

03.7.2024

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Title

Student perceptions of the fairness of grading procedures: a multilevel investigation of the role of the academic environment/ Roland Burger

Publication year

2017

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education. - 74 (2017) 2, S. 301 - 320

Inventory number

45679

Keywords

Studentenschaft : Studienverhalten

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of assessment method (essays vs. examinations) and instruction method (seminars vs. lectures) on student perceptions of the fairness of the assessment process. Department-specific combinations of these factors give a unique profile to the assessment process and to the way students interact with faculty. It is argued that the conditions thus created place students in some departments in a more advantageous position when it comes to meeting justice-related expectations. The variables of interest are procedural justice (PJ) and informational justice (IJ). For PJ, aspects regarding the amount of control students can exert on the grading process (PJ-C) are distinguished from aspects regarding the perceived validity of grading procedures (PJ-V). The sample consists of 1549 students from 48 departments of a German university. Analysis is done via multilevel mixed effects models. Models also check for cross-level interactions between effects of the academic environment and student socioeconomic status (SES). Results show that PJ-C and PJ-V are significantly affected by the assessment method. Higher proportions of essays relative to

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examinations in a department lead to higher ratings of PJ-C, while they decrease ratings of PJ-V. Ratings of IJ are higher as well if assessment is more essay-based, although this only affects low-SES students. Regarding the instruction method, a higher proportion of seminars was found to significantly increase PJ-C and IJ. Again, effects on IJ are moderated by parental SES. Policy implications for reducing feelings of injustice are discussed.. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Burger, Roland, E-Mail: roland.burger@uni-tuebingen.de