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**Abstract**

Higher education institutions have experienced an increase in student enrolment over the past decades. At the same time, universities increasingly attempt to attract students by offering a variety of study programmes. Using a Dutch panel data set of 1300 programmes in 50 institutions, this study investigates what explains the attractiveness of study programmes. We hypothesize that the distance of study programmes plays a major role in student decisions to attend. Based on an instrumental variables identification strategy, we demonstrate that the closest distance between similar programmes offered and competition between programmes have significant effects on the enrolment of students in higher education. The results indicate that a one-kilometer increase in the closest distance between similar programmes decreases the number of students to enrol in a programme by – seven students after controlling for programme type and other characteristics.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)