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Change in Achievement Goals and Their Relation to Exam Grades

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Abstract: Past research has shown that students use feedback such as exam scores to regulate achievement goal pursuit, and that achievement goals predict class performance. However, little is known about goal change in the time between exams. Using college classroom data, we examined changes in achievement goals across six time points and how they relate to exam scores. We found that achievement goals assessed immediately before an exam or immediately after grades were given were most strongly predictive of exam scores. Changes in mastery-approach goals between the start of a unit and immediately before the exam predicted exam performance. However, changes in achievement goals from the time immediately before one exam to the time immediately before the next exam were not predictive of scores. This suggests that the changes to achievement goals within exam units, and not between units, are most important in predicting achievement outcomes. Implications for results are discussed.