

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MILLION MOOC USERS

(Excerpt from unpublished manuscript)

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We examine the flow of registrants through 16 Coursera courses that were taught by faculty at the University of Pennsylvania between June 2012 and July 2013. The study explores key user-transition points and variations in those points based on course characteristics. This excerpt supplements our [initial findings](#).

One measure that we use is “sequential flow,” which we define as an orderly movement through a course. This approach considers, for instance, the proportion of users who accessed a lecture in the first course “module” (defined as the activities comprising the first segment or week of course material), the proportion of that group who then accessed a lecture for the second course module, and so on through the final course module. This pattern is akin to attending, at least part of, every class in a course delivered in face-to-face mode.

Figure 1 shows that, across the courses, the percentage of registrants who accessed the first course module ranged from 26% to 62%. Regardless of course length, considerably smaller shares went on to access a lecture in the second and third modules. At about the fourth module, access stabilized. The share of registrants who viewed at least one lecture in every module ranged from 5% to 13% of registrants.

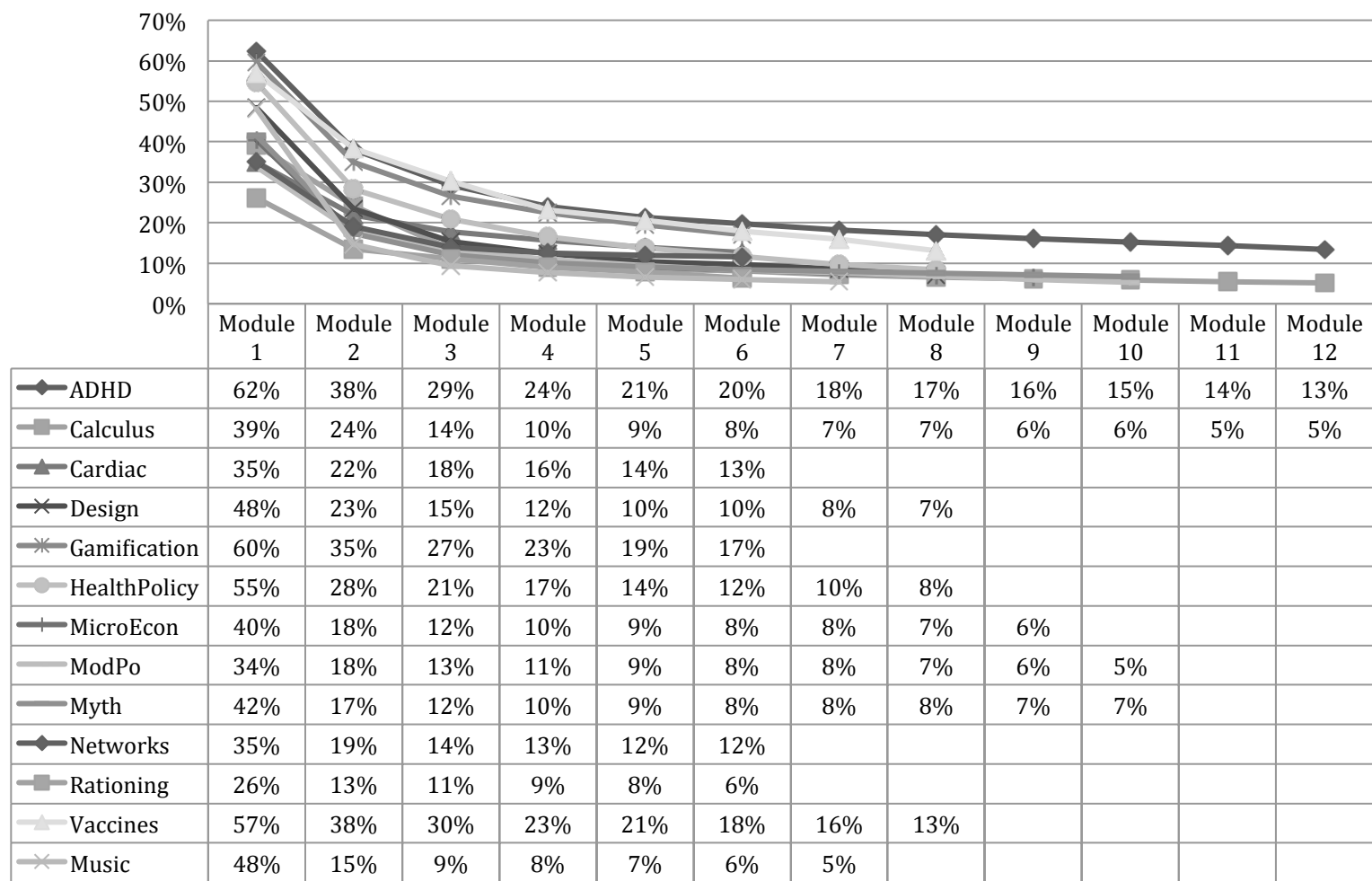


Figure 1. “Sequential flow” of registrants: Percent of registrants accessing at least one lecture in each course module (in sequence)

Source: Perna, Ruby, Boruch, Wang, Scull, Ahmad, and Evans (May 12, 2014). Excerpt from unpublished manuscript.