

Cumulative Final Exams: A Continual Review of the Impact on Student Learning

Abstract:

This project extends our examination on the short- and long-term impact of cumulative final exams on student learning. Our department uses content exams given at the beginning and end of each semester to monitor student learning in many of our classes. Student learning is determined by the amount of improvement (i.e., the change scores) in the tests scores for each student from the beginning to the end of the semester. Last year, we began a systematic examination on the impact of cumulative final exams on student learning. We also examined the long-term impact of cumulative exams on student learning by re-testing students 6-months and 1 year after course completion. Our preliminary results indicate that students who did take cumulative finals retained more course information than did students who did not take cumulative finals. We would like to continue monitoring the impact of cumulative finals on students' long term retention by re-testing students on a semi-annual basis. Finally, we would like to change our department policies and curriculum to recommend instructors use cumulative testing both within courses and across courses (e.g., retesting on concepts learned in Research Methods and Statistics I in Research Methods and Statistics II).

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Continuation Funding