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**Abstract**

An important issue in higher education research is how to keep study progress at a good pace. In this article we will deal with the study progress of first-year students in various courses in Dutch higher education. Why are some courses more effective than others? Do such aspects as the composition of student population and different curricula influence variation in study progress, after controlling for individual factors? Multilevel analysis shows that there is in fact such variation between courses and this variation is only partially explained by individual characteristics and course characteristics. At the individual level, sex, initial ability, academic fit, expectation and commitment are important factors. After controlling for these individual factors, some courses still turn out to be more effective than others in getting their students to earn credits. Students in courses with a high proportion of women make more progress than students in courses with a high proportion of men. Furthermore, courses with a high average number of student study hours per week do better. Courses are ranked in an "order of effectiveness" before and after important factors in the models are taken into account.

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Comparing courses before and after controlling for any characteristics clearly provides a different picture of effective courses. (HRK / Abstract übernommen), Beekhoven, S., E-Mail:

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