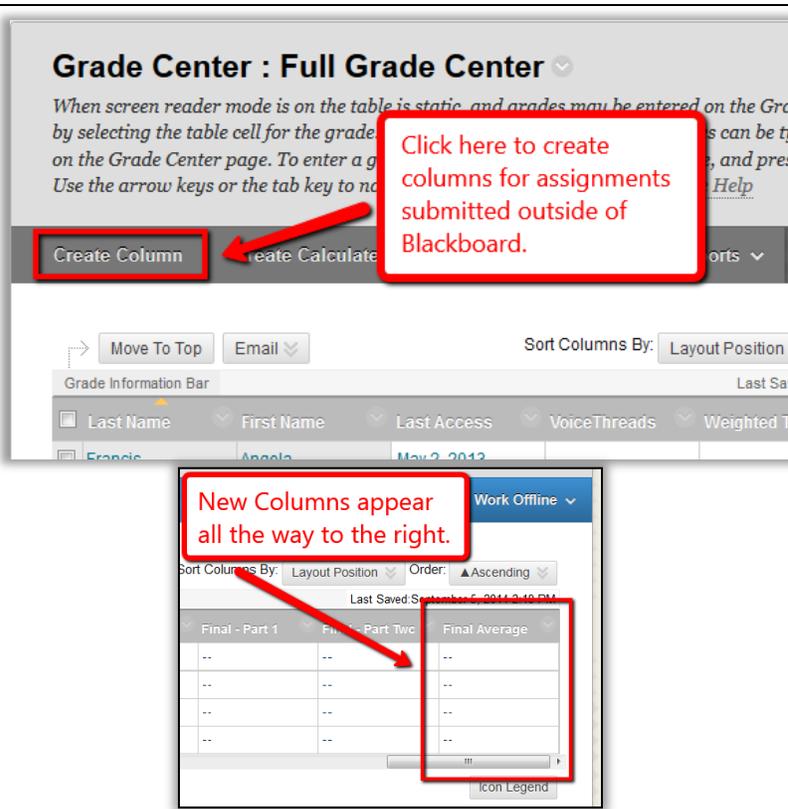
- Select *both* "Hide from Students" and "Hide from Instructor View";
- Recategorize the column as "No Category" (Grade Center → Column dropdown menu → Edit Column Information → Category);
- Select *not* to include this column in Grade Center calculations (Grade Center → Column dropdown menu → Edit Column Information →

Step 4

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

If a column does not appear for an item which will be submitted through Blackboard, check to make sure the "graded" option has been selected in the item's settings. If there are assignments in your course submitted outside of Blackboard (e.g. on ePortfolio), you can add a Grade Center column by clicking "Create Column" on the top menu bar.

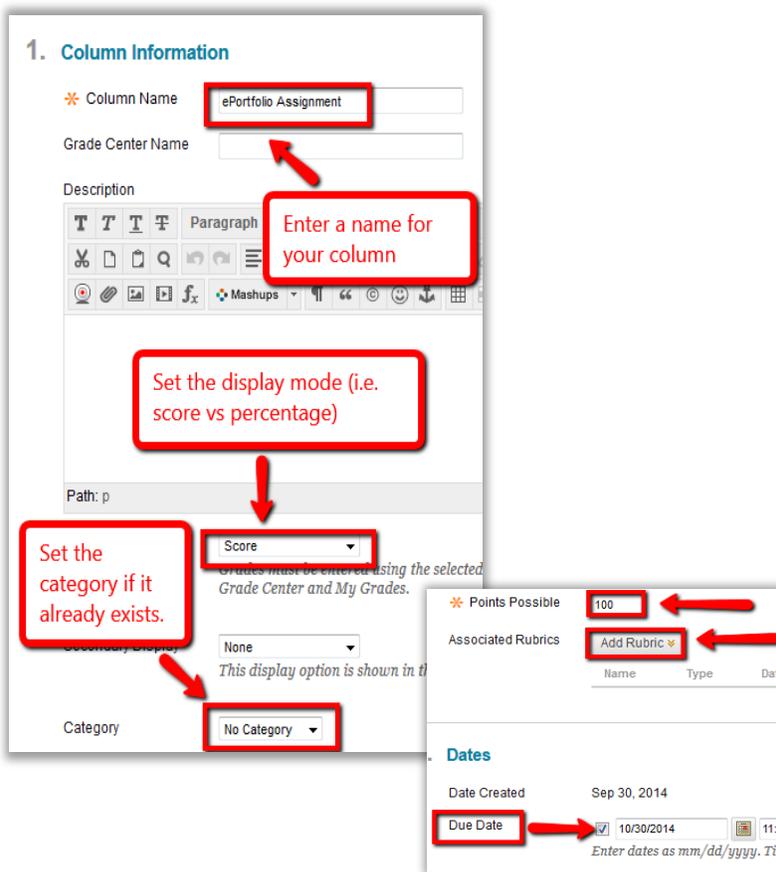
Note: By default, new columns appear all the way to the right of the Grade Center. See Step 13 for how to reorder columns.



