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Introduction
GradesFirst is a web-based retention and advising tool used in Athletics at the University of West Georgia since 2011 and expanded for the entire student body in 2013. GradesFirst provides a powerful platform for communicating with students, keeping course attendance, providing roll verification, and issuing alerts for students who might be at-risk. This guide details some ways faculty at UWG can use GradesFirst in two parts, a Basics section for quick reference on topics all faculty should know and an Advanced section for users who want to learn about other GradesFirst features.

GradesFirst Basics
Basic functions of GradesFirst include how to log in, checking email, viewing courses, searching for students, viewing the student profile page, issuing Alerts, and sending messages.

How to Log in to GradesFirst
Faculty can login to GradesFirst via the myUWG portal using the UWG ID.

Login Step 1: Login to myUWG
From anywhere on the University of West Georgia website, click the Log On link at the top right of the page and login to myUWG.
Login Step 2: External Resources Tab
Once login to myUWG is complete, click the External Resources tab and then click the GradesFirst link.

This takes you to your GradesFirst home page. Because many faculty also advise, the default home page in GradesFirst for all faculty is the Advisor Home page. Click the arrow to the right of Advisor Home and choose Professor Home.
From Professor Home, you can check your messages (A), navigate to other pages via icons on the left side of the screen (B), view your courses for the semester (C), issue an alert (D), and search for students by name (E).

Email Indicator (A)
GradesFirst uses a symbol of an envelope to denote unread email messages. The number in the red circle tells you how many emails you have waiting. Emails sent to you through GradesFirst show up in your West Georgia Gmail as well, so you don’t have to worry about missing them. They remain unread in GradesFirst until you look at them in that system.

Navigate to Other Pages Via Icons (B)
The pages a user has access to depend on his or her permissions. A sample of the functions is visible in the image below.
**View Your Courses for the Semester (C)**

The Courses tab in GradesFirst will allow you to see the courses you currently are teaching as well as a complete list of all students enrolled in your courses. You can send messages to one or multiple students, issue an alert for a student who might be at-risk, and record class attendance.

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**Issue an Alert (D)**

You might find during a semester that you wish to issue an alert for a student who is at-risk to be unsuccessful. GradesFirst is the place to make this report. From Professor Home, click **Issue an Alert** from the Actions menu.
Alternately, you can check the box next to a student’s name from your class rosters. Then you can click the arrow by Actions and select Issue Alert from the menu.

Both methods lead to a dialog box:

You will need to enter a name if it was not a student chosen from your class list. Then you must select one or more reasons for the alert in the first drop down box. You also will have the option of selecting a specific course if the alert directly pertains to a single course. The student’s schedule is pre-populated in the second drop down box. To complete your alert, fill in any additional comments you have, then click Submit. The Alert goes to the Center for Academic Success, the University Writing Center, and/or the Counseling Center based on the nature of the selected Alert reason(s).
Searching for a Student by Name (E)

GradesFirst has the ability to quickly search for students by name by using Quick Search (E) at the top of the page in the gray bar.

Once you begin typing a student’s name, GradesFirst automatically begins searching for students. Once you see the student’s name in the list in the drop down box, you can select the student by clicking his or her name.

Overview of Student Profile Page

Each student profile page will show you the student’s current schedule, his or her status (Normal or At-risk), options for you as a faculty member to contact or report about the student, academic information, and personal information.

Sending Messages

GradesFirst allows you to send messages to students from within the system. When students receive emails sent from you through the GradesFirst system, it will not only show up for them in GradesFirst but it will also be delivered to the UWG Gmail account.

Check the box next to a student’s name from your class rosters. You can send messages to multiple students at once by checking the box next to each name. Each student will receive the message as though you only sent it to him/her and will not be able to see the other recipients. Then you can click the arrow by Actions and select Send Message from the menu.
You will see two tabs in the **Send a Message** dialog box, **Send Email** and **Send Text**. The tab that has a blue highlight is the action being taken.

**Send an Email Message:**
For emails, simply fill in the subject and message boxes, attach any additional documents, and decide if you would like the email to go to anyone else (works like a cc: in regular email). Click **Send Message** to complete your message.

**Send a Text Message**
For texts, enter the brief message you wish for the student to receive. The message is limited to 160 characters. Once you have composed your message, click **Send Message**. The text will be sent to the cell number the students have on file in Banner. Make sure to identify yourself in your text message and include your call back number.
Progress Reports
Progress Reports allow faculty to quickly and easily mark which students are At-Risk to fail a course and then automatically mark the rest as Active. This guide details how to respond to a Progress Report campaign.

Faculty Progress Report Campaign Step 1: Email Notification
GradesFirst sends an email to solicit feedback for a Progress Report. The email will contain a custom message to the faculty member (1) and a link to enter the report (2). Click the link that says Click to Begin Entering Student Feedback.

![Image of email notification](image-url)
Faculty Progress Report Campaign Step 2: The User Interface and Responding

Once you click the link, your browser will navigate to a page that allows quick response to the Progress Report. You will see a message about the security of the system (1). UWG uses a FERPA agreement with GradesFirst that was approved by the Registrar and ITS. Moreover, only school officials with legitimate educational interest have the ability to initiate a Progress Report. Thus, responding to a Progress Report does not violate a student's FERPA rights. You'll see your name below the security statement (2). All of your courses are listed in one convenient place, with each course listed separately (3).

