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Using Blackboard for Entering Grades: Tips for Success

By Dr. Zina McGee and Dr. Arun Verma, CTE Faculty Associates

As the final examination period begins, we would like to share with you a few tips for entering your grades into the Blackboard System. The following strategies are excerpts from the official Blackboard Help Site.

You can enter grades in the Grade Center in the following ways:

- Scores are entered automatically into the Grade Center for course items you create such as online tests, exams, and surveys.
- You can upload grades from an external source, such as a comma separated values (CSV) file or an Excel spreadsheet, eliminating the need for double entry.
- You can manually enter grades into the Grade Center using any of the views of the Grade Center.

Automatically Entered Grades

Tests you add to your course are scored automatically and recorded in the corresponding Grade Center column. Some questions require manual grading such as Essay questions. You can manually edit grades that are scored automatically.

To edit grades, see [Overriding Grades](#).

Manually Entered Grades

You can manually enter grades in the following ways:

- On the main Grade Center page.
- Anonymously from the main Grade Center page.
- On the Grade Details page.
- Anonymously from the Grade Details page.
- Grading tests by question.

You can enter grades for certain tools without having to navigate to the Grade Center. You complete grading within the tool if the item is set for grading. After

you assign grades, you can change them.

You can add comments while using any method of assigning grades. To learn more, see [Including Comments With a Grade Entry](#).

Uploading Grades From External Sources

To eliminate repeated entry of Grade Center data in several tools, you can work offline and then upload grades into the Grade Center. You can upload grades from external sources such as a comma separated values (CSV) file or an Excel spreadsheet. Data must be formatted specifically to upload correctly and be synched with existing Grade Center data. To learn more, see [Uploading or Downloading Grade Center Items for Working Offline](#).

How to Enter Grades From the Grade Center Page

You can assign grades in any cell in the Grade Center or from the Grade Details page. When you type directly in a Grade Center cell, the grade may be an override grade. To learn about what qualifies as an override grade, see [Overriding Grades](#).

1. Click within the cell you want to insert a grade.
2. Type the value.
3. Press the Enter key.
4. Click OK to save the grade.

If you do not press Enter and you attempt to leave the entry cell or Grade Center, a dialog box asks if you want to save the grade entry.

How to Enter Grades Anonymously From the Grade Center Page

You can grade items in the Grade Center without viewing user information. The students appear in a random order without any identifying information to you or your designated grader during grading. Anonymous grading is helpful to reduce bias from an instructor or TA when grading. This option is available in the column header's contextual menu.

1. Access a column header's contextual menu and click Grade Anonymously.
2. Type a grade in the text box for each question.
3. Click Save and Exit to return to the main Grade Center page.

-OR-

Click Save and Next to show the next student.

-OR-

Click the arrows on the action bar to navigate to the next or previous student.

How to Enter an Attempt Grade From the Grade Details Page

1. Access a grade cell's contextual menu and select View Grade Details.
2. On the Grade Details page in the Attempts tab, click Grade Attempt.

3. Type a grade in the Grade text box.
4. Click Save and Exit to return to the main Grade Center page.

-OR-

Click Save and Next to display the next attempt.

How to Grade and Manage Multiple Attempts From the Grade Details Page

You enable multiple attempts during test or assignment creation or by later editing the test or assignment's options. The Attempts tab on the Grade Details page lists all submitted attempts so that you can grade, clear, and ignore attempts. Grades for all attempts are tracked in the Grade History log.

1. Access a grade cell's contextual menu and select View Grade Details.
2. On the Grade Details page, the Attempts tab lists all completed attempts.
3. For each attempt, you can Grade Attempt, Clear Attempt to remove it, or Ignore Attempt to keep it but omit the score from Grade Center calculations and not count it toward the number of allowed attempts. Assignment attempts also have an Edit Grade function.
4. You can use the Delete drop-down list to delete the first or last attempt, highest or lowest scoring attempt, attempts in a date range, or all attempts.

