Managing the student grade book

Comprehensive guide for instructors

For Blackboard Vista 4.x

This guide takes a comprehensive look at the Grade Book tool. It is intended for Section instructors.

Contents

About the Grade Book

The Grade Book is a shared tool that acts like an electronic version of a paper-based grade book or mark book. It is shared by the Section's instructors and teaching assistants. It is like everyone sharing the same mark book and able to change entries, add new columns, and rearrange the way it looks. This means that it is important for all users to understand which actions affect others and to agree on protocols for making changes.

What you can use the grade book for

- Instructors and teaching assistants can use the Grade Book to find out who has access to their Section (these people are referred to as members) and what their role is e.g. Student, Teaching assistant, Section instructor, Section designer, Section instructor & Section designer, Teaching assistant & Section designer, Auditor
- Instructors can control who accesses the Section.
- Instructors (and teaching assistants) can store data, such as marks or grades, for members in the table provided. Each row contains data about one member. Instructors and teaching assistants can add and delete columns. Instructors can also import data from, and export data to, a text file, which is particularly useful if you use spreadsheet software like MS Excel.
- If the students have access to the **My Grades** tool (the Section designer has added the My Grades tool to the **Course Toolbar**) then you can set columns so that students can view their own data using **My Grades**.
- Managing large numbers of students and many tutors. The tutors need to be made members of the Section with either a **Teaching Assistant** or **Instructor** role, as an **Instructor** you can add them as members of your Section. The Grade Book can

then be set up so that tutors can enter the marks for the assessment items that they mark (although they should also keep their own copy too). This way you can check the progress of the marking and the distribution of marks, and at the end of the unit you can export the marks to a spreadsheet. Additionally, if the **My Grades** tool is used and students are encouraged to check their marks then any issues about the marks that have been recorded can be raised in a timely manner.

- If you have data about students in a spreadsheet, such as the tutorial group they are in, it can be useful to import this data so that you can view the data for students in particular tutorial groups. This is done by using the Query functionality (see 'Viewing records of members').

Using the grade book

Only instructors and teaching assistants can access the grade book.

1. Click on the **Teach** tab.
2. Click 

under the **Instructor Tools** menu.

Structure of the grade book

There are five grade book tabs. The **Grades** tab is the default view.

The first four tabs (**Grades**, **Members**, **View All**, and **Custom View**) display data about each member in a table format.

The data for each member (also referred to as the 'member's record') is displayed as a row in the table.

There are two types of columns:

- grade-related columns (also called grade columns). The system creates two of these columns by default, the **Final** and **Midterm** columns, as well as columns for any quizzes, assignments or grade-related discussions that have been created (these display the scores). You do not need to use the **Final** and **Midterm** columns.
- non-grade-related columns. The system creates four of these columns by default: **Last Name**, **First Name**, **User ID** and **Role**.

Additional columns of both types can be created (and removed).

The difference between the first four tabs

- The **View All** and **Custom View** tabs can display all columns.
- The **Members** tab can display all non-grade-related columns.
- The **Grades** tab can display all grade-related columns and the four default non-grade-related columns: **Last Name**, **First Name**, **User ID**, and **Role** columns.

Viewing data with the first four grade book tabs

- If you want to view:
  - **Grade-related data only**
    Click on the **Grades** tab to see the default columns and **grade columns** that are set as 'shown'.
  - **Non grade-related data only**
    Click on the **Members** tab to see the **non-grade-related columns** that are set as 'shown'.
  - **All data**
    Click on **View All,** or **Custom View** tab to see all columns that are set as 'shown' – **grade columns** and **non-grade-related columns**.
- If there are columns that you expect to see but that are not displayed, then you will need to set them as 'visible' – follow the steps below, under 'Showing Columns'.
- If there are columns that are displayed that you do not want to view, then follow the steps below, under 'Hiding Columns'.
- If rows of members' records are not displayed as expected, then follow the steps below, under 'Viewing records of members'.
- Hiding and showing columns only affects which columns you see in the current Grade Book tab. However, changing which rows are displayed, or the order that they are displayed in the current Grade Book tab changes the display for each of the first four grade book tabs. This can be useful if you have a lot of columns as you can set each tab to display columns that you use for different purposes. For example you could use the **Grades** tab to display columns where you enter marks directly for each student and use the **Custom View** tab to display columns that are marked automatically by the Assessments tool. Then once you have set which members you want to view you can then swap between the different displays for the same students by clicking on the appropriate Grade Book tabs.

