

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT STRATEGIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Cramming for finals is a common phenomenon and many students seem to cram for their final in the Principles of Marketing course. We developed scales to assess a) cramming in general, and specifically b) cramming in the Principles of Marketing course. In addition, student *perceptions* of cramming are assessed and then related to *actual* GPA and grade in the Principles course.

Our interest in student Study Strategies (SSs) derives from a comprehensive assessment program being initiated for our Principles of Marketing course. In designing that assessment, we became concerned that the use of embedded multiple-choice "master tests," for assessment purposes, might cause students to cram more as a study strategy for the Principles course. If so, what would be the consequences of that on short and long-run learning?

We administered a survey about SSs to students in an upper-division marketing course as a pilot. This allowed us to relate the SS survey results to "Master Test" scores also administered to measure comprehension and retention of material from the Principles of Marketing course (which these students had previously taken anywhere between 2 and 11 quarters prior).

FINDINGS

We conclude that there is little difference between the tendency to cram for the Principles of Marketing course compared to "most other courses." Students

do not think cramming is better for multiple-choice tests, which is an important result. Also we *reject* that students *perceive* cramming would earn a good grade (both in general as well as for the Principles course). We *reject* the hypothesis that cramming is *perceived* to result in remembering course material 6 months or one year later. With regard to two measures of *actual performance*, cramming did not seem to have a very strong effect on the Principles of Marketing course grade, but the relationship is significantly negative for overall GPA.

We ran a regression to explain the Master Test score (percent correct) as a function of the course grade in the Principles of Marketing, the degree of cramming reported in it, and time since the course was taken (e.g., delay):

$$\text{Master Test \%} = b_0 + b_1 \text{Grade\%} + b_2 (\text{Cram}) + b_3 (\text{Cram}) \times (\text{Delay})$$

The model estimation indicates that cramming interacts with quarters of delay, which is best illustrated by an example. Consider two hypothetical students: Student A with a high course specific cramming scale index (25) but an 88% on the Principles Course grade, versus Student B, who had a low index (11) and scored 83% on the course grade. The model predications are that after 7 quarters, Student A would have a Master Test score of 63% (an absolute drop of 25%), compared to a 67% (an absolute drop of 16%) for Student B.