Step 5

You will be taken to the "Create Grade Column" page. Enter a title for your column (you don't need to add a description) and set mode the grade will be displayed. Note: 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.

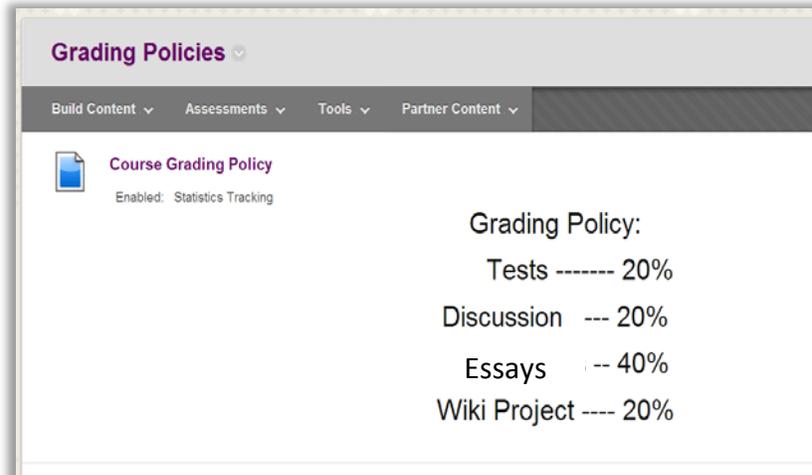
If the category for this assignment already exists, you can select it here; if not, you will create the category and map columns to it in Steps 7-12. Then, set the points possible for the assignment and add or create a rubric (if using one) by clicking on "Add Rubric." You can also set a due date that will be integrated into the course's calendar here. When you're done, click "Submit."



Step 6

Now we will look at how to create Grade Center **categories**. In this example, there are four components, or categories, to the final grade of the course: Tests, Discussion, Essays and a Wiki Project. Note that each category may include more than one assignment (i.e. column in the Grade Center).

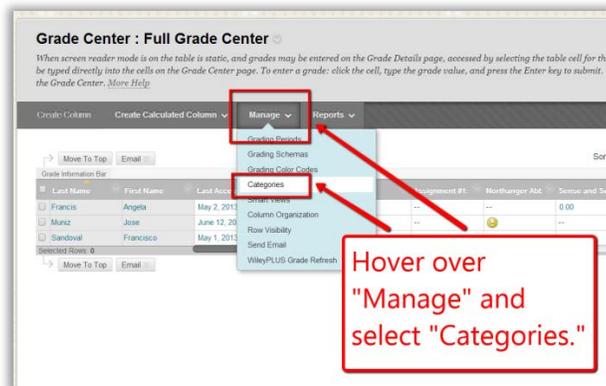
The next few steps will explain how to create a category for each component, add the appropriate Grade Center columns to each category, and create a weighted column to calculate students' final grades.



Step 7

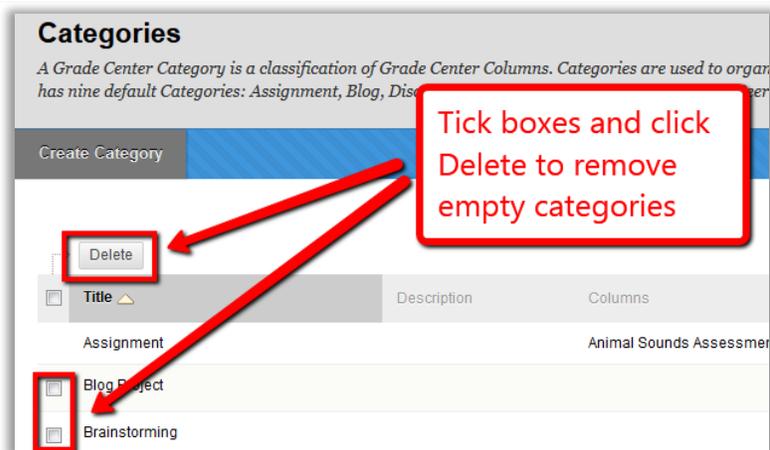
First, we have to review existing categories in the Grade Center to make sure they correspond to the components of the final grade in this course (see Step 6).