Showing columns

Note: This only affects the display for the current Grade Book tab. Any changes you make will affect the display for all instructors and teaching assistants.

1. If the columns that you want are not displayed, click Reorder Columns, just above the Grade Book tabs. The names of all of the columns that can be displayed for this tab are listed vertically.
2. For the column names that you want to display, click on **Show Column**. It will change to **Hide Column**.
3. Click **Save** at the bottom left of the page.

OR

1. Check the boxes to the left of the column names that you want displayed.
2. Click **Show** at the bottom left of the page.
3. Click **Save** at the bottom left of the page.

Hiding columns

Note: This only affects the display for the current Grade Book tab. However, any changes you make will affect the display for all instructors and teaching assistants.

If you want to hide some columns there are three alternative methods.

Method 1 – hiding one column at a time

- Click the name of the column and from the drop-down menu click **Hide Column**.

Method 2 – hiding several columns at once

- Click Reorder Columns, just above the Grade Book tabs. The names of all of the columns that can be displayed for this tab are listed vertically. Then either:

  1. For the column names that you do not want displayed, click on the words **Hide Column**). It will change to **Show Column**.
  2. Click **Save** at the bottom left of the page.

  OR

  1. Check the boxes to the left of the column names that you do not want displayed.
  2. Click **Hide** at the bottom left of the page.
  3. Click **Save** at the bottom left of the page.

Changing the order for the display of columns

Note: This only affects the display for the current Grade Book tab. However, changes you make will affect the display for all instructors and teaching assistants.

1. Click Reorder Columns, just above the Grade Book tabs. The names of all of the columns that can be displayed for this tab are listed vertically.
2. For all column(s) that you want to move, check the box to the left of the column name.
3. If you want these columns moved to the end of the list of columns (these will display on the far right when viewed from the Grade Book tab) then click on the *Move Selected Items to Bottom of List* icon on the left hand side of the last column name in the list.
4. If you want the column(s) that you have checked to be displayed before a specific column (left of that column when viewed from the Grade Book tab) then click on the *Move Selected Items Above* icon on the left hand side of the same row as the name of that column.

Viewing column statistics

To view data such as the column average, standard deviation and a histogram, click on the *ActionLinks* icon next to the column's name and select Column Statistics from the drop-down menu.

Viewing records of members

This affects how, and which, rows of members' records are displayed. Any changes you make will affect the display for all Grade Book tabs.

1. Check whether member records are displayed on more than one page. This information is displayed above the table on the right (e.g. [1] of 2). To locate the record for a specific member when the records are displayed on more than one page you may need to click on the appropriate page number to locate the relevant record.
2. To display the records for all the members on one page click on the *Edit Paging* icon at the bottom right of the screen and increase the **Number of records per page**. (This changes the display for all instructors and teaching assistants).
3. To display the records for a specific subset of members then click **Find Members** under Grade Book Options.
4. On the **Find Members** page enter your criteria and click Run Query. (This does not change the display for other instructors or teaching assistants).
   Note: This functionality is very useful if you want to view a subset of members, such as students who have failed an assessment or who are in a particular group.
5. If there are some members who are not displayed, click **Show All Members** under Grade Book Options. This is useful when a Query has displayed a subset of students – **Show All Members** returns the display to the default. (This does not change the display for other instructors or teaching assistants).
6. To change the order of member records in the table, click on the column name in the table heading row that you want to determine the order and, from the drop-down menu that appears, select Sort Column. If you want the records displayed in the reverse order click it again. (This does not change the display for other instructors or teaching assistants).

