

Academic Performance, Grade Inflation and Regulatory Exceptions in HE During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic will leave its mark on the history of education and its impacts, in addition to affecting society from different dimensions. Years will pass before the effects on higher education are sufficiently systematized in such a way that it is possible to identify the impact on student learning. Research published in Colombia has focused on national high school standardized test (Saber 11), not in higher education. Despite not having causal evidence on the effects of the pandemic on higher education learning in Colombia, it is possible to expect that the results have been heterogeneous between institutions according to their characteristics and those of their students. This document explores the impact of the pandemic in academic performance in higher education. The analysis is developed in the case of a private non-profit university in Colombia. This document analyzes the evolution of academic performance in undergraduate university students during a ten year period, between 2012 and 2021. Academic performance is measured by the average GPA in the context of regulatory changes and the pandemic context. Results show an atypical effect of the pandemic on learning outcomes measured by the Grade Point Average (GPA) and the proportion of students successfully approving all the academic credits during the term. The effect of grade inflation during the pandemic period reflected in the increase in the GPA for the semester is identified as equivalent of 50% of the total change in grades.