To review – and create new – categories, mouse over the “Manage” menu in the top bar, and select “Categories.”



Step 8

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; leave these in place. 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.

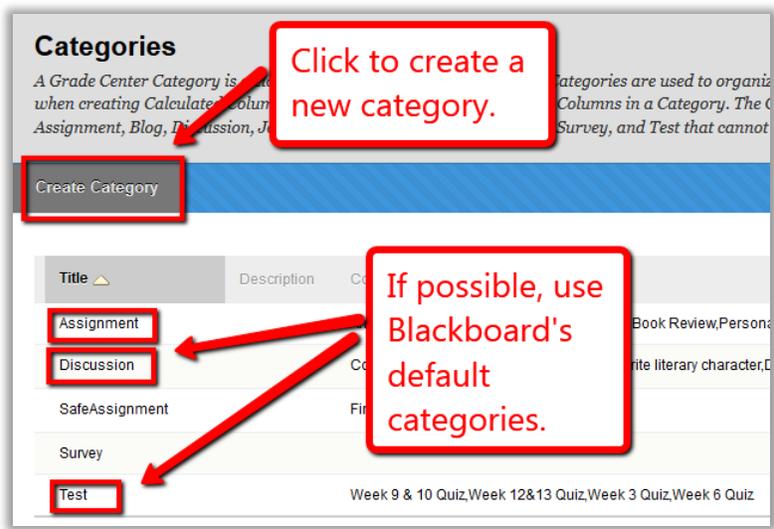


Note: To delete categories that are not empty, you must first remap the associated columns to a different category (see Step 12).

**Step 9**

For our example, we will use existing default categories for Discussion, Assignment (for essays), and Test (for quizzes) and only create an additional category for the "Wiki Project". To create new category, click the "Create Category" button on the top.

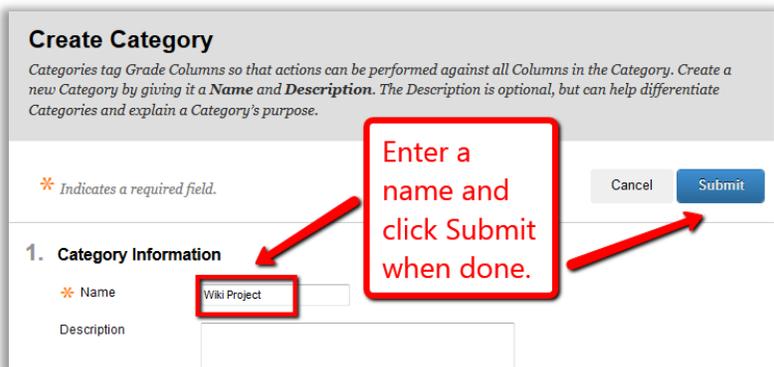
Note: Whenever possible, use the default categories in Blackboard; this way, new assessed items created will be automatically mapped to the correct category.



**Step 10**

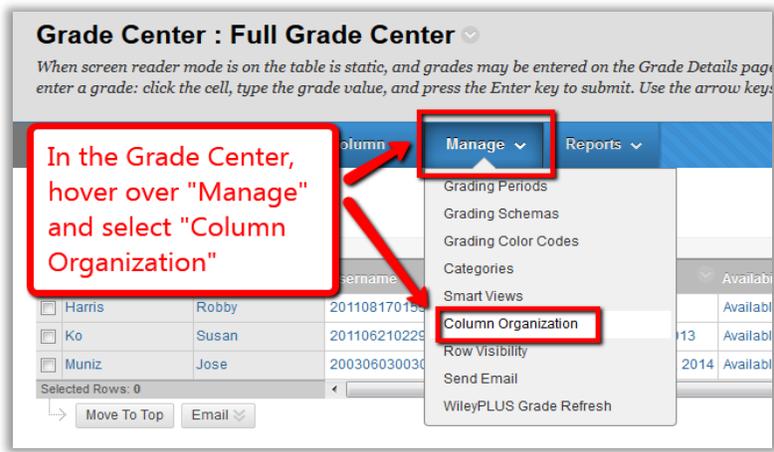
On the "Create Category" screen, simply enter a name, e.g. "Wiki Project". A description is not necessary. Then click Submit. Repeat Steps 9-10 for each new category you need to create.