Adding and deleting columns

Types of columns you can add

There are seven different types of columns that you can create, depending on the type of data that you want to store. When you add a column, you are adding it for all of the instructors and teaching assistants.

- **Text** – You can enter text (maximum 200 characters); can include paragraphs.
- **Alphanumeric** – You can enter one line of text made up of text and/or numbers. The maximum length is 255 characters; however it is not a good idea to use this column type for very many characters as all the text is displayed on one line and this can make the column very wide. If you want to add a lot of characters then it will usually be better to use the text type.
- **Selection list** –You create a list of options as values that will appear as a drop-down list (e.g. 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Fair'). Once the column is created click on the column name to open the drop-down list and click on the *Edit Column Select List* icon. The **Edit Selection list for ...** screen appears, where you add the values options you want.

- **Numeric** – You can only store numbers. You will need to decide how many decimal places will be displayed and you can also enter the maximum value that should be entered (this does not restrict what values are entered). The maximum number is displayed after the column name in the grade book (as 'Out of").
  Note: when you first create the column you must choose to display either 1, 2, or 3 decimal places however once the column is created you have the option of displaying 0 decimal places – to do this click **Column Settings** under Grade Book Options. If you enter more digits after the decimal point than you have set to display they will be stored but not displayed (if you export the data all decimal places will be retained) however if you are editing the number then up to three decimal places will be displayed.
- **Grading Forms** – This column is used to calculate a numeric grade based on a grading form. When adding a grading form column you are asked to select the grading form that will be used to grade this assessment item. Once grading is complete, when you click on a student's grade in this column, the relevant grading form displays showing criteria and scores that make up the total grade.

The final two columns involve calculations based on values in numeric columns rather than direct input.

- **Calculated** – This contains a calculated numeric value. The calculation is based on other columns. Once the column is created, click on the column name in the table heading row to reveal the options and click on Edit Column Formula to create the formula to be used.
  You can override the calculated value (a ^ is displayed in front of any number you override).
  Note: the default columns **Final** and **Midterm** are both calculated columns.
- **Letter grade** – This contains a letter grade that is based on either a numeric or calculated column. Once the column is created, click on the column name to view the options and then click on Edit Column Letter Grade Scheme The **Edit Letter Grade Scheme for …** screen appears, where you specify numeric ranges for the letter grades.
  You can override the calculated value (the symbol **^** is displayed in front of any letter grade you override).

Adding columns

If you want to add a column to the Grade Book then:

1. Click on **Create Column** to reveal the drop-down menu of column types, and select the desired column type. The **Column Settings** page for that column type appears.
2. Enter the required data (click on the **Help** link if you would like more detailed information on the input fields).
3. If you want the column to be a **grade column** then check the **Grade-related column** checkbox. Additionally if you want students to see their data for this column with the **My Grades** tool as soon as the data has been entered, then the **Released to Student** checkbox must be checked too.
4. Click on the **Save** button at the bottom left of the page.

Deleting columns

You cannot delete:

- columns that are created by the system. These include the six default columns **Last Name**, **First Name**, **User Id**, and **Role** (non-grade related) and **Midterm** and **Final** (grade related).
- Columns created for Assignments and Assessments if those assignment/assessments item still exists.

Note: When you delete a column, you delete it for all the instructors and teaching assistants.

1. Click on **Column Settings** under Grade Book Options
2. Locate the column that you want to delete. The name of the column is in the row marked **Label**.
3. Either:
   - Click on the *ActionLinks* icon next to the name of the column and choose Delete from the drop-down list.
     OR
   - Click on the checkbox at the top of the column (or columns) that you want to delete and then click Delete near the bottom of the table on the left.

Editing data for members

Adding and changing data

If you want to add/change data in the columns there are three alternative methods. Each method has advantages depending on whether you want to change one or several items at a time, and whether multiple changes are for a specific member or in a specific column.

