Comprehensive Guide to Using the Gradebook in Blackboard Learn Ultra Course View (UCV)

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Quick Tips for the Gradebook

Set up the Gradebook last: Assignments, quizzes, and graded discussions are automatically added to the Gradebook when created. So, if you are having students submit assessments in Blackboard, create the assessment first then ensure it was added to the Gradebook accurately.

There are default Grade Categories: Blackboard Ultra preloads courses with default grade categories, including Tests, Discussions, Assignments, Journals, Exams, etc. These grade categories **cannot** be deleted, but you may hide them when modifying the overall grade calculation.

Review the default settings: The Gradebook as well as assessments have several default settings, such as automatically assigning a grade of "zero" to students who miss the due date for assignments or having the default grade display be a letter grade. Review the settings to make sure they align with your syllabus and expectations.

Definitions

Accommodations: Settings in Blackboard you can set for individual students for extended time or due dates.

Attendance: A Grade Item in the Gradebook that can be used to measure students' attendance.

Calculation: An Item you can create in the Gradebook to perform simple or complex equations.

Grade Category: A way of categorizing Grade Items, especially helpful for Weighted Gradebooks.

Grade Item: An Item in the Gradebook tied to an assessment.

Grading Schema: A map for percentages in the Gradebook to align with letter grades or grade names.

Overall Grade: A default Grade Item that calculates students' overall grades based on items and categories.

Purpose of the Gradebook in Blackboard

The Gradebook in Blackboard is a central tool for managing student grades, tracking academic progress, and providing feedback. It serves several essential functions:

- **Centralized Record Keeping:** It provides a single location where all grades and assessments are recorded, making tracking and managing student performance over time more accessible.
- **Transparency:** Both instructors and students can access the Gradebook to see grades and feedback, which promotes transparency in the grading process.
- **Organization:** It helps instructors organize and categorize assessments, ensuring that grades are recorded accurately and consistently.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** It allows instructors to give timely and detailed feedback on assignments, quizzes, and exams, which is essential for student improvement.

Benefits of Adopting the Gradebook in Blackboard

Utilizing the Gradebook in Blackboard can provide a number of benefits for faculty:

- **Consistency and Accuracy:** Adapting to the Gradebook ensures that grades are consistently and accurately recorded, reducing errors and discrepancies in grade reporting.
- **Efficiency:** The Gradebook automates many grading tasks, saving time for instructors. This allows them to focus more on teaching and less on administrative tasks.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Using the Gradebook facilitates better communication with students about their progress, expectations, and areas for improvement.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** The Gradebook provides data that can be used to identify trends in student performance, helping instructors adjust their teaching strategies to meet students' needs.

Additionally, students can benefit from the Gradebook tool:

- **Immediate Feedback:** Students receive prompt feedback on their performance, which is crucial for their learning and development.
- **Transparency:** Students can see their grades and understand how they are evaluated, reducing confusion and disputes over grading.
- **Self-monitoring:** Students can track their progress throughout the course, allowing them to take proactive steps to improve their performance if needed.
- **Motivation:** Knowing their grades and feedback can motivate students to engage more actively in their studies and strive for better performance.