Note: Make sure there is a category for each component of your final grade even if it will contain one column only.



**Step 11**

Now we will map the columns in the Grade Center to their correct category. To do so, go back to "Full Grade Center," hover over "Manage," and select "Column Organization" from the drop-down menu.



## Step 12

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

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

You may also "Show" or "Hide" columns using the same method outlined above and clicking the "Show/Hide" button at the bottom of the list.

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

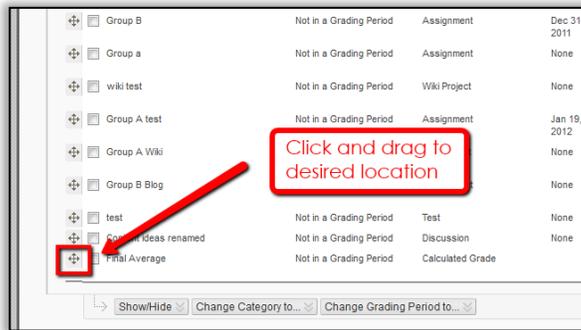
Name	Grading Period	Category
<input type="checkbox"/> Yakkity Yak	Multiple Grading Period	No Category
<input type="checkbox"/> EXAMPLE	Multiple Grading Period	No Category
<input type="checkbox"/> Content ideas rena...	Multiple Grading Period	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Sounds Ass...	Multiple Grading Period	Assignment
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce your favorite literary character	Not in a Grading Period	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Final Paper (Hidden)	Not in a Grading Period	SafeAssignment
<input type="checkbox"/> Total	Not in a Grading Period	Calculated Grade
<input type="checkbox"/> Weighted Total	Multiple Grading Period	Calculated Grade
<input type="checkbox"/> Movie Review	Multiple Grading Period	Assignment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Book Review	Multiple Grading Period	Assignment
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Statement	Not in a Grading Period	Assignment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe Assignment (External Grade) (Hidden)	Not in a Grading Period	SafeAssignment
<input type="checkbox"/> Week 9 & 10 Quiz	Not in a Grading Period	Test
<input type="checkbox"/> Week 11 & 13 Quiz	Not in a Grading Period	Test
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Week 3 Quiz	Not in a Grading Period	Test
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discuss!! (Hidden)	Not in a Grading Period	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss! (Hidden)	Not in a Grading Period	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Introductions	Not in a Grading Period	Discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Week 6 Quiz	Not in a Grading Period	Test
<input type="checkbox"/> Assignment for Jose	Not in a Grading Period	Assignment

Buttons at the bottom: Show/Hide, Change Category to..., Change Grading Period to...

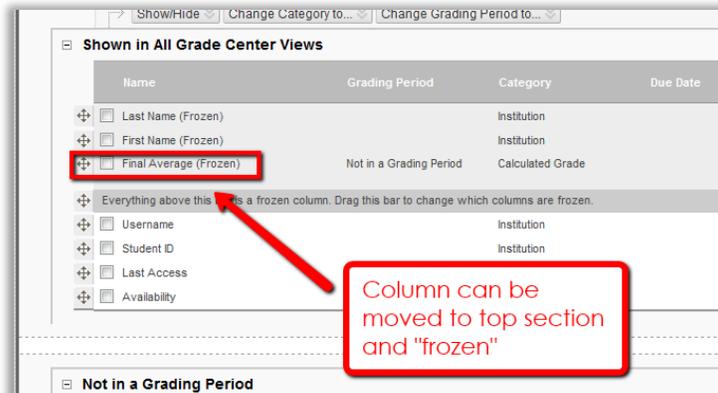
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**Step 13**

You can also re-order the columns in the Grade Center from the "Column Organization" page. If a column is all the way to the right, it will show up at the bottom of this screen. Drag the arrows icon to move the column to the desired position.

