Creating Gradebooks in Bb

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Blackboard does provide a robust grade book, which means it is good... and complex. We can avoid problems by trying to keep grade books simple. Especially those new to Blackboard will benefit from keeping grades simple. Consider two cases:

Case #1: You have three categories of tasks that are used to calculate grades: exams, homework, and discussions. Within each category, each task is equal. Let’s assume there are three exams and the average of those is 60% of the final grade, 10 homework tasks are 25% of the final grade, and 10 discussions are 15% of the final grade.

To set up such grade books, I proceed as follows:

1) Create the exams, homework assignments, and discussions in Bb. Those items will show up in the grade book.
2) Create an “Average Column” named “Exam Average” and select the exam columns from the grade book to be included in that column. Create a second Average Column named “Homework Average” and select the homework columns for that average, and a third Average Column named “Discussion Average.”
3) Once the three average columns are set, create a “Weighted Column.” Select the Exam Average, Homework Average, and Discussion Average columns, and enter the percent of the final grade the assignment should represent. This column will display the running grade the student has in the course... it will change as new grades are entered.

Case #2: Your grade is based on a number of points the student earns in the semester, and the final grade is a fraction of possible points that were earned by the student. In such grading schemes, a brief homework assignment may be worth two points, a quiz worth 15, and an exam worth 100. To calculate grades this way, the simplest method is to proceed as follows:

1) Create the exams, assignments, discussions, and other assignments in Bb. Those items will show up in the grade book.
2) Create a “Total Column” and include all of the columns in calculating it.

Some students find it disconcerting that the Total Column grades appear so low. I point out that this is the minimum grade the student will earn and that it will only go up from there. By making the columns for the items (quizzes, homework, etc.) display as percent, teachers can reduce the consternation of students.

Make sure to name each and every assignment! This is essential for grade books to function correctly!