



Department SEMINARS

Shall I try it again or maybe later?
Number and schedule of exam
sessions and university students'
outcomes

SILVIA GRANATO

EU Joint Research Centre,
Competence Centre on Microeconomic Evaluation

FRIDAY, 7 JUNE 2024
2:00 PM

Seminar Room 237, DEM



A B S T R A C T

Higher education systems face many challenges, among which student dropout and low completion rates are the most prominent. The literature tends to explain student performance based on family or individual characteristics, paying little attention to the role of exams. The literature has mainly focused on the individual, family, and higher education institutions' characteristics as determinants of student performance and dropout, paying little attention to the exam organization.

This paper aims to fill this gap by exploiting a policy implemented in one of the largest universities in Italy, which reduced the number of exam attempts from 6 to 3. We use a difference-in-differences design and compare students enrolled under the new versus the old exam system. Leveraging rich administrative data we show that the reform improved students' first-year outcomes by reducing the probability of dropout and increasing the number of exams passed and credits earned. Our analysis also shows that just a tiny part of these improvements is accounted for by the increase in the average quality of the student intake.

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