Method 1 – one item for a specific member:

1. Click on the item value that you want to change. The **Edit Value for** pop-up window appears.
   Note: Only highlighted items can be edited.
2. Enter or select the new value in the **Change to** text box.
3. Click **Save**.

Method 2 – one or more items for a specific member:

1. Click on the member's last name (under the **Last Name** column) and from the drop-down menu click on **Edit Member**.
2. Enter the new values in the **Change to** text boxes.
3. Click the **Save** button at the bottom left of the page.

Method 3 – one or more items in the same column:

1. Click on the *Edit Values* icon from the **View options** drop-down list that appears when the column name is selected.

2. Enter the new values in the **Change to** text boxes.
3. Click the **Save** button at the bottom left of the page.

If your edit overrides a value that is based on a calculation or one that is generated by the system (such as for an **assessment**) a **^** symbol is displayed in front of the value.

Auditing of changes

Changes to data in all grade columns are tracked. You can view the audit history by clicking on the data entry value and then clicking on View Audit History. Alternatively you can click on the **View Audit History** option under Grade Book Options. This shows the history for all members and also changes made to grade columns. If you enter comments when you make updates to this data then they will also be displayed.

Exporting and importing data

You can export data to a spreadsheet or import data from a spreadsheet that contains grades or other information.

Exporting Data

- You can export the data for all members or some members, and for all columns or some columns (except for formulas for calculated columns).
- To export the data for only some of the members then check the boxes on the left side of the rows for the members that you want in your selection.
- To export only some of the columns, *hide* those that you do not want to export.

To export data:

1. From any of the first four tabs (**Grades**, **Members**, **View All**, and **Custom View**) click **Export to Spreadsheet** at the bottom of the table. The **Export to Spreadsheet** screen will be displayed.
2. Under **Members to Export:** If you had some members selected before you clicked **Export** then you can decide to export the data for the **Selected Members** or **All Members** by clicking the appropriate radio button.
3. Under **Columns to Export:** You can decide to export the data for the **Visible Columns** or **All Columns** by clicking on the appropriate radio button.
4. Under **Select Export Format:** You can decide to export the data as a **Comma-delimited** or **Tab-delimited** text file—most spreadsheets can open both formats—by clicking on the appropriate radio button.
5. Under **Select Character Set:** Choose to export the data using the **Unicode (UTF-8)** or **UnicodeLittle** character sets for the text file. Many applications will translate both character sets and the result will be the same, regardless of the one that you use. If you are not sure which one to use then choose **Unicode (UTF-8)** by clicking the appropriate radio button.
6. Click **Export**. The file will be downloaded.
7. Click **Back to Grade Book**.

Importing data

You can import a comma-delimited or tab-delimited text file containing the data about members as long as the text file contains:

- a heading for each column
  AND
- a column that contains the User IDs (WebCT IDs)

You can usually use 'Save As' or 'Export' to save your spreadsheet as either a comma-delimited (also called CSV) or a tab-delimited text file.

You do not need to have all of the members or all the columns in your text file. Columns can also have a different name to the column in BlackboardVista. You can also import columns that that you have not already created in BlackboardVista, although generally it is preferable if the columns are already created as you will have set the type of data that the column can contain.

To import data:

1. From any of the first four tabs (**Grades**, **Members**, **View All**, and **Custom View**) click **Import from Spreadsheet** at the top of the page. The **Import File** screen appears.
2. Click **Browse** to choose your text file to import.
3. From the drop-down list called **Separator** select either **Comma** or **Tab** to indicate the type of file you are importing.
4. Click **Upload**.
5. A page listing each column name from your file will be displayed, as well as the first few rows in each column (for you to refer to). Each column name has a drop down list displayed next to it. For each column name choose one of the following:
    a. The name of the grade book column that matches the column that you are importing,
    OR
    b. **Do not import** if you want to do not want your column imported,
    OR
    c. **Add as a new column** if you want to create a new column in your grade book with the data from this column.
6. You can add a comment (optional) that will appear in the audit history if any of the data that you import changes data in a grade column.
7. Click **Import**.
8. If an error occurred during the import, an **Import Errors** page containing a report of the result and error(s) will be displayed. This page is also displayed for notification if all the data in the file was not imported or if the name of a column was changed, for example if you specified that columns should not be imported. Click **OK**.

