Categories and the Weighted Column: Using Grade Centre to Automatically "Drop the Lowest Grade"

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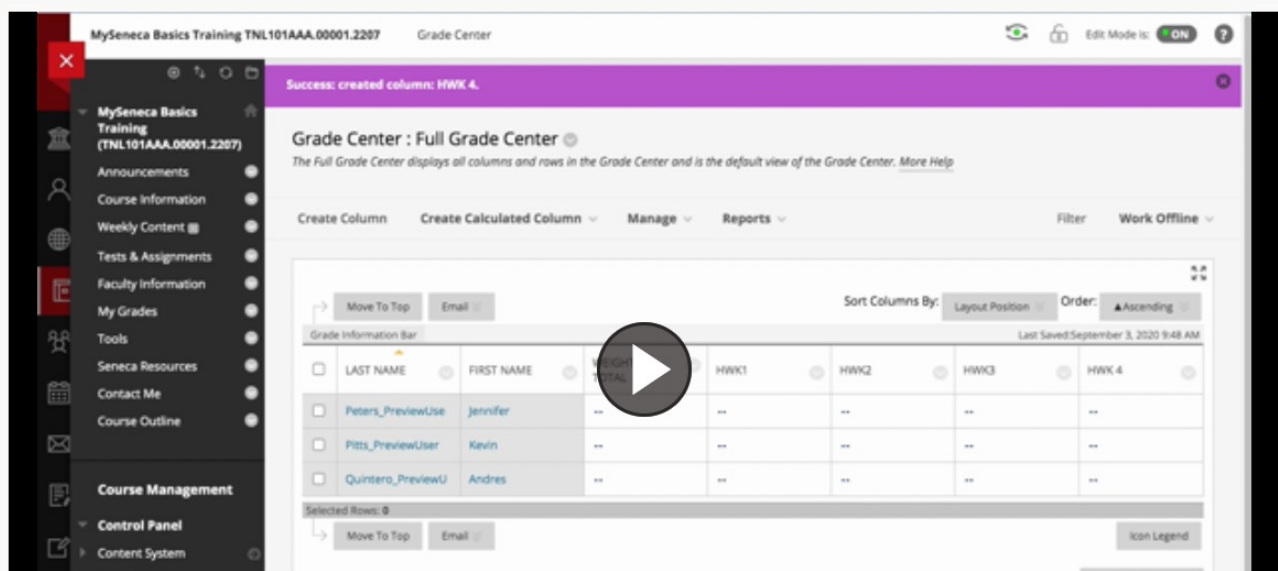**by Jennifer Peters, Seneca Libraries and the Teaching & Learning Centre**
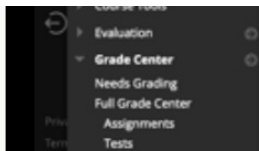
in the September 2020 issue

We use the Grade Centre to record grades and track students' progress in the course, but do you use some of the time-saving features in the Grade Centre?

A popular assessment technique is to assign multiple smaller or shorter assessments and then drop one or two of the lowest grades. For example, students are assigned five homework exercises where only the top four grades will be counted, or ten pop quizzes where only the top eight grades will count towards their final grade. It's an effective approach to reviewing smaller chunks of content, increasing engagement, and providing students flexibility should they struggle during a particular time. But when it comes to grading, you will have a lot of calculating to do!

Instead, try assigning a category to the grade centre columns for that assessment and then use the Weighted Column to do the calculating for you.

Watch a video demonstration of the process:

Or, see the breakdown of steps below:

1. Open the **Full Grade Centre** for your course and ensure you have **Edit Mode** turned on.

2. Ensure you have a grade centre column for each item. For example, if we have four homework exercises, I'll create HWK #1, HWK #2, HWK #3, and HWK #4 columns. **Note:** If you use online quizzes or assignments through Blackboard, the columns will be created automatically.

3. Create a Category by clicking on **Manage** -> **Categories** -> **Create Category**. Then enter the name of your category (we'll use Homework Exercise for this example).
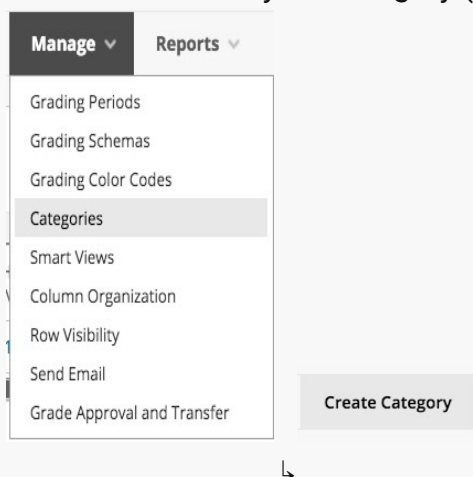
4. Assign this category to your four homework exercises by clicking on **Manage** -> **Column Organization**. Select the four exercises, scroll down to **Change Category to...** and select the category you created (Homework Exercise, in this example). Then click **Submit**.

Click Submit to proceed.

5. Now you can edit the Weighted Column to do the calculating for you. In Full Grade Centre, click on the drop-down arrow beside the Weighted Column and select **Edit Column Information**.

6. Scroll down and select your category under **Categories to Select** (**not** Columns to Select). Then select the little arrow to move the category over to the Weighting Panel.

→

7. Once the category is in the weighting panel, you can set your options for the calculation.
   What is the total weighting for this group of assessments?
   How many low or high grades do you want to drop?
   Do you want them equally or proportionally calculated? Meaning if they have different points possible, do you want the higher points to count more or do you want them equally calculated?
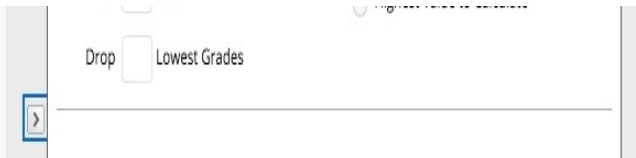   Do you only want to pull the lowest or highest value as the grade for the column?
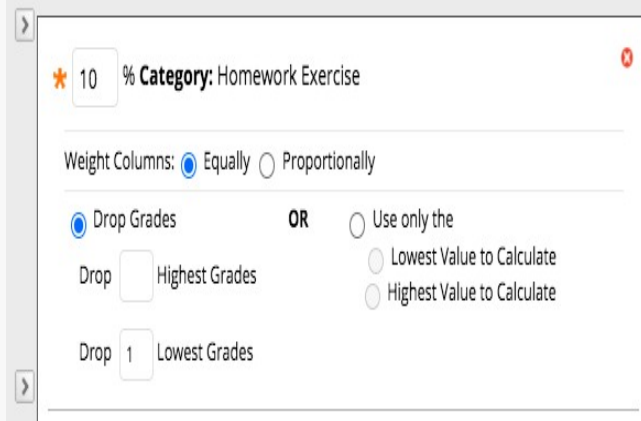
For example: here I am assigning 10% to the assessment group for the final course grade, weighting the columns equally, and dropping the lowest grade:

8. Click **Submit** when you are done.

Once you start to enter grades in the assessment columns, you will see the weighted column change. Try it out using Student Preview to get a real sense of what it will looks like to students.

View the September 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter.

September 2020 issue

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