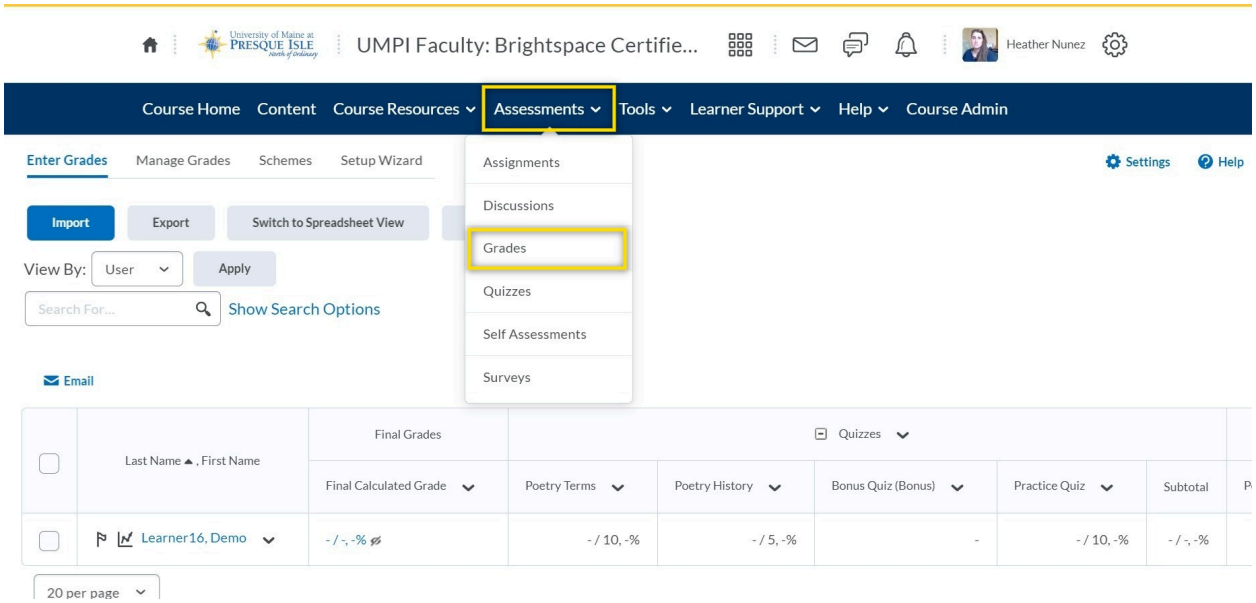
Accessing and using the Grades tool

The *Grades* tool is the Brightspace equivalent to the Grade Center we have seen in Blackboard. You can access the **Grades** tool from the NavBar's **Assessments** tab. This tool page includes access to creating, editing and deleting *grade items* (Brightspace's name for grade columns), categories, grading schemes, and grade display options. It is also one of the spaces where you can enter student grades.

Students also have access to the Grades tool, though their view is similar to the My Grades panel in Blackboard--they will only see the grades and grade columns/categories that have been released.

Accessing the Grades tool



You will note that the Grades tool opens on the *Enter Grades* panel--and the first time you log into a class, you will be prompted to go into the Setup Wizard. Like

many grade books, the Enter Grades panel is set-up in a horizontal spreadsheet-style. The easiest space to manage your grade items and categories is in the *Manage Grades* panel.

Setting up your initial grade book

There are many factors that go into setting up your grade book, that you will have to decide even before you enter the Setup phase! Decisions such as: Do I need my grades to be weighted? Should grades be percentage-based (ie: 8/10) or points-based (ie: 9/10)? How do I want students to see their grading information?

Page setting guidance:

Once you click Start on the Grade Center Wizard, you will be prompted to make the following decisions:

1. *Grading System*: Choose either a **weighted** or a **point-based** grading system. Be sure this system aligns with your syllabus language, and how you talk to students about how you will grade them. Once you have selected a system, click **Continue**
2. *Final Grade release*: Choose how to release final grades by selecting either **calculated** (based on information from the grades that have been entered) or **adjusted** (instructor reserves the ability to adjust/overwrite the final grade) final grade. Click **Continue.**
3. *Grade Calculations:* Choose how to treat ungraded items by selecting the option to **drop** items or **treat them as 0**. The advantage of dropping items is that students will have a more accurate idea of the overall grade at the beginning of the class. One thing to keep in mind, if you choose to treat