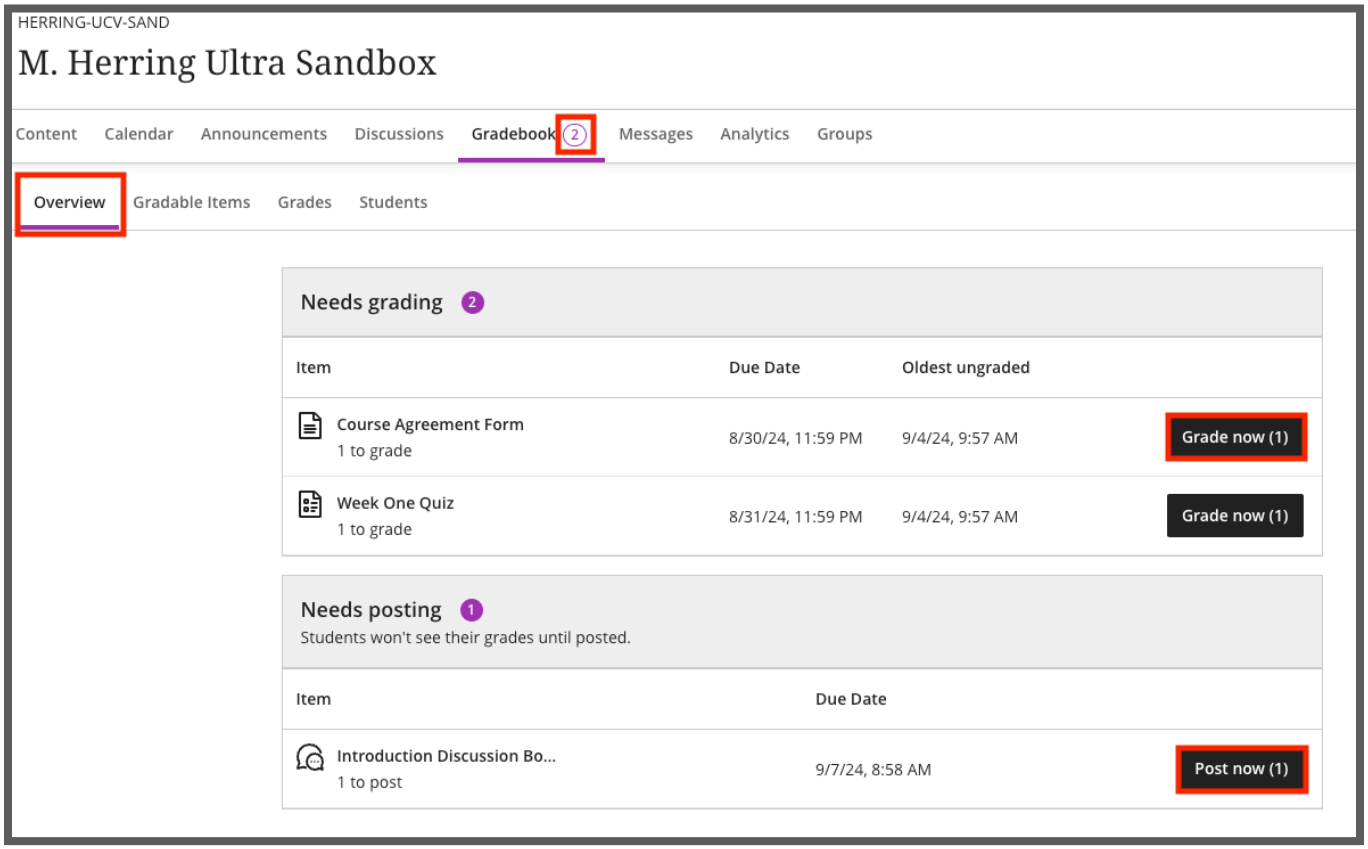
How to Access the Gradebook

To access the Gradebook in a course:

1. Login to Blackboard.
2. Navigate to the course in which you want to review the Gradebook.
3. Select “Gradebook” on the navigation bar at the top of the page.

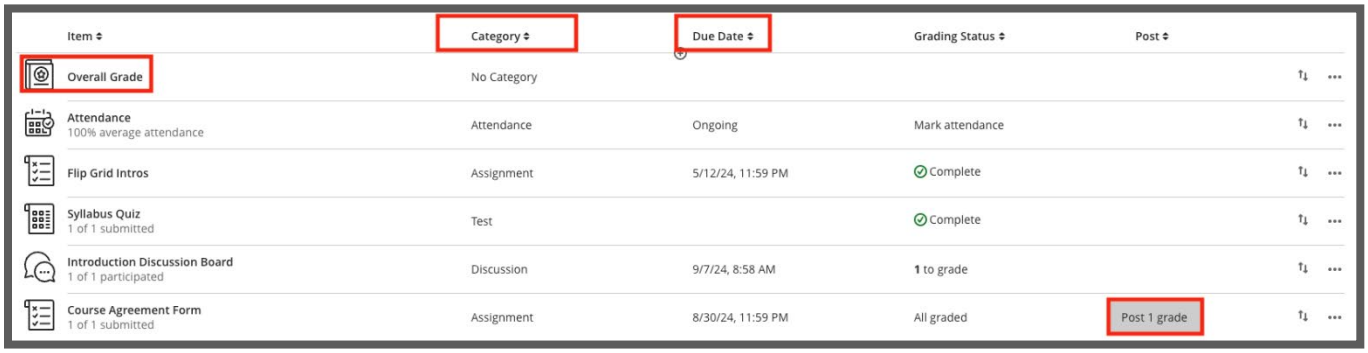
Overview View

The first view is a current Overview of your gradable items. This view provides insights for grade items that may need your attention, highlighting the number beside “Gradebook” on the navigation bar and separating them by “Needs Grading” and “Needs Posting.” You can grade and post grades from this view.



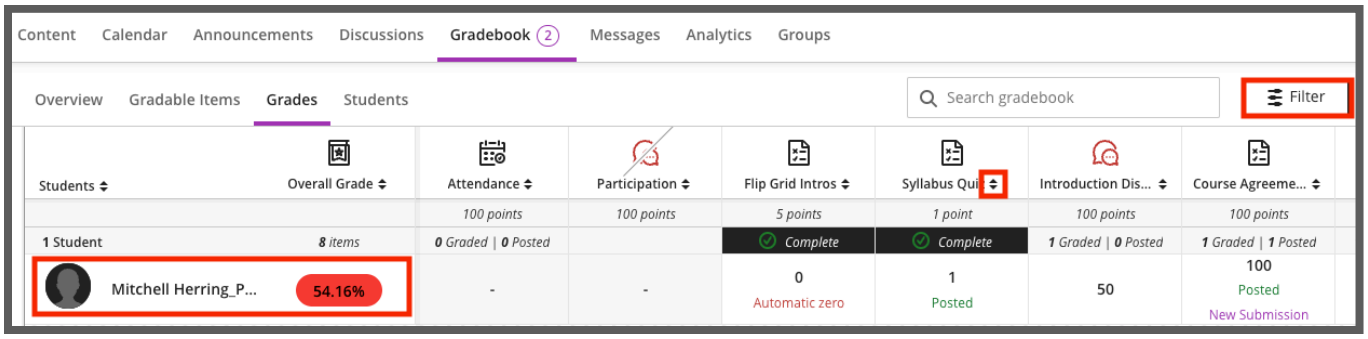
Gradable Items View

The Gradable Items view shows all the items in your course that can be graded. It lets you see due dates, grading statuses, and item categories. You can also post grades and modify the overall grade calculation for the course.