Controlling who can access your section

Revoking a member's access to your Section

Note: Only instructors can change the membership status.

There are two ways to revoke access:

1. Deny Access
   In some cases you may want to revoke a member's access rights without removing them as a member.
   This means that they will see the Course listed in ***MyLO*** but if they click on the link they will get a message to say that they have been denied access and that they should contact the instructor.
   If a member has been denied access, an icon  appears next to their last name.
2. Remove (unenroll) Member
   In other cases you may want to revoke the person's membership rights.
   This means that they will no longer see the Section listed in ***MyLO***.
   Note: If membership is automatically updated on a regular basis by the institution then they will be reinstated as members when the automatic updating occurs. (UTAS students enrolled in units that use a particular ***MyLO*** Course are added as members on a regular basis).

Denying Access

There are two methods.

Method 1 – for a specific member:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, click on the member's last name.
2. From the pop-up menu that appears, click on **Deny Access**.

Method 2 – for multiple members:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, check the boxes to the left of the name of each member that you are going to deny access. (To deny access to all members, select the check box in the table heading row.)
2. Click Deny Access .

Removing a Member

There are two methods.

Method 1 – for a specific member:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, click on the member's last name.
2. From the pop-up menu that appears, click on **Unenroll Member**.

Method 2 – for two or more members:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, check the boxes to the left of the name of each member that you are going to remove.
2. Click on the **Unenroll** button at the bottom right of the table.

Permitting people to access your Section

Note: Only instructors can change membership status.

There are two reasons why people cannot access your Section:

1. They are members but have been denied access, so they can see the course listed in ***MyLO*** but if they click on the link, they get a message to say that they have been denied access and that they should contact the instructor.
   - If a member has been denied access, the icon appears next to their name.
   - You will need to grant them access.
2. The person is not a Member of the course, so they cannot see the course listed in ***MyLO***.
   Note: If membership is automatically updated on a regular basis by the institution then they will be added as members when the automatic updating occurs. (UTAS students enrolled in units that use a particular course are added as members on a regular basis).
   - You will need to add them as members.

Granting access

This is used where a member has been denied access. This is denoted by the icon next to the member's last name. There are two methods for granting access.

Method 1 – for a specific member:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, locate the member and click the member's last name.
2. From the menu that appears, click Grant Access.

Method 2 – for multiple members:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab check the boxes on the left side of the rows for the members that you are going to grant access.
2. Click Grant Access at the bottom right of the table.

Adding (enrolling) a member

Each member added is assigned a role that determines what they will be able to see and do in your course. There are five different roles that members can have:

- **Student**: Students see a display similar to the one that you see from the **Student View** tab. They do not have any tabs in their view.
- **Teaching assistant**: They have the **Teach** tab and the **Student View** tab. The **Teach** tab provides teaching assistants with a subset of the functionality that instructors have. The **Student View** tab has the same functionality.
- **Section instructor**: When you add an instructor they will have the same display and functionality as you do; however they will not be displayed under the course link on the ***MyLO*** home page.
- **Section designer**: They do not have access to the **Teach** tab. They have the **Student View** tab and also the **Build** tab.

- **Auditor**: An auditor has the same display and functionality as a student. (The only difference between students and auditors is that auditors will not get a value in the Grade Book system column **Final**. So if you are not using this column there is no difference.)

There are two combinations of roles that are permitted:

- Section Instructor & Section Designer
- Teaching Assistant & Section Designer.

Note 1: Depending on administrator settings, you may not be able to enrol users in some of the above roles.

Note 2: You must know the user name of the members you want to enrol.

