

Teaching & Learning in Full- and Condensed-Course Formats

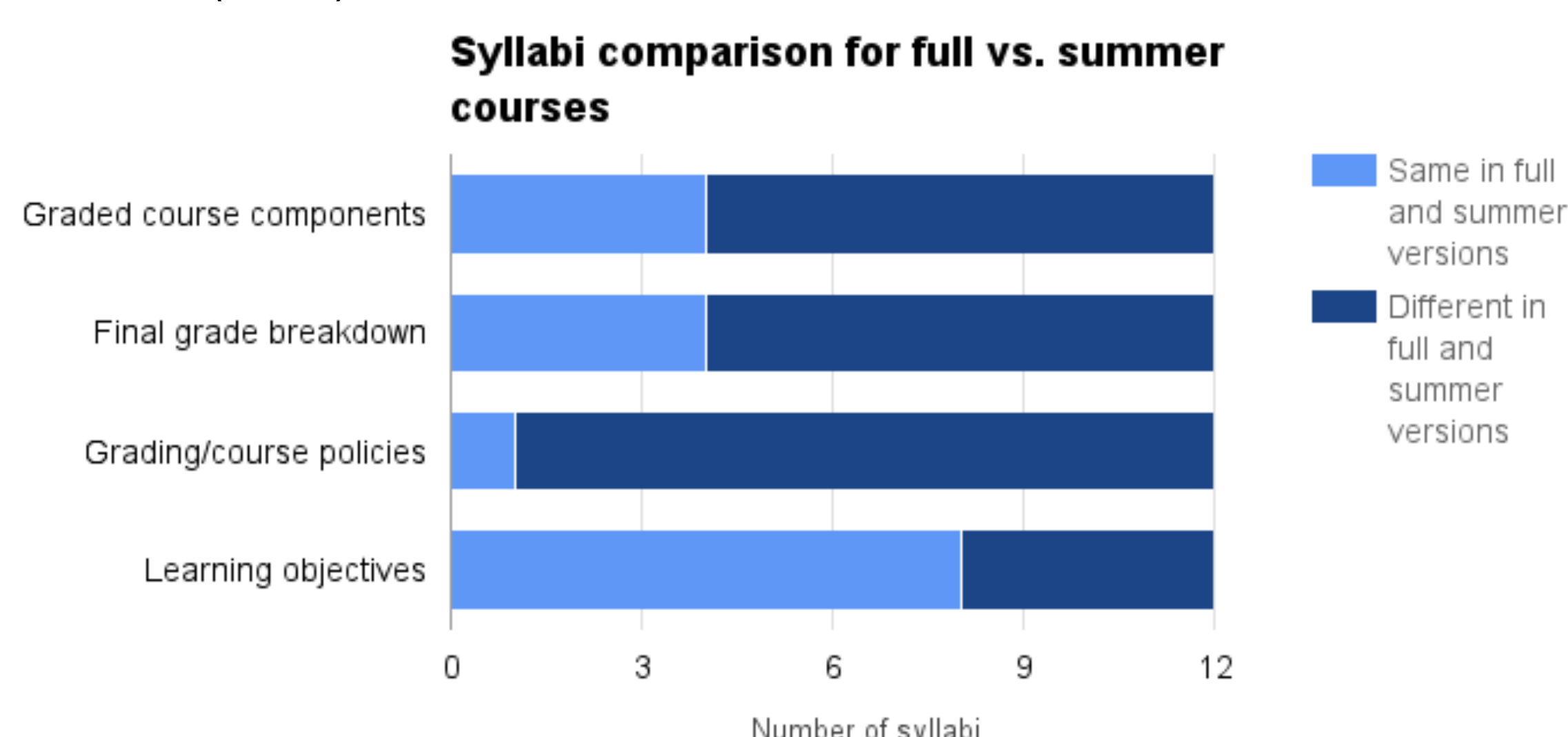
Do condensed and full-semester versions of the same course differ in terms of: 1) instructors' experiences, 2) students' experiences, 3) student learning or persistence?

Study Design

- Matched-pair study design: Same course (course # & units), same instructor, 2 different formats: full-semester (fall or spring) and condensed (summer)
- 13 courses from 10 different disciplines
- Data sources: faculty focus group, student survey, final student grades, student demographic data, and course syllabi

Results: Syllabi & Faculty Focus Group

- Syllabi differ across full-semester and summer versions of the same course ($n=12$)



Opportunities Afforded by Summer Format

- Increased student-instructor interaction
- Increased student time on task
- Fewer competing distractions for faculty and students

Primary Challenge of Summer Format is the Available Time

- Limits students' prep and processing time
- Limits the number and nature of assessments
- Makes recovering from setbacks (e.g., missed assignment, instructor absence) difficult

Instructor Stress

- Fewer commitments makes summer teaching less stressful
- Fast pace of summer classes means that the workload is relentless

Reported Modifications to summer course

- Shorten the length of assignments
- Reduce the number of exams/assignments

Lessons Learned

- Both students and faculty perceive summer courses as less stressful.
- There is a 5% bump in summer student performance, despite lower incoming QPAs.
- It's unclear whether this bump is caused by lower cognitive load or the reported differences in assessments.

Results: Student Survey & Grades

Demographics – Summer Term v. Full Term

- Lower incoming QPA in the summer term
- Greater proportion of international students in the summer term

Impact of Taking Course During the Summer

- 5% bump in final grade (controlling for course and incoming QPA)

Student Perceptions

- 67% perceived the summer term to be less stressful and 64% suggested that the format had a positive impact on their learning

“It feels a little bit less [stressful], as I focus on one or two courses, while in regular semester I care about five or six.”

- 33% of the students who perceived a positive impact attributed that to having to remember the material for a shorter amount of time.

“It gives you less time to forget (normal semesters are too long that I forget what I learned).”

- The summer term is perceived as less stressful, but the condensed format may allow students to use less adaptive learning strategies.

“I think I retain more of the information but I can't judge if I will remember it later on as much as a 14 week course.”

Future Directions

- Direct measure of student learning in both formats: pretest, posttest, and retention test
- Analysis of earlier syllabi: Are differences the result of the different learning formats or of instructors iterating on a course (regardless of format)?
- Comparing the performance of summer- & full-semester students in sequenced courses.