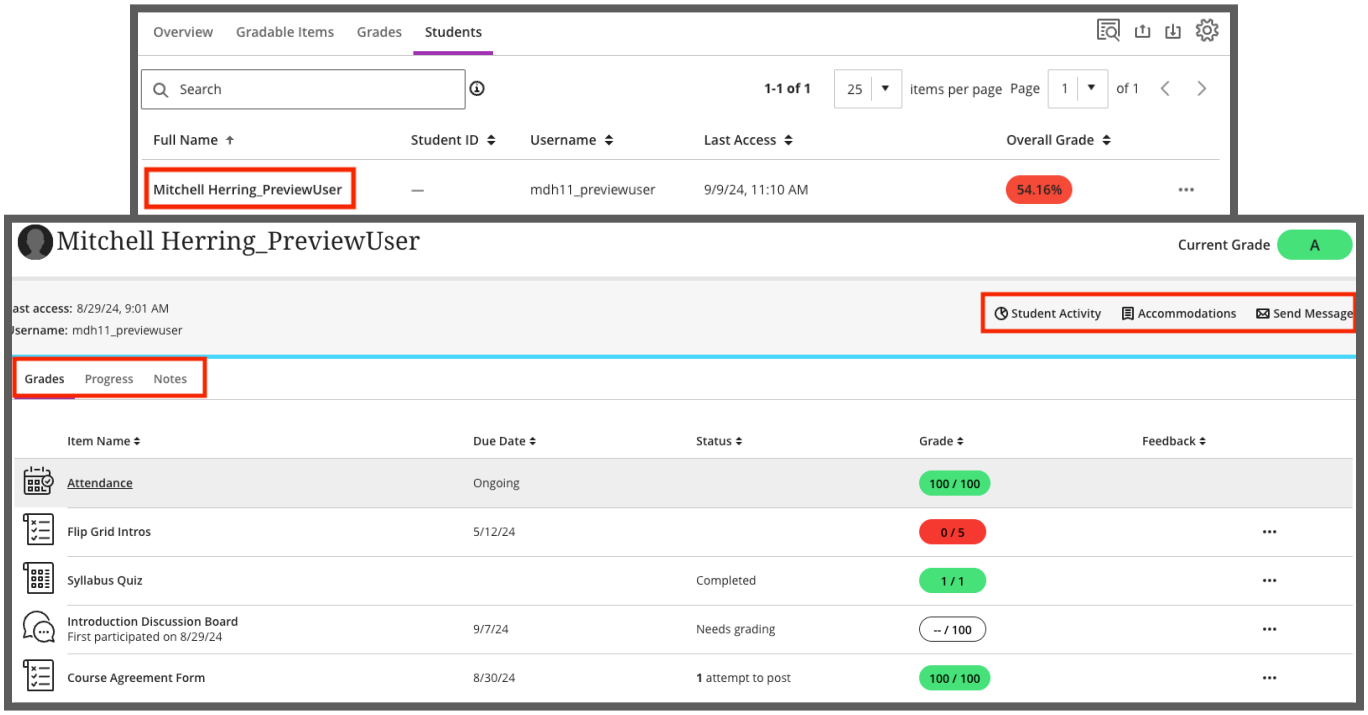
Grades View

The Grades view shows each students' grade for a particular assignment, with each row representing a student and each column representing a gradable item. You can use the arrow buttons to sort the columns in ascending or descending order. Additionally, the filters in the Gradebook will allow you to sort your gradebook, including by section if you are teaching a merged course.



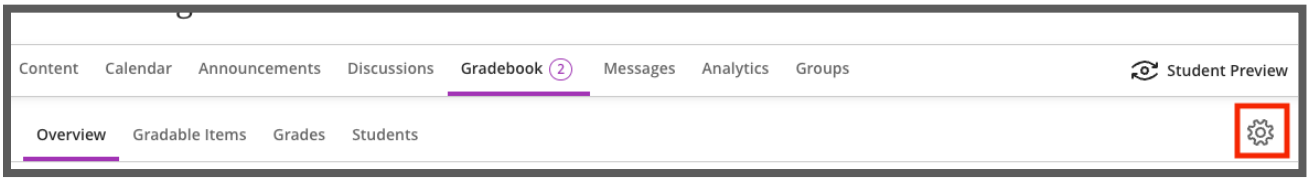
Students View

The Students view provides overall performance of particular students, itemizing their performance and activity regarding assessments in the course. This information includes their current grades, progress, activity, and accommodations.

