

Recommended Changes to Moodle 1.9 Gradebook

From Moodle2 Wiki

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Overview

Our initial usability testing of the new 1.9 gradebook found that it was very difficult to use in a middle and high school setting, even at a laptop school like ours where every teacher is well versed in technology and is familiar with Moodle. However, the following recommended changes make thing not only workable, but a considerable improvement over the current gradebook. We offer these suggestions for the core code for 1.9, are pleased to offer any of our gradebook code to core, and strongly recommend that these changes be evaluated prior to releasing 1.9.

Grade branch of Site Administration Block

Grade category settings

Teachers will be quite intimidated by the extreme range of choices offered. In many cases, the current default behavior is not the most natural. We recommend these default values under the site settings:

- `grade_hideforcesettings: true`

Very important to simplify the interface for teachers. Sites with more advance instructors (and site administrators!) can easily go in and set this to false.

- `grade_aggregation: weighted mean of grades` (see note below)

By changing the behavior is "weighted grades of mean" to be the same as "mean of grade" when no categories (or weights) have been set, this makes a good default setting.

- `grade_aggregatedonlygrade: true`

This may eliminates the need to have a hide/lock cycle. Grades are always up-to-date with what has been graded; teachers set grades to zero if something has not been submitted. The current default means that students always have out-of-date grades, or that teachers must move items in and out of categories.

- `grade_aggregateoutcomes: true`

The default is less important than that some default is forced to make the out-of-the box interface easier.

- `grade_aggregatesubcats: true`

The default is less important than that some default is forced to make the out-of-the box interface easier.

- `grade_keephigh`: none

Since this is probably less common than `droplow`, it should be forced off by default to keep the interface and choices less confusing.

- `grade_droplow`: Do not force

Common enough and part of 1.6, so keep it not forced but set to none be default as it is now.

Grader report

Recommended changes from current defaults

- `grade_report_studentsperpage`: 100

Teachers of larger courses will usually want to see their whole classes, even if they need to scroll down. The option should remain for them to set it smaller.

- `grade_report_quickgrading`: true

This is stable enough and a common enough setting to have turned on.

- `grade_report_quickfeedback`: true

If teachers are going to go into turn editing on, there is no reason not to let them set feedback.

- `grade_selected_meanselection`: Non-empty grades

Why default to have assignments not yet graded to be treated as zero? Teachers can always give unsubmitted assignments zeros if needed. Mean while, the summary is always up-to-date with grading.

- `grade__report_showaverages` = true

This is a common enough summary to have it on by default.

Within course gradebook

Grader Report

- Change assignment name to have a style of no-wrap. User `shorten_text` to shorten to 30 characters. When doing this, it is helpful to hide background image for certain styles.

Current settings make this report almost unusable beyond two or three assignments, especially if assignment names are long, but the above makes it much better.

- Default font-size in standard style could be smaller.

This, again, makes the report more usable.

- When editing grades, allow items to go over maximum grade

At least allow this when being pushed by modules. This works fine, and it is not uncommon to have points that are "extra credit" that bring the total points over the technical maximum. A warning message could be added if changed in the gradebook, if needed, although that can be added in a future version.

- Add tab for Categories and items (at least), and probably user report

Using the pull down menu, especially given its length, makes it difficult to find things. The tabs make these common items more assessable. And it will be easier for those using previous versions of Moodle. This was easy for us to add to add.

- Set even/odd row styles to enable coloring lines for easier reading.

Makes for easier reading if styled in different colors, especially when the activity count goes up.

- Put student names at far right of grader report

Again, for more activities, this becomes important. Ideally, student names would also be fixed on the left, but we have not yet implemented this.

User Report

- Those with grading capability should see all user reports.

It makes little sense for a teacher to see their own grades. But if it is desired to keep this capability, a choice should be for teachers to show only their own, show all graded users, or show both. The default should be just graded users.

- If the above change is made, a menu should be added for groups and individual students to be selected.

This makes it easy to view or print out a selected set of student reports.

Edit Categories and Items

- Re-define the behavior of "Weighted mean of grades" when no weights are set to behave as "Mean of Grades" which should be renamed to "Unweighted mean of grades"

With this new setting, "Weighted mean of grades" should be the default, "Mean of grades" should be renamed to "Unweighted mean of grades", and aggregation options should be set to advanced.

- All other settings should be set to advanced except for Category name and "Drop the lowest"

This is set with the forms calls easily and makes new users not be overwhelmed with too many choices.

- All edit items in the aggregate line should be moved to the category that is summarizes and an edit item should not appear. All except "Maximum Grade" should be set to advanced.

It is very confusing to know what setting is covered under the category and what is covered under the summary for the category. By just listing them under the category and using the advanced setting to hide less used features, things are much less confusing.

- When creating categories, teachers should be able to assign weight.

This is a very common setting, and if the recommendation on new behavior for weighted mean of grades is followed, it makes category setup much easier. Consideration should be made as to whether this should be zero or null by default.

- Consider the wording of field settings; words like aggregate should be simplified to summary.

While these might seem obvious terms to programmers or developers, they don't have obvious meaning, at least to US educators.

Course Settings

Add options to "show percents" (default true) and "show points" (default true), and probably "show rank" (default false).

What students and teachers can view will be important. So, we have added show points and show percents to this view; show rank should probably be a course level setting but set to false by default.

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