Grading in Blackboard
Part V: Exceptions and Options
It is sometimes necessary to provide an exception to a specific student with regard to a specific assignment. Some of those options are described here.
A number of exceptions are available on the View Grade Details screen (available by clicking on the chevron in a particular cell in the Grade Center). One option is to exempt a student from an assignment or whatever other work a particular column in the Grade Center represents. Clicking on the Exempt button tells Blackboard that this particular student is not expected to submit work for this particular assignment. Any totals or other calculations based on this grade are automatically adjusted as if this assignment did not exist, but only for the specific student receiving the exemption.

For online tests and assignments, you can adjust the number of allowed submissions and the submission history for a single student. The exact options available depend on the number of attempts allowed and the number already submitted by the student. One option is to click the Clear Attempt button, which completely deletes the selected attempt and any grades associated with it. Under most circumstances, this brings the number of attempts made down below the number of attempts allowed, meaning that Blackboard will accept another submission from the student. The Ignore Attempt button does something similar, but keeps a record of the existing submission. The submission is not counted against the total number allowed, nor is the grade attached to that submission considered in the grade the student gets for the assignment as a whole. Clicking on Allow Additional Attempt raises the total number of allowed attempts for this one student and one assignment. All previous submissions and grades are retained, and scoring rules defined in the assignment (first, last, highest, lowest, or average) will determine the student's grade for the assignment as a whole.
The Grade Center provides a variety of options that can be used to make grading more customized to the needs of your course.
The Full Grade Center supports a wide variety of options that vary in part by the type of column. By moving the cursor to the title at the top of the column, then clicking on the chevron that appears, it is possible to bring up a menu of options that apply to that column. You can use these options to delete a column, change a column’s settings, view student submissions, look at statistics, perform an item analysis on test questions, and more. Using these options it is possible to sort the display by student name or the values in a particular grade column.
You can click on Create Calculated Column to create a Grade Center Column with values that are calculated from other columns or categories. You can take an average, select the minimum or maximum value, total up selected inputs, or weight various inputs.
Clicking on the Manage tab brings up a menu for inspecting or changing a variety of Grade Center settings. The most important of these are Grading Schemas, Categories, and Column Organization.
By default, each course starts with one grading schema called “Letter,” that controls the mapping between numerical grades and their numerical values. The default values are shown here. This “Letter” schema is one of the options that can be assigned to the primary and secondary grade display values in a Grade Center column or in the definition of an assignment. For example, a Grade Center column set for a primary display of “Letter” won’t accept an entry of the number 97, expecting instead one of the letter values listed here. A grade of B+ could be entered, and according to this schema would be counted as an 88.5% in any Grade Center calculations. A Grade Center Column with a primary display set to percentage and a secondary display set to “Letter” won’t accept an entry of the characters “C+,” but would accept an entry of 78 and would display the “C+” as the secondary display within that Grade Center column (only the instructor can see secondary grade displays).

The default Letter schema can be modified according to the grading policies of a given course. It is also possible to create multiple schemas and use different schemas in different assignments or Grade Center columns.
A Category in the Grade Center is an arbitrary label that can be associated with one or more Grade Center columns. Calculated Columns, including the default Total and Weighted Total columns, can perform weighting and other arithmetic on a category as a whole, automatically including all the columns associated with that category. The default categories are shown here, and additional categories can be created. Each column in the Grade Center can be associated with one category by editing the column details, or using the Manage Columns options.
Under Manage Columns there is a set of options that can adjust the appearance and behavior of the Full Grade Center. You can use it to rearrange the order of the columns, hide or unhide columns, delete columns, or change the category with which one or more columns is associated. It can also be used as a quick review of the overall arrangement of grading in the course, including items, categories, due dates, and possible points.
You can use the Reports tab to create custom reports out of the Grade Center, to view the grading history for the course, and very importantly, to look up submission receipts by student.
The Work Offline Tab allows the data in all or part of the Grade Center Grid to be downloaded to, or uploaded from, the instructor’s computer. Downloading from the Grade Center can be useful for creating a backup copy of grades or using spreadsheet programs to check calculations. Uploading a spreadsheet into the Grade Center should be done with great caution, as it is possible to add unwanted columns to the Grade Center or to overwrite existing grade values.