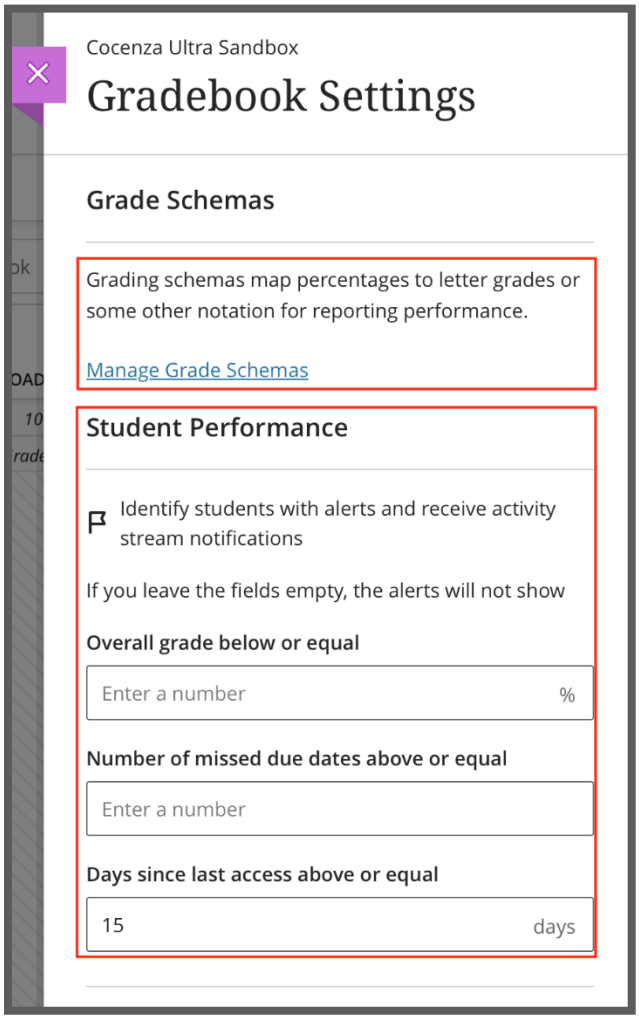


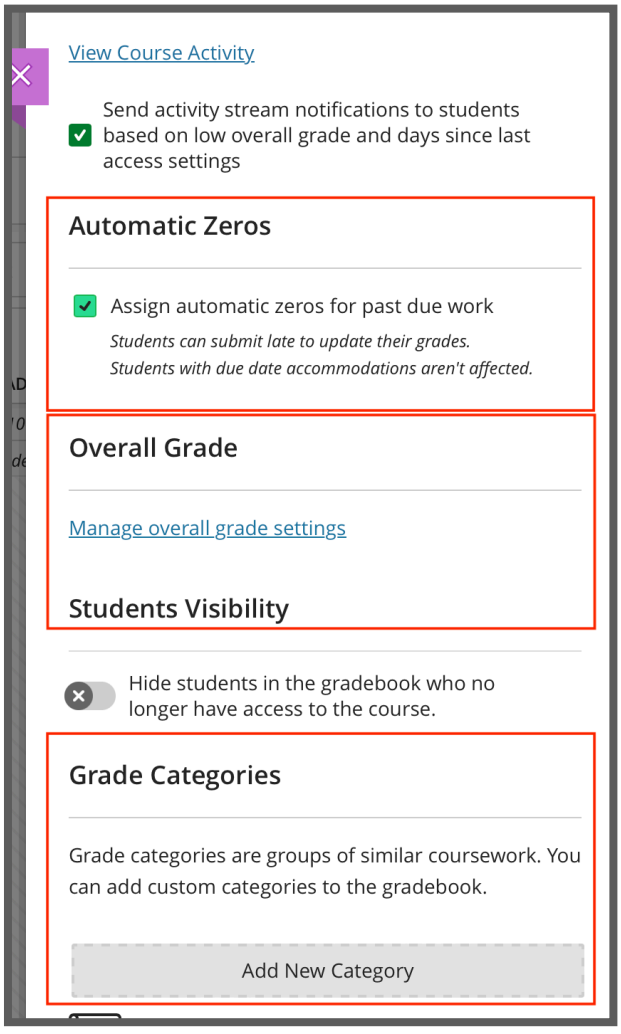
Gradebook Settings

The “settings” icon in the top-right of the Gradebook will open the Gradebook Settings menu.



This menu will allow you to edit the Grade Schema, set Student Performance alerts for student performance (e.g., falling below an Overall Grade threshold), change the Automatic Zeros setting, manage the Overall Grade, manage Grade Categories and Create Rubrics.