Check the radial button for any students who are At-Risk to fail your class (4). Each person you select will highlight in red to show risk. Then you can any Alert reasons you want (5), report the number of absences (6), indicate current grade in the course (7), and add comments (8). The more information you provide the better.

Finally, you have the option to Submit only marked students (9) so that you can return to finish the report later or to Submit unmarked students as not At Risk (10), which allows you to use your time only to report on students at-risk.

**STUDENT FEEDBACK**

Your information is secure. GradesFirst security measures ensure your school to adhere to government rules and regulations concerning FERPA and overall student privacy. Thank you for using GradesFirst.

Professor Gladney: 2

You have been asked to fill out progress reports for students in the following classes. Update each student based on your best knowledge of their performance at this point in the term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>At-Risk to Fail Your Class?</th>
<th>Alert Reasons (You must choose at least one if the student is at risk)</th>
<th>How Many Absences?</th>
<th>Current Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Battle, Bryan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Failed to do assigned work in class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kelly, Scott</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Misses Tutor Appointments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Perry, Nathan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Steen, Tony</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Vogler, Parker</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advanced Features of GradesFirst

In addition to the functions outlined in GradesFirst Basics, faculty might receive requests to verify rosters via an Enrollment Census Campaign or to report student progress via a Progress Report Campaign. Other permissions include the ability to record class attendance, view student conversations recording in GradesFirst, use the Calendar with two-way Google integration, and access multiple reports and use Analytics. This portion of the guide seeks to inform you of the utility of these functions. It is neither complete in its instructions for how to use the features nor exhaustive in its listing of the capabilities of GradesFirst.

Viewing Conversations in GradesFirst

When you send and receive messages (email or text) using GradesFirst, your conversations are saved in the system. Access them via the Conversations icon (the envelope) in the blue vertical menu on the left side of the screen to help track your communications with a student.

To view the content of a communication, click on the Details link.
Reports and GradesFirst Analytics
GradesFirst has robust reporting features that enable you to see if a student attended tutoring, has seen an advisor, and/or participated in academic coaching. **Note:** Medical and mental counseling visits and notes do not appear in GradesFirst because of HIPAA.

Reports do not alter data—only collect and display it. Therefore, it is safe to play around with Reports without concern for altering data. For assistance using Reports, contact Danny Gourley, campus administrator for GradesFirst, at dgourley@westga.edu.
Like Reports, Analytics provide a way to review student activity in advising, tutoring, career counseling, and academic coaching services. Analytics also provides graphs as visual aids to understand usage patterns. For assistance using Analytics, contact Danny Gourley, campus administrator for GradesFirst, at dgourley@westga.edu.

Roll Verification

Roll verification in GradesFirst takes place via the Enrollment Census Campaign. This feature allows faculty to quickly and easily mark which students have never attended and then automatically mark the rest as Active. This guide details how to respond to an Enrollment Census campaign. **Note: UWG currently completes roll verification via Banweb.**

Faculty Enrollment Census Campaign Step 1: Email Notification

GradesFirst sends an email to solicit feedback for an Enrollment Census. The email will contain a custom message to the faculty member (1) and a link to enter the report (2). Click the link that says Click to Begin Entering Student Feedback.
Faculty Enrollment Census Campaign Step 2: The User Interface and Responding

Once you click the link, your browser will navigate to a page that allows quick response to the Enrollment Census. You will see your name at the top (1) to ensure you know you are in the system correctly and a message about the security of the system (2). UWG uses a FERPA agreement with GradesFirst that was approved by the Registrar and ITS. You’ll see your name again below the security statement (3). All of your courses are listed in one convenient place, with each course listed separately (4 and 5).

Check the radial button for any students who have **Never Attended** your class (6). Each person you select will highlight in pink to show non-attendance.

Next, scroll to the bottom of the page and check the box to **Mark remaining as active**. Note that checking the box does NOT highlight the other students in green to show their active status; however, the results do report accurately. Click the **Submit** button to submit your response.
Finally, the page confirms that you have completed your response. Close the browser to exit securely.

Record Class Attendance
GradesFirst gives you the ability to track your class attendance and observe attendance patterns for each student. From your Professor Home, click Record My Class Attendance in the Actions menu.
The next screen will populate your class schedule on the left side of the screen. Select a course to record attendance (1). Then select the date of the class meeting you wish to record (2).
Your students for the selected course should now be showing in the center of the window. Mark students who were absent or tardy by clicking the appropriate radio button next to their name. You can also indicate if their absences or tardiness was excused. Once you have completed marking all the absent and tardy students, click the box next to **Mark Remaining Present** to select all other students as present.

Click **Save Attendance** to complete the record.

**Calendar**

GradesFirst has a calendar tool that will pre-populate all of your courses and show appointments. It has two-way integration with Google Calendar as well. If you want to use GradesFirst to conduct advising appointments, contact Danny Gourley, campus administrator for GradesFirst, at dgourley@westga.edu.