Preventing Grade Center Calculation Problems

Reviewing your Grade Center columns’ basic information and settings can help ensure that your primary grade data is accurate and in turn helps eliminate one source of Grade Center related problems.

**Viewing Column Information**

A quick way to check a column’s information and settings is to use the “Quick Column Information” link associated with a column. To view a column’s “Quick Column Information”, click the gray double-down arrow at the top of the grade center column and select “Quick Column Information” from the menu that appears.

A pop-up window will appear on the screen and briefly list information about the column: Column Name, Primary Display, Category, Points Possible, and Included in Calculations. Using this information, please check to make sure that:

- Grade values entered in cells do not exceed the maximum points possible for the assessment.
- Grade values that you manually enter in cells match the format indicated by Primary Display.
- If you have a Weighted Total column that uses categories, the appropriate categories are assigned to each column you want to include in the calculation.
- Columns you want to include in other Grade Center calculations (i.e. Total, Weighted Total, and Average etc.) have an “Included in Calculations” option set to “Yes”.

**Understanding Primary and Secondary Display**

Primary Display refers to the data format that grades must be entered as into grade cells and the format in grades are displayed to students. This differs from Secondary Display, which is optional and can only be viewed by instructors in the Grade Center. When a Secondary Display option is selected, grade information entered in Primary Display, such as a score, is interpreted in...
a different format, such as a percent or letter grade. It appears in parentheses next to Primary Display grade information.

**Detecting Data Entry Mismatches**

Knowing what your columns’ Primary Display is set to and using a Secondary Display option will help you detect and avoid making grade calculation errors, especially when assigning grades manually. When a grade value is entered into a cell in a format that differs from the column’s assigned Primary Display, the grade will be calculated incorrectly for that column.

For example, let’s say you have an Assignment worth 90 points. In the Grade Center, the Assignment 1 column has a Primary Display set to “Score”, meaning points earned out of points possible. On this assignment, John Smith has earned 90 points out of 90. Instead of typing the expected “90.00” points in his cell, you have typed “100”, as in the percentage grade he earned. Blackboard assumes John Smith earned 100.00 points out of 90.00 points possible, which skews his grade higher by 11%. With a Secondary Display set to “Percent,” this becomes more readily apparent (111%).

Similarly, let’s say the Assignment 1 column’s Primary Display is set to “Percent”, but you entered the grades as score point values earned. For John Smith, who earned 90 out of 90 points, you type a “90” in his grade cell. However, Blackboard assumes you mean “90%” and that John earned only 81 points out of 90! Again, enabling a Secondary Display option set to “score” serves as a helpful clue to visualize how Blackboard is calculating this grade.

These types of grade data-format mismatches may not be noticeable at first, but are often the reason why a Calculated Column, such as a Total or Weighted Total, is returning a higher or lower value than expected (or possible).

**Making Corrections**

If you find that you have a date entry mismatch that is contributing to a miscalculation, you can correct the problem using these steps:

1. First, print or write down what the student’s actual grades should be. This information may be needed in step 3.
2. Next, you will check the column’s information settings and make adjustments if need be. Click the gray arrow button at the top-right corner of the affected column, and select “Edit Column Information” from the context-menu.

3. If your column’s Primary Display does not match the format of your grade data, select the Primary Display option that matches your grade format from the drop down menu (i.e. Choose “score” to add grades as points earned out of points possible etc). If the column’s “Points Possible” value does not match the total possible points possible on the assessment, type the correct value in that field. When you are done, click “Submit”.

4. Depending on the changes you have made, you may have to re-enter the correct grade data into students’ grade cells.