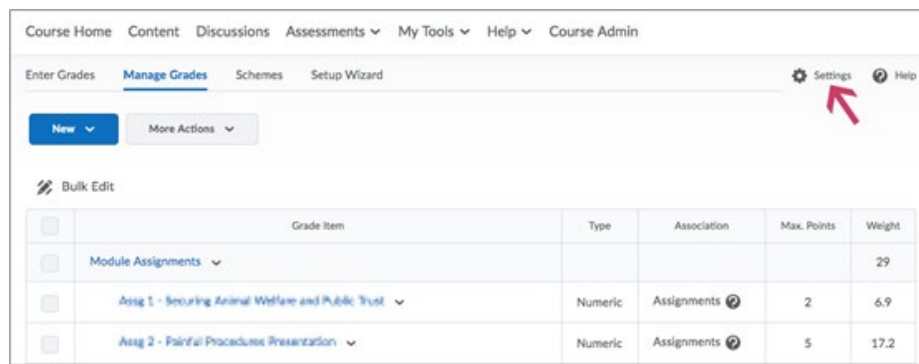# Weighted vs. Points Grading and Grade Categories

The most common issue instructors have with the Brightspace gradebook is the system's default settings. The fact that the gradebook defaults to a Points system rather than a Weighted system has caused a number of issues. We strongly advise instructors to change this setting before setting up the gradebook items. There are very few marking schemes that lend themselves well to a points-based system, it is very likely instructors will need to change the settings in the gradebook to reflect a Weighted system.

To change this setting, there are two options:
1. Use the Gradebook Setup Wizard to walk through each of the steps – Step 1 is setting the grading system, choose "Weighted" and continue.
2. Go directly to the gradebook and select "Settings" (see screenshot). Then click on the "Calculation Options" tab, select "Weighted" and then Save.

Once a Weighted system has been established, the gradebook can be set up. The weighted system calculates grade items as a percentage of a final grade worth 100%. The Max. Points you assign to individual grade items can be any value, but their contribution towards the category they belong to, and the final grade is the percentage value (weight) assigned to them.

Grade items in a category count as a percentage of that category, not of the final grade. Therefore, **grade items in a category should combine to a weight of 100%.** For example, if a category is worth 10% of the final grade with two equally weighted grade items, the weight of each grade item is 50%, (its contribution to the category), not 5% (its contribution to the final grade).

If grade items do not add up to 100% a warning message is located at the top of the gradebook page. This can be ignored as a balanced grade book is not required; however, it is recommended to have the gradebook total 100%, or clearly communicate why it does not to students. If the weights assigned to grade items do not sum to 100%, the tool adjusts the weight of each item. For example, if there are only three grade items with a weight of 25% each, each item is actually calculated as 33.33%. This is true for categories and the final grade.

NOTE: A category MUST have at least one item within it. Grades cannot be added into a category. If there is only one grade within a category, the category is not essential, but can still be used for organizational purposes if desired.

For more information on Grades in Brightspace, **Brightspace Help** is an excellent resource. For more information on setting up the gradebook, access the instructional sheet on the **Grades Setup Wizard.**