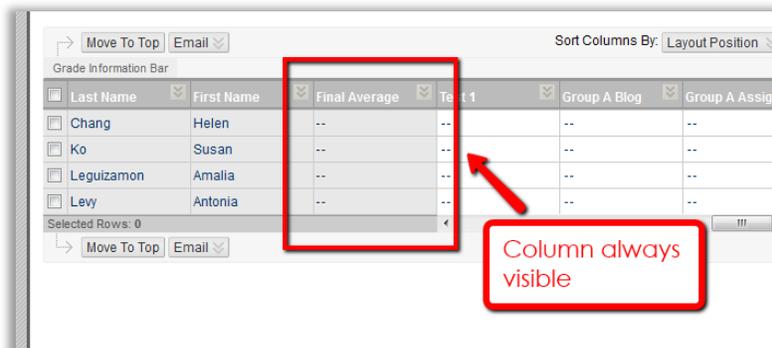


If you move the column all the way to the top, above the gray bar, it can be "frozen," which you may find useful for columns like the final grade.



If you freeze a column, then it will always be visible in the Grade Center no matter where you scroll.

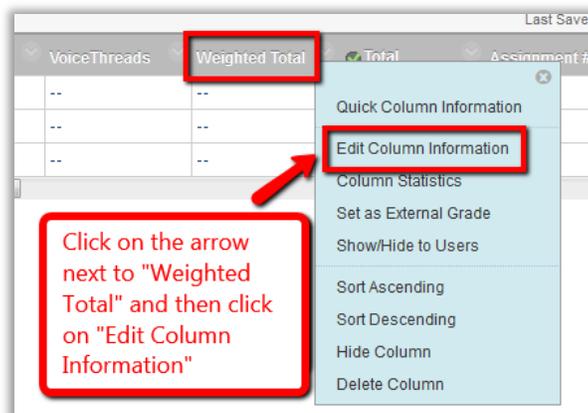
**Important:** when done, click "Submit" to save all changes.



**Step 14**

As the last step, we will set up the "Weighted Total" column so it will display the final grade for each student.

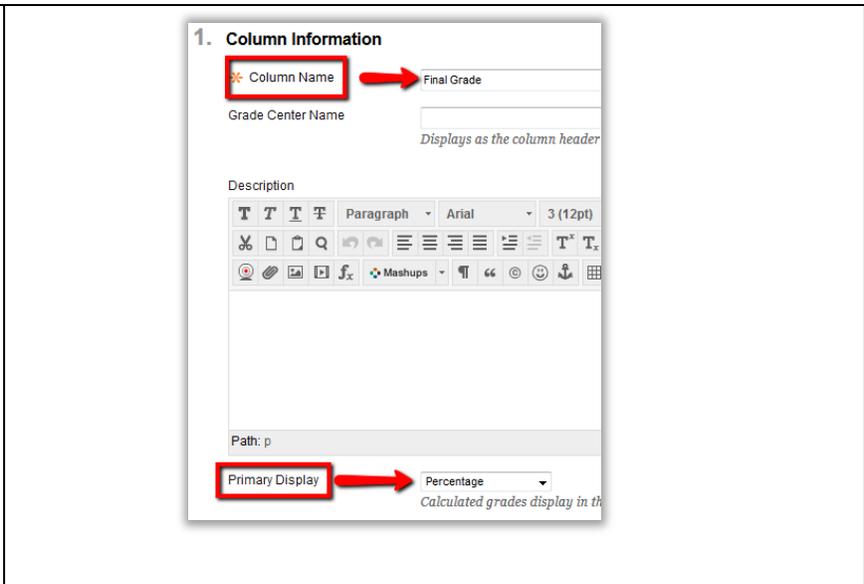
All courses at SPS include a "Weighted Total" column by default. To set yours up, go back to the Grade Center. Find the "Weighted Total" column, click on the downward facing arrow next to its name, and select "Edit Column Information."



**Step 15**

On the "Edit Weighted Column" page, type in a title for your weighted column, such as "Final Grade," or leave it as is. Make sure the primary display is set to "Percentage."