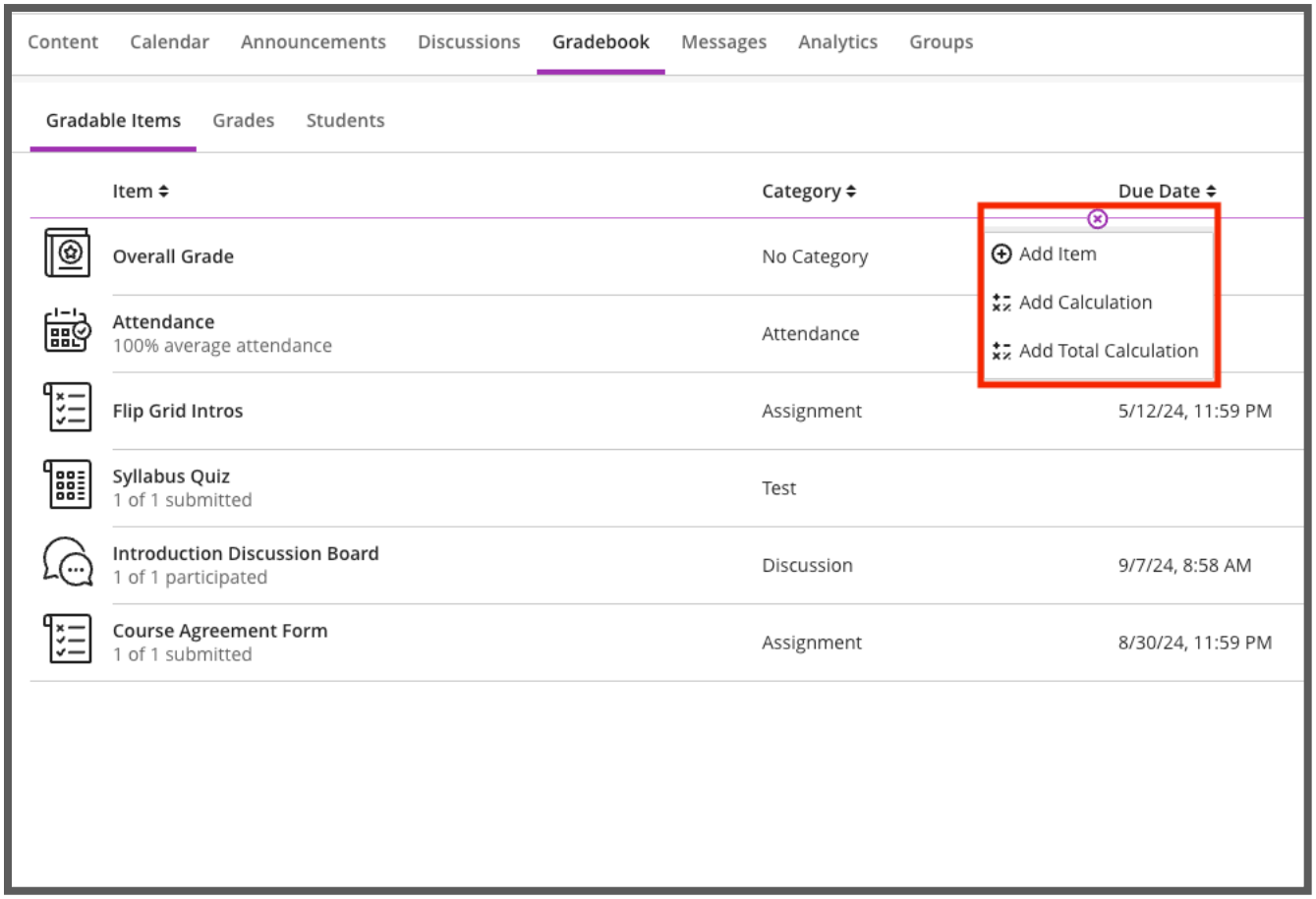




Adding Items to the Gradebook

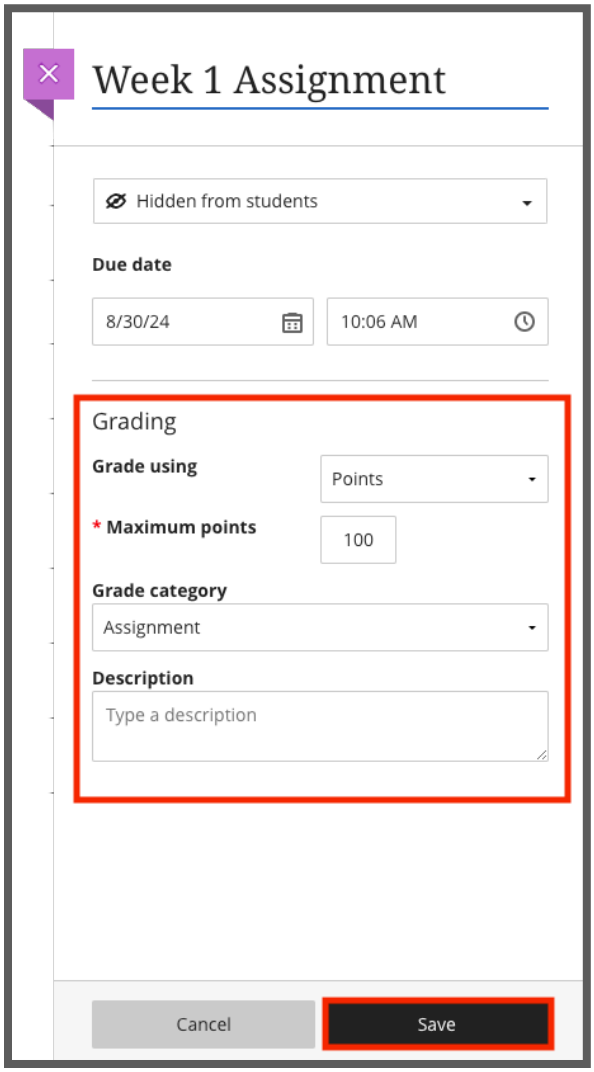
Note: Assessments are automatically added to the Gradebook if you identify them as being graded when creating the assessment. Only add items that will not be completed in Blackboard *or* if you need to create a calculation.

1. To add an item, navigate to your preferred view of the Gradebook. Navigate to the "plus" icon where you would like to add content. In the Grades display, this will appear between the columns; in Gradable Items view, the icon will display between rows.
2. Select "Add Item" to add a Grade Item. You can also add a Calculation or Total Calculation from this menu, but courses less frequently use those.



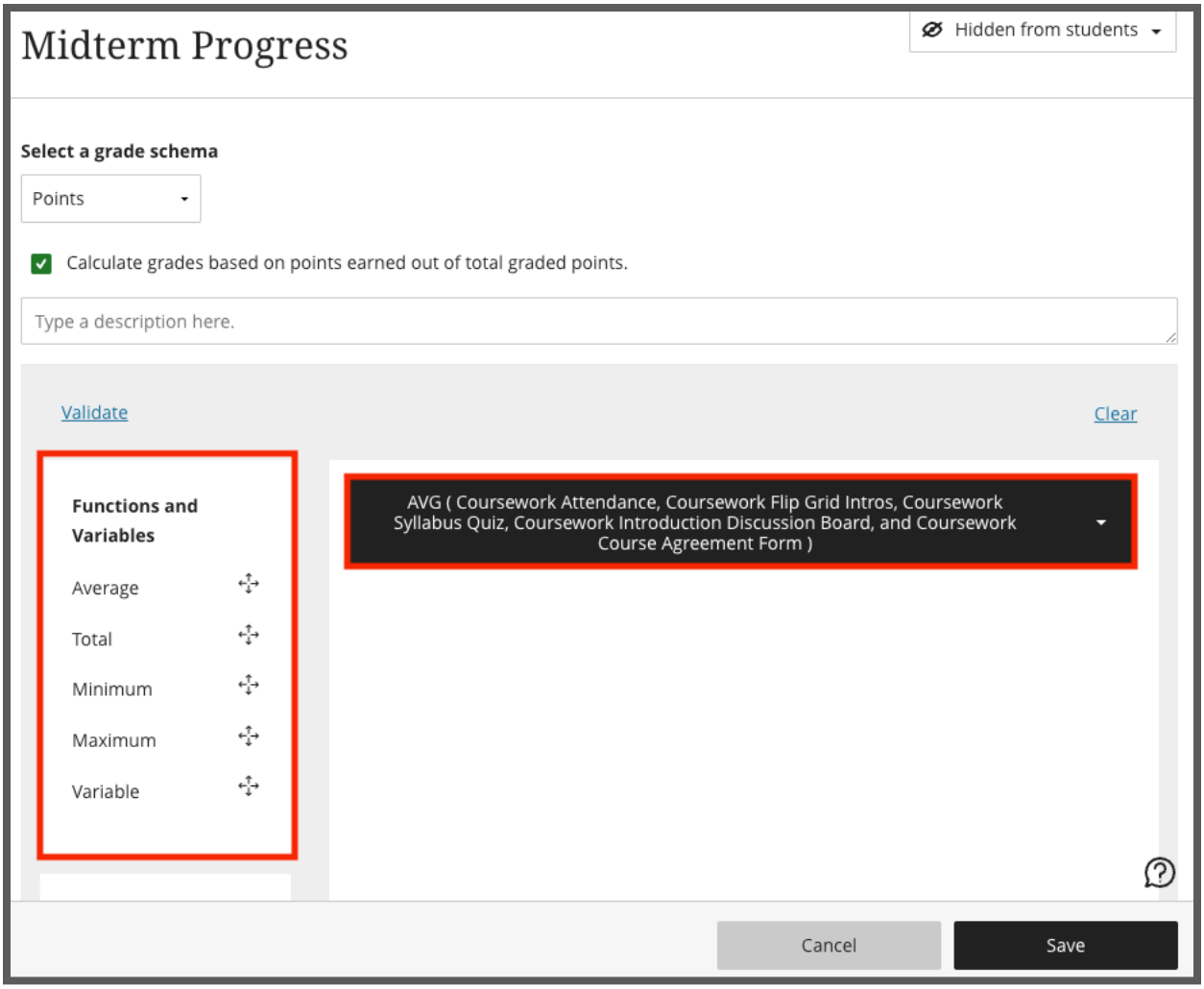
Grade Items

When creating a Grade Item, you will set a due date and time, as well as specify the grading method, points, category, and description.