You can also view a list of completed attempts from the contextual menu for a grade in the Grade Center grid. When you access attempts in this way, you do not have the options for clearing and deleting attempts.

If you allowed multiple attempts for a test or assignment when you created it, the most recent graded attempt's score appears in the Grade Center and appears to students in My Grades by default. To change the attempt used for the score, access the test or assignment's column header to access the contextual menu. Select Edit Column Information and select from the options in the Score Attempts Using drop-down list.

How to Enter an Attempt Grade Anonymously From the Grade Details Page

You can hide user information on the Grade Details page. After you select an attempt, you can hide the student information before grading the attempt.

1. Access a grade cell's contextual menu and select an Attempt.
2. Click Hide User Names.
3. Click OK. This action opens a new attempt with all student identification removed. Any unsaved changes to the current attempt will be lost.
4. Type a grade in the Grade text box.
5. Click Save and Exit to return to the main Grade Center page.

-OR-

Click Save and Next to display the next student.

-OR-

Click the arrows on the action bar to navigate to the next or previous

student.

How to Grade Tests by Question

You can grade all of the responses for a specific question at one time by using the Grade Questions option. Use this for assigning new grades or changing grades. You can assign grades anonymously by clicking Hide User Names on the Grade Responses page.

The test remains in needs grading status until you grade all of the responses for all of the questions.

1. Access a column header's contextual menu and select Grade Questions. On the Grade Questions page, you can select the option to grade responses anonymously.
2. Click the number in the Responses column to access the question.
3. Click Edit next to the score for a user.
4. Type a new grade in the Score text box, or if you associated a rubric with an Essay, File Response, or Short Answer question, click View Rubric to grade the question using the rubric. To learn more, see [Rubrics](#).
5. Click Submit.
6. Click Back to Questions to return to the Grade Questions page to select the next question to grade.

For more information, please access the following resources online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEU42cxxT34>

http://www.atomiclearning.com/highed/bb9_gradecenter

Why We Believe in Our Students, a Timely Reminder

From Facultyfocus.Com

By Maryellen Weimer, PhD

For most of us, it's that time of the semester when we are least likely to think positively about students. We're tired, they're tired, and there are still the proverbial miles to go. Some students have finally figured out they're in trouble in the course, but none of their difficulties derive from anything they've done (or haven't done), or so they think. Others remain lost in a thick fog that obscures even very fundamental course content. Passivity is the default mode for what feels like an increasingly large group. If there's any lull in the action, they settle back, quickly finding their way to places of mental relaxation.

An exaggeration, perhaps, but it's easy to lose faith in students when so many of them seem bent on making poor decisions about learning, which is why we may need a post that reminds us how much all students need teachers who believe in them.

There's a lovely commentary by Paul Corrigan in *College Teaching* that affirms all the reasons to believe in students. He started his teaching career believing, as most of us do, that students are capable of great learning, and so he set high standards and put students in charge. "The central writing project for my first-year composition course asked students to present and develop their own thinking on a topic while engaging primary and secondary sources. I left the parameters and possibilities *wide open*." (p. 127) The seasoned veterans among us can imagine how well beginning students handled that assignment.

Corrigan continues that, although right about the ability of students to learn, he missed "that we also have to respect where the students are presently when they come into our classrooms. We have to embrace them in all their academic inadequacies including their lack of motivation." (p. 127) His assignment gave students the opportunity to fly. A lot of them of them had just started to flap their wings. A few could make it to the nearest branch and even fewer could soar to the heights of that assignment.

Teachers need to go to where students are, and then lead the way to where they need to be. Corrigan revised his assignments. Now if he wants students to write about the environment, instead of an open-ended admonition to tell him what they think, he comes to class with a concrete example.

