

Impact of Course Length on Student Learning

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ABSTRACT

Using a database of over 45,000 observations from Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters, we investigate the link between course length and student learning. We find that, after controlling for student demographics and other characteristics, intensive courses do result in higher grades than traditional 16 week semester length courses and that this benefit peaks at about 4 weeks. By looking at future performance we are also able to show that the higher grades reflect a real increase in knowledge and are not the result of a “lowering of the bar” during summer. We discuss some of the policy implications of our findings.

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