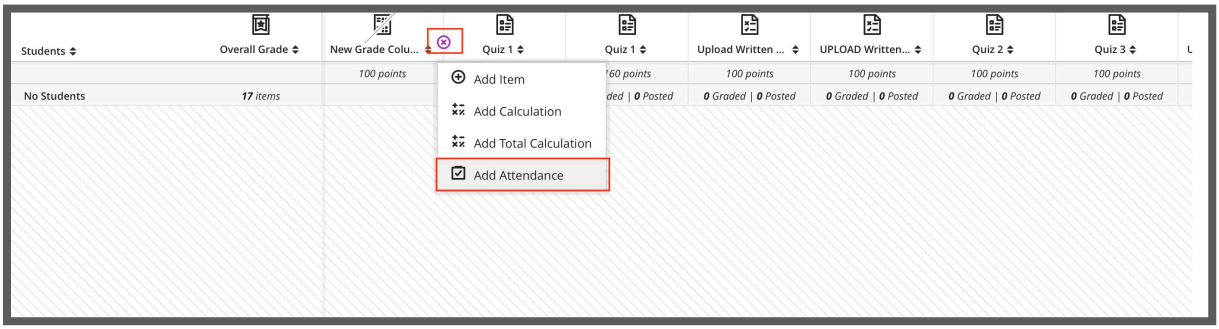
Calculation Items

Adding a calculation to your gradebook will require you to set up a calculation using functions, variables, and operations. You will select the content you would like to add to the calculation from the left menu, and your selections will populate in the white space in the middle of the screen. You will need to select Grade Items or Grade Categories when using Functions and Variables, and Operators will allow you to perform calculations among your selected Functions and Variables. Blackboard provides a detailed breakdown on the options available for creating a calculation. When you are finished with the calculation, select "Save" at the bottom of the screen.



Attendance

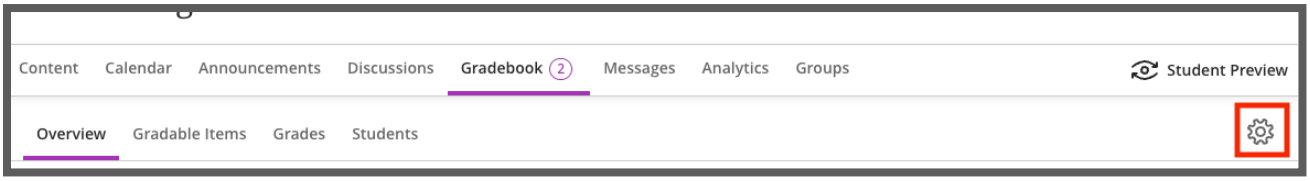
You can add attendance to the Gradebook to keep track of students' attendance in courses. Attendance records will display as a grade in the Gradebook regardless of whether you create the item from the course homepage or from the Gradebook directly. If you are interested in housing your attendance data in Blackboard, review the comprehensive information provided by Anthology.



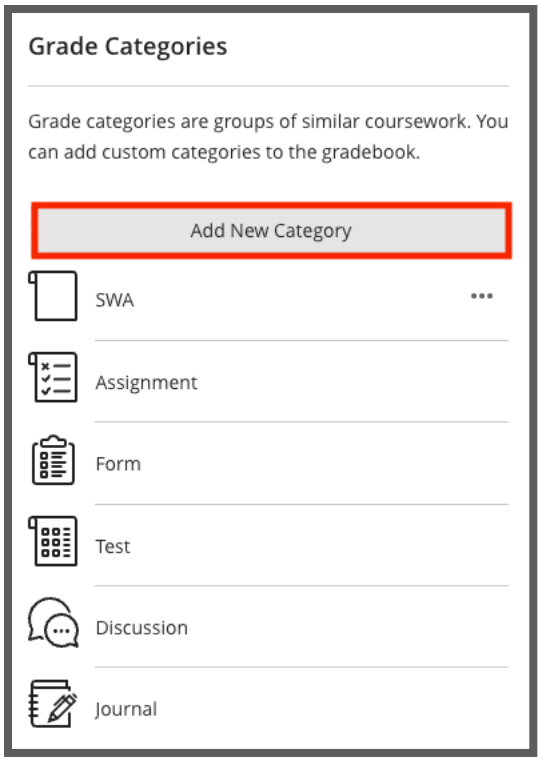
Adding Categories to the Gradebook

To assist in organizing your Grade Items, consider adding categories to the Gradebook. To add Grade Categories to the Gradebook:

1. Navigate to the Gradebook and select the "settings" icon from the top-right corner.



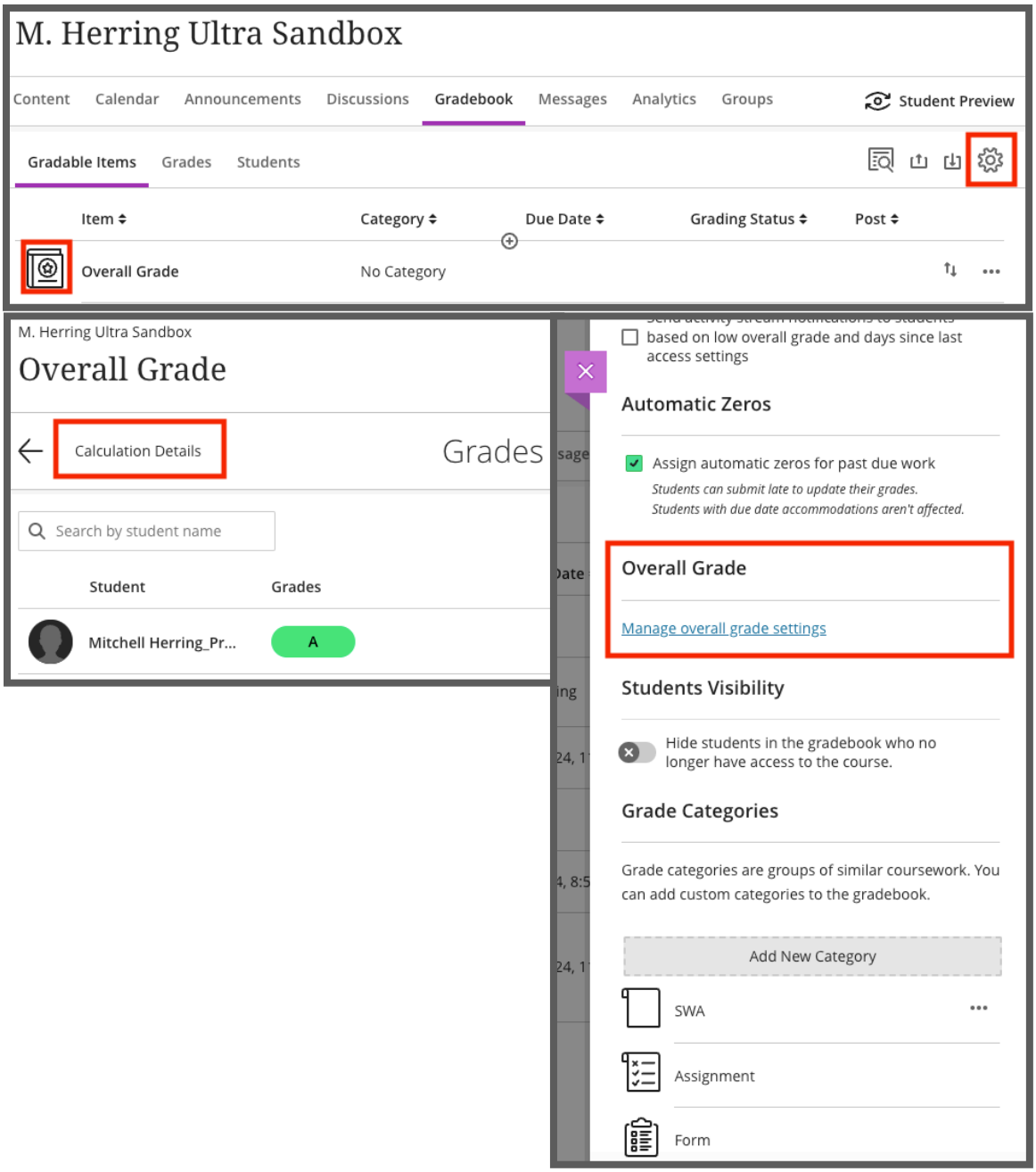
2. From here, navigate to the bottom of the Gradebook Settings menu. Select "Add New Category" to name a new category that you can associate with Grade Items. You will associate Grade Items to your created category through the Grade Item's settings. Categories are assigned points and weight in the Overall Grade Calculation settings.



Overall Grade

For your grades to properly calculate, you will need to set up the Overall Grade.

1. You can access the Overall Grade either through the settings icon in the top-right corner of the Gradebook or through the Overall Grade Item located on the Gradable Items tab.