San Francisco has banned single-use plastic bags. "Is the law going too far? Why or why not? What is going too far? What's not going far enough? And who should get to decide?" (p. 128)

Students quickly write their responses. Then they talk about them and that gets their thinking processes started. It is less ambitious than the earlier approach, but now Corrigan has everyone flapping their wings with ideas and feeling motivated to fly.

I was reminded of another powerful favorite piece that recounts a new teacher's journey from extraordinarily high expectations to more realistic goals for his teaching and students' learning. K. L. Sandstrom aspired to prepare students "for active and socially responsible citizenship" (p. 526), wanting to enhance their "abilities to understand and participate effectively in the decision-making processes that affect their lives." (pp. 525-6) He saw his work as a teacher contributing "to the construction of a more humane world." His first teaching experiences were deeply disappointing. "The most vexing issue I faced as a beginning teacher was how to sustain a sense of hope." (p. 526)

Haven't we all found ourselves in that place of despair? We climb out by pulling ourselves up with more realistic understandings of what students and we can accomplish. For Sandstrom it was a growing appreciation of "small accomplishments" — seeing a student fall in love with an idea, gain an insight, ask a provocative question, or look at the world in a different way. There will always be some students who disappoint us, vex us, and make us glad that courses have endings. But others will amaze us. So, maybe that student arguing for three more points he doesn't really deserve will someday exceed our highest expectations, probably not, but he needs a teacher who responds believing that's a possibility.

References: Corrigan, P. T. "How I Came to Understand That My Students Would Need Training Wings in Order to Learn to Fly." *College Teaching*, 2011 59 (4), 127-128.

Sandstrom, K. L. "Embracing Modest Hopes: Lessons from the Beginning of a Teaching Journey." In B. A. Pescosolido and R. Aminzade, (eds.), *The Social Worlds of Higher Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1999.

Announcements

Diversity, Learning, and Student Success: Assessing and Advancing Inclusive Excellence

A Network for Academic Renewal Conference

March 26-28, 2015

San Diego, California

Register by February 12, 2015 for best conference rates

We invite faculty, administrators, student affairs educators, and students to participate in AAC&U's 2015 Conference on [**Diversity, Learning, and Student Success: Assessing and Advancing Inclusive Excellence**](#)—both individually and as teams—to help design and promote educational strategies that ensure all students have access to high-quality learning throughout their varied educational journeys.

In AAC&U's 2015 *Diversity, Learning, and Student Success* conference, participants will explore critical questions and formulate action-oriented strategies to make excellence inclusive for *all* students through sustainable and measurable campus practices. Through its Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) initiative, AAC&U is advancing and expanding its long-standing commitments to educational quality, diversity, equity, and civic engagement. MEI also provides a framework for educators to use—to deepen students' learning through high-impact practices, including the use of digital innovations, and to make assessment of students' actual work a meaningful part of the teaching and learning experience.

Featured Presentations Include:

Keynote Address:

Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete

Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Associate Professor of Raza Studies and Education Administration and Interdisciplinary Studies, San Francisco State University

Plenary:

Student Voice, Student Empowerment, Student Agency

George Sanchez, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity and History, and Vice Dean for Diversity and Strategic Initiatives; and a Panel of Undergraduate Students—all of the University of Southern California

The LEAP Challenge Forum: Preparing Students to Create Solutions for Our Future

Geoffrey Chase, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and Director, Center for Regional Sustainability; and a Panel of Undergraduate Students—all from San Diego State University; and Gail Evans, (Retired) Dean of Undergraduate Studies, San Francisco State University and Senior Scholar, AAC&U

Plenary:

Intentional and Strategic Connections Among Diversity, Learning, and Student Success

Johnnella Butler, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Spelman College

In addition to a full roster of concurrent sessions and plenary presentations, AAC&U also offers practical [Pre-Conference Workshops](#)—three hours of active learning with some of higher education’s leading innovators in developing strategies, practices, and policies that lead to student success.

Learn more about this [conference](#) and [register online](#).

For more information, please call 202.387.3760, or write to Siah Annand at network@aacu.org.