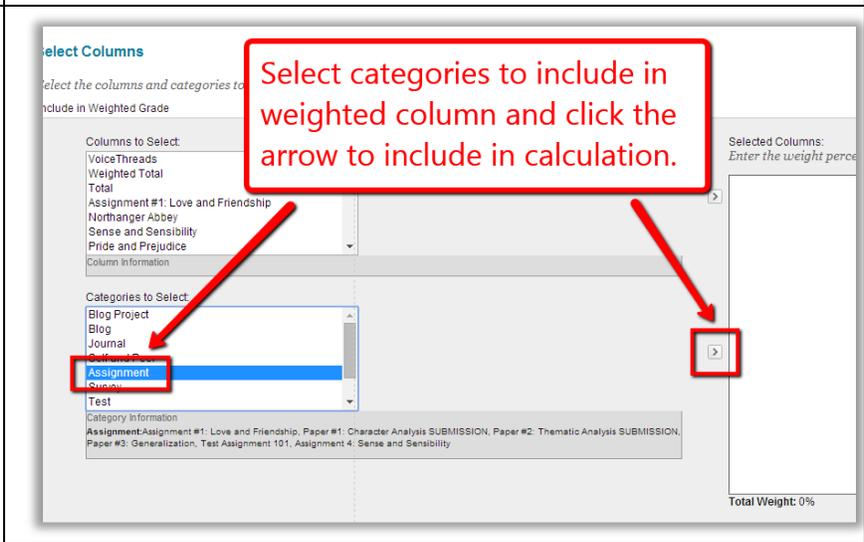
Note: Select "Percentage" even if you used points for all the grades in your course.



**Step 16**

Next, go to the middle of the screen. In the list of categories, select a category and click on the right arrow to move it to "Selected Columns." Do this for every category you wish to include in the weighted column.

Note: Do NOT use columns to calculate a weighted average, as this will generate an incorrect grade.

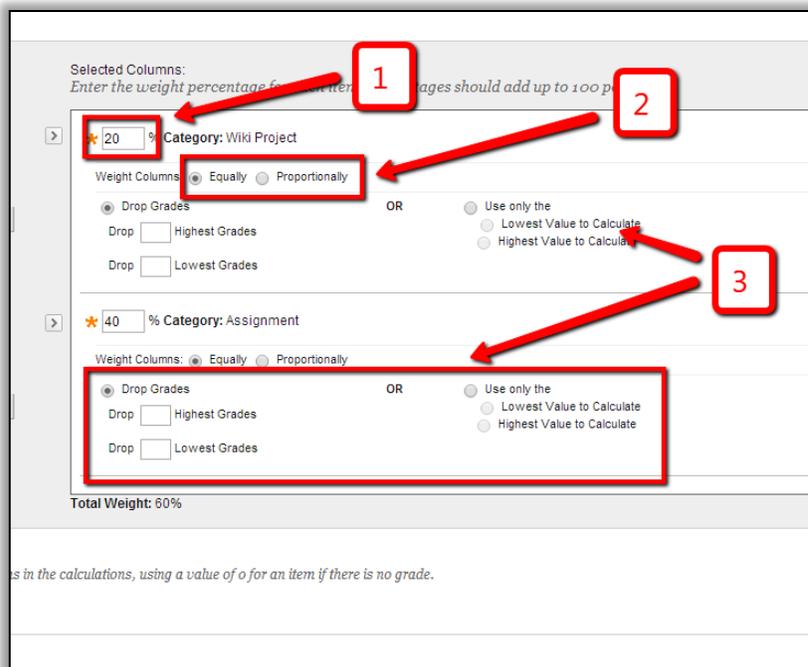


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**Step 17**

In the "Selected Columns" box, you must define the following parameters:

1. **Category %:** The weighted percentage for the category as a component of the final grade. In our example, the Wiki Project is worth 20% and Assignments 40% of the final grade.
2. **Weight Columns:** Items in a category should be weighted "Equally" if you want each assessment within the category to be worth the same amount, and "Proportionally" if each is worth a different amount (e.g. Essay 1 is worth 50 points, Essay 2 is 60, Essay 3 is 75, etc.).
3. **Drop or Use Only:** You may choose to drop any number of the highest / lowest grades or to use only the highest / lowest grades when calculating the grade for this column.



**Step 18**

Finally, on the bottom of the screen, keep the defaults for "Calculate as Running Total" and the options for including the column in the Grade Center, showing it to students and showing statistics.

Note for grading: when calculating the final grade as a running total, you must enter a "0" for any missing work before that column will be factored into that student's final grades. If you enter no grade at all the assignment will be regarded as not submitted (and graded) yet.