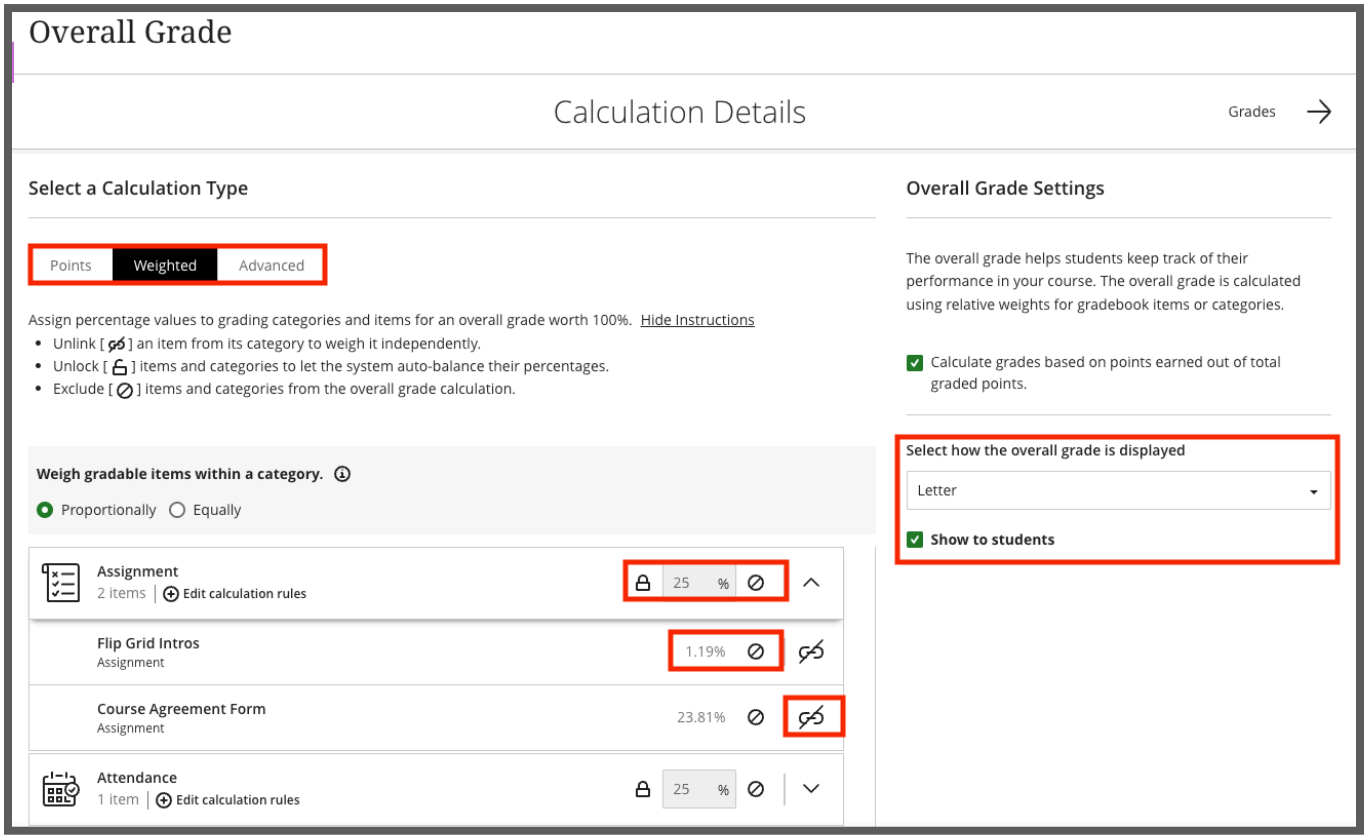


2. Accessing the Calculation Details screen will allow you to modify the overall settings for the Gradebook.

Weighted Grades

When setting weighted grades, you can use the "exclude" icon to hide specific categories from being displayed in the Gradebook. Additionally, the “lock” icon will automatically distribute the weight of items within a category. You can associate or disassociate items from categories utilizing the “link” icon. Unlinking Grade Items from their Categories can be beneficial for points-based courses with a large number of different assignments.

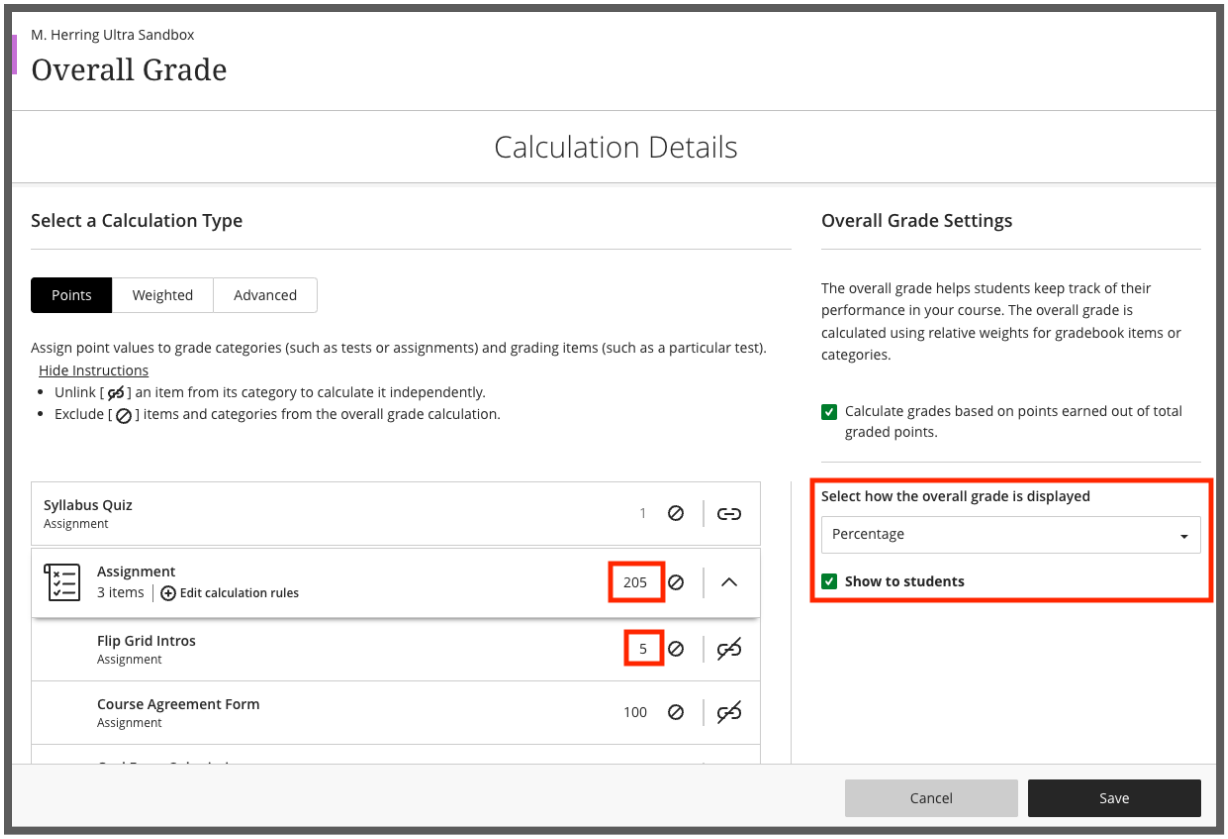
You can modify the weight of a category or item here, but the weight of individual grade items depends on the "Out of Points" set when the assessment was created and cannot be modified from this window. Finally, you can change the way the Overall Grade is displayed (e.g., percentage, letter, or points).



Points Grades

When working in a Gradebook utilizing a Points calculation, the Overall Grade setting displays how many points each category is worth in addition to the individual points of grade items. The points of each category are comprised of the individual points assigned to grade items. Just as with Weighted grades, you cannot edit the points from this screen. To change the points of grade items or their categories, you will need to navigate to the individual item and change it from the grade item's setting. Ensure that the points are displayed how you would like for students to see them (e.g., percentage, letter, or points).

The link icon will link and unlink items from specific categories. Unlinking an item from a category will have the Gradebook calculate that item into the overall grade, just not associated with a specific category. This can be helpful in courses where categories are not used, and each item is assigned its own, specific points.



Additional Resources and Support

Trainings

Attend webinars and presentations facilitated by Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Instructional Designers and eLearning Services (eLS) Consultants.

Consultations

If you need individual assistance, consult with a CTE Instructional Designer or a member of the eLS staff.

Resources and Tutorials

Explore the Blackboard UCV resource page for guidance and tutorials on various Blackboard topics.