User Needs Report: Gradebook Improvements

Spring 2018

While the new Gradebook is a considerable improvement over the previous iteration, some of the wizard-driven rust of the earlier model can still be knocked off, leaving a cleaner and simpler UI; in addition, some functionalities that are frequently requested by faculty might be added. These are:

High Priority

- Option for 4-point grading scale / ability to enter letter grades for items.
- Visibility settings on grades/gradebook are unclear, particularly the distinction between “releasing” and “displaying” grades to students. Regarding greater clarity of display, the relation between hiding the Gradbook tool itself and hiding grades in the tool needs to be clearer (e.g., that hiding the tool means students cannot see any grades regardless of the settings within the gradebook). Particularly confusing is the “Edit Gradebook Item” screen, which automatically checks “Release item to students” if one checks “Include item in course grade calculations,” even though these appear to be totally separate functions.
- Push grades to Albert (currently can only pull from Classes, but faculty who keep a Classes gradebook would be starting in Classes when grading, not Albert).
- Make default Grading Schema the one used by the school in which the course is being offered. Schools should also be able to include in a Site Template a set of templated item/category weights. Imperative that rounding conventions be clarified and that the instructor have some options for setting them (e.g., whether a cut-off is used so that, if A=95, any grade below 95 is registered as an A-, or whether a halfway point is employed, so that, if A=95 and A-=92, a 93.7=A).
- Relation of point value in “grade items” to percentages in “weighting” unclear. Instructor needs option to express grades throughout tool as either points, percentages, or letters (with one option as default that can be altered).

Medium Priority

- Simplification of Gradebook creation. Currently, an instructor must create a gradebook by defining the elements that will compose it; a simpler UI would be automatic creation of a gradebook with, for example, five columns that the user could then tailor to their own needs, defining, adding, and deleting columns as necessary. (Comparison: one doesn’t create a spreadsheet in xls or Sheets by first being asked “what do you want to call the first column? How many columns do you want?” etc. - the program generates a blank sheet and then the user can add labels/eliminate columns/add columns, etc.)
● Edit grade pulled from other tools (e.g., Assignments) in gradebook (by overriding grade from tool, if necessary) - include a record of who entered grade
● Gray out rather than deleting dropped grades (e.g., when using drop lowest) (Nb - there is already a Sakai community effort to implement this change)
● The “Permissions” tab is misleadingly labelled, as it only covers the permission to give grades (e.g., for TAs), not for students to see them.
● Ability to create categories on the fly from items in the spreadsheet view, rather than having to open a separate window. E.g., when a user goes into the “Edit Item Details” screen for a column, they should be able to assign that item to a category (which could be either an existing or a new category); currently, they need to leave the spreadsheet view to do this. There should be an ability to create categories from the spreadsheet view, rather than having to open a separate window.
● Create an “Item Summary” page (analogous to Student Summary page) that would allow instructor to enter grades and comments with much fewer clicks. Allows instructor to see multiple comments at once and more easily edit/copy/paste.
● Allow calculated sub-columns with additional calculation options, such as best grade, average of grades, weighted average of grades, addition of grades (have, e.g., a column/item called "Essays" that, as a whole, counted for, say 60% of the final grade, and then have three sub-items - Essay One, Essay Two, Essay Three - that counted, respectively, for 10%, 20%, and 30% of the final grade (total of 60%).)
● Ability to assign random test IDs to test takers, associated on back-end with student number code (e.g., net id).

Low Priority

● Grading Schema, a very important function, and Categories/Weighting are hidden under “Settings”; also, not clear “weighting” options would include options for drop highest, drop lowest etc.
● Ability to enter grades/comments on the student summary page.