To add a member to your course:

1. From the **Members**, **View All**, or **Custom View** tab, click on **Enroll Members** at the top of the page.
2. Enter the user name (User ID).
3. Select the role that the person will have. (If the person is going to be a Section designer then either **instructor** or **teaching assistant** can be selected too).
4. Click **Enrol**. The details of the person added will be displayed in the **Members Added** table, queued and ready for adding.
5. If you would like to add additional people repeat steps 2-4.
6. Click **Save**.

Generating student performance reports

You can generate individual student reports on their participation and performance in the online unit.

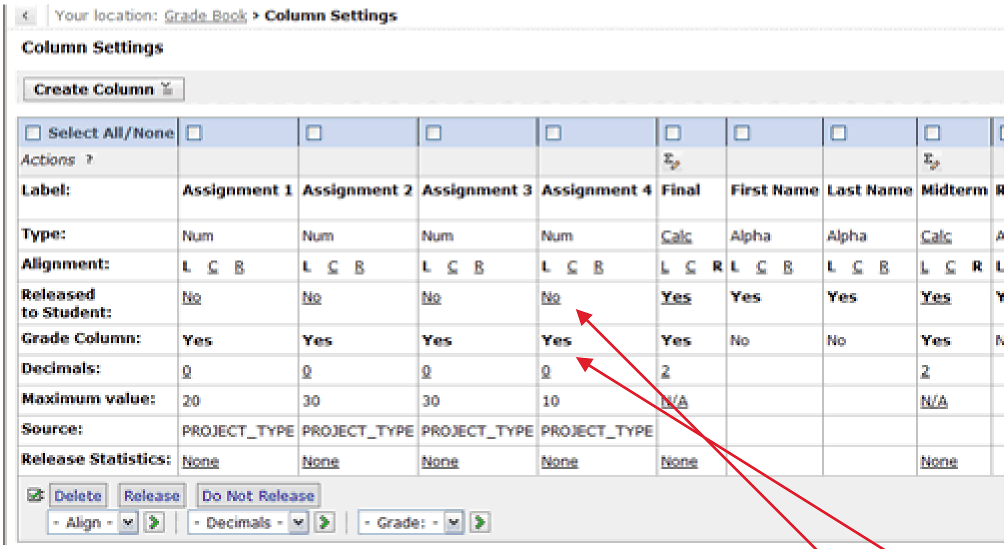
To generate an individual student report:

1. Click on the student's name and select View Performance Report from the drop-down menu.
2. The **Individual Student Performance Report** screen appears, showing information about the tools they have accessed.
3. To produce a summary of their grades (for assessments, assignments etc.), click **View Student Grades**.

Releasing results from the grade book

If you have chosen to not automatically release the scores/grades during the set up of the assessment tasks, you release the score/grades when you are ready through the Grade Book.

1. Click Grade Book Options and select **Column Settings** from the drop-down menu. The following screen appears.



Your location: Grade Book > Column Settings

Column Settings

Create Column

Select All/None									
Actions ?									
Label:	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Assignment 3	Assignment 4	Final	First Name	Last Name	Midterm	R
Type:	Num	Num	Num	Num	Calc	Alpha	Alpha	Calc	A
Alignment:	L C R	L C R	L C R	L C R	L C R	L C R	L C R	L C R	L
Released to Student:	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Y
Grade Column:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	N
Decimals:	0	0	0	0	2			2	
Maximum value:	20	30	30	10	N/A			N/A	
Source:	PROJECT_TYPE	PROJECT_TYPE	PROJECT_TYPE	PROJECT_TYPE					
Release Statistics:	None	None	None	None	None			None	

Delete | Release | Do Not Release

- Align - | - Decimals - | - Grade: -

2. In the **Column Settings** screen, locate the row '**Released to Student**' and the column for the assessment results you wish to release. Toggle '**No**' to '**Yes**' (the example is for Assignment 4). The results will now appear in the students' **My Grades** tool main screen.

References:

Designer and Instructor Reference: Application Pack 2 for Blackboard Learning System – Vista Enterprise License (Release 4) 2006 Blackboard Inc

Vista 4.2 Online Help (Blackboard Inc.)

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