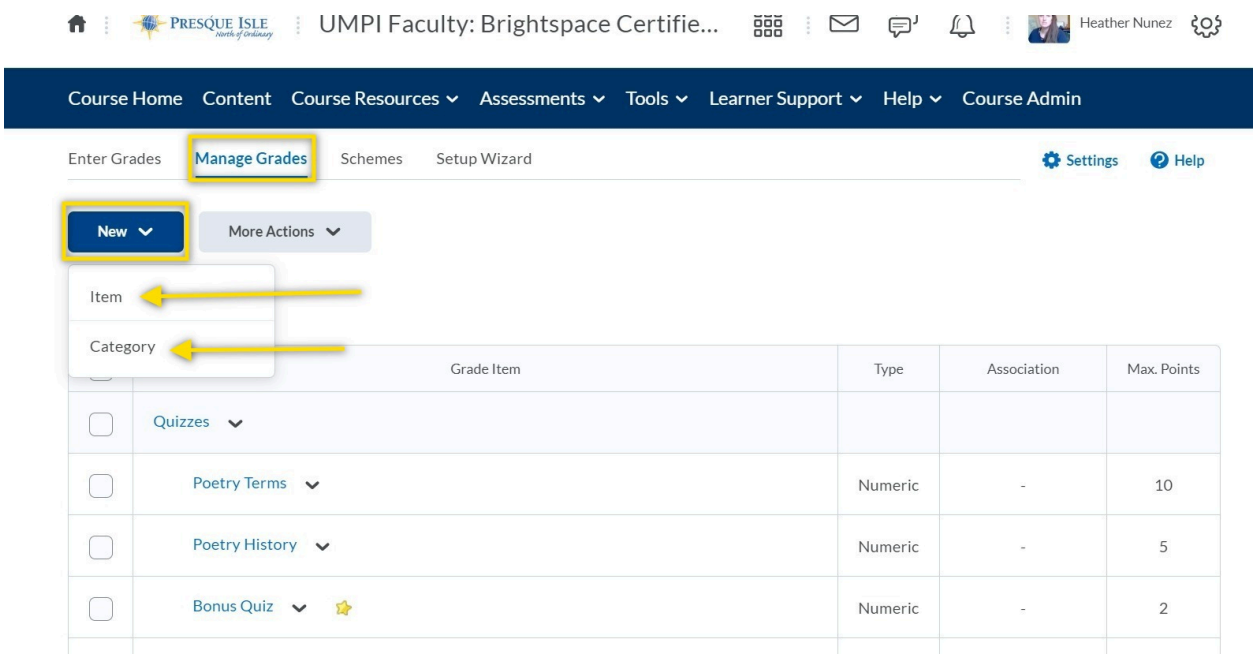
ungraded items as "0", is that all future ungraded items will display as "0" until you grade them (and students grades will reflect that iterative approach--they will look like they are 'failing' at the beginning of the course). Make sure the **Auto Update** box is checked off to keep final grades updated in the grade book. Select **Continue.**

4. *Default Grade Scheme:* Keep the grading scheme as the **percentage scheme** default, if you are utilizing weighting. In the future, you may choose to create your own grade scheme, is needed.
5. *Managing Display Settings:* Choose the number of decimal places you wish to see in the grade book (ie: 1 or 2)
6. *Student View Display Settings:* Choose **Student View Display Options**. Note that if the *Final Grade Calculation* option is checked, learners will be able to see how their grades were calculated--which could be confusing if you chose the option to adjust the final grade. Select **Continue.**

Alternate access to settings after initial set-up: As you set up your Grade Book, and toggle between Learner and Instructor view, you may need to make adjustments. Quickly access individual Setup pages to make adjustments by clicking on the Settings gear, in the top right corner of the Grades tool page.

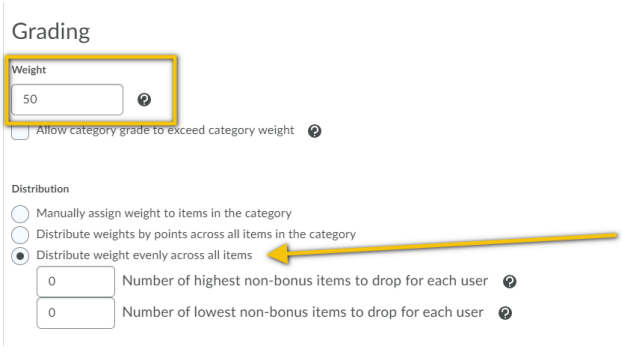
Managing your grade items and categories

In the *Manage Grades* tab of the Grades tool page, you can access, manage, add and delete *grade items* (grade items are the grade columns in Brightspace) in a list-style view. You can also view, create and manage an Assignment's category association, for those who use categories to weight their grades by activity type (ie Assignments, Written Tests, Journals, etc).



Setting up categories:

Categories in the *Manage Grades* panel are useful for organizing graded items by type or weight, and you can choose to show those categories in the student Grades view, or not. It is essential, if you are utilizing weighted grading systems, to create your categories first. Be sure to set up your category with a weight that aligns with your syllabus. CTL also recommends distributing weight evenly across items in a category as a default, though you have the option to distribute weights by points or to manually assign weight to each individual grade item:



Once your Categories are created, you can create grade items that align with your categories, so that Brightspace will automatically weight grades in the *Final Calculated Grades* column.

Creating and managing grade items

Grade items can also be managed and created in the Manage Grades panel. CTL recommends creating Grade Items by attaching them to Assignments, Discussions, and Quizzes, in those tools pages, or content pages as you are creating those assessments--which creates the most fluid workflow (for online or any Blended modality). Creating new Grade Items from within the Grades tool can also be an alternate workflow reserved for those faculty who do not manage any assessment activities from within Brightspace, but who still want to create a clear and transparent space to share grades with students throughout the semester, or for recording behaviour that you see in person, like attendance. It is also useful to note that creating grade items in the Manage Grade panel gives you *additional grading options*, including: Numeric, Selectbox, Pass/Fail, Formula, Calculated or Text (creating a grade item directly on your assessment only gives you the option of Numeric or Selectbox).

A note on migrated classes: *You will notice that your course that has migrated from Blackboard will have migrated with all Grade Center columns and categories intact--thought you might still find it beneficial to do some house-keeping, to delete irrelevant categories from Blackboard--as well as any old grade center columns from Blackboard that you hid, because it wouldn't let you delete them.*

When might I need a Grade Scheme?

Creating a custom grade scheme may not be applicable to all, but it can be very useful to those who grade on a Proficiency scale, or another Program-level grading scale. If you think a custom grade scheme may fit your need, please review video tutorials, or our FAQ page, to get started!

Troubleshooting & next steps

Congrats! You have successfully set up your Grades! Luckily, as you develop these initial Grades settings, they can be course copied to future semester offerings of the course so the time spent setting your grades up so that they are 'just right' will be time well spent!

If you need additional help of resources on the Brightspace Grades Tool, please be sure to **save a copy of our Grade Tool Guidebook**.