

HOW MUCH DO THEY REALLY DO? ASSESSING STUDENT WORKLOAD

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How much time do we (as educators) expect students to spend studying for a given subject? When designing courses (or units of study), academics often have a clear expectation about what students should do, and how much time students should invest into their studies (Brown-Kramer, 2021). There is some evidence correlating student grades to invested time, and even to the time in the day students study (Young, 1998; Marbouti et al., 2018). However, how realistic are the expectations, how much time do students effectively spend? Are we expecting them to do more (or less) than what they do? If they do less, does this give reason to question the course design and even the validity of achieved grades?

Here, we tried to understand, how much time students effectively invested in a course, how this compared to expectations and how is correlated with final grades.

In a third-year simulated work experience course, we have had students self-report their study effort for the course for every week of the semester. The course is largely based on a group project, with the final grade being moderated by peer evaluation. We have analyzed the submissions and correlated the self-reported time investments with student final grades. At Flinders University, guidelines state that a course (or unit, or topic, worth 4.5 Units) should have approximately 135 hours of student workload. The self-reported study times from the students came, with a few exceptions, nowhere near this value, yet a significant number of students were awarded high grades for the course.

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