

Time allocation Board subjects

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Queensland
Board of Senior Secondary School Studies

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TIME ALLOCATION FOR BOARD SUBJECTS

Introduction

Purpose

The main aim of this paper was to discover how schools allocate time for Board subjects, both timetabled and real contact time, and to compile some data on the diversity of methods used by schools in achieving these outcomes.

Within the boundaries of this examination was the identification of subject-specific treatments — a sample of subjects was chosen to be representative of general school curriculum.

A secondary exploration was to ascertain how common were different approaches to catering for the needs of post-compulsory students who need to study outside of the norm of two years.

Process

All schools were sent a survey (see appendix 1). They did not receive instruction as to how to compile the information, except those directions for each question. Two hundred and fifty-seven schools responded of the possible 379 — about 67 per cent.

The survey had four sections:

- The first asked schools to provide a comparison between timetabled school time including assessment and real contact time (the actual time that students spend in learning and assessment) for nine subjects — Maths B, Geography, English, Biological Science, Art, BCT, Technology Studies, IPT and French/German.
- The second asked how the school organised its teaching time.
- The third asked for the proportion of time devoted to assessment for the same subjects as identified previously.
- The fourth asked schools to identify their implementation of variable progression rates.

Discussion

It was evident as the survey results were returned that schools had used a variety of methods to gather their information and then to report it back on the survey form.

To accommodate these differences, results with common qualities were grouped (see appendix 2).

An explanation of each of the groupings is given in the analysis before the presentation of data.

Summary of findings

- Schools allocate an average of 65 hours timetabled time including assessment for the sampled subjects, with real contact time averaging 57 hours.
- 75 per cent of the sampled schools timetable for more than 60 hours per semester. This is significantly more than the required 55 hours per semester.
- 75 per cent of schools succeed in having real contact time of at least 55 hours.
- The differences in the means (timetabled time compared to real contact time) for each subject as a percentage of the timetabled time ranges from 12.5 per cent to 14.75 per cent.
- The difference in the mean time for timetabled school time as compared to the mean time for real contact time varies between eight and ten hours across the range of subjects.
- 61 per cent of schools replied that interruptions were the result of public holidays and school-based activities, such as excursions, school sporting commitments and special events.
- 69 per cent have a number of lessons with set durations scheduled each week. Of these, about 32 per cent are opting for fewer lessons of longer duration.
- Combinations are the next most popular organisational format with 26.7 per cent.
- Cycles that last for longer than a week were operating in 12.6 per cent of schools.
- 1.6 per cent of schools favoured English and Maths in time allocation.
- In most subjects in most schools up to 10 per cent of time is spent in assessment.
- It is notable that for Art and Technology Studies, about a third of responses indicated more than 70 per cent of time is spent in assessment.
- About a quarter of schools identified that more time was committed to assessment in practical subjects and about 30 per cent commented that the time varied from subject to subject. Fifty per cent of responses provided a variety of comments that could not be grouped.
- 94 of the 257 schools that responded to the survey were already pursuing variable progression rates for post-compulsory students. Eighty of the 94 were allowing students to complete senior over three years and 14 of the 94 were allowing students to study two semesters of a senior subject simultaneously.

Conclusions

All sample schools are meeting the Board requirements of at least 55 hours of timetabled school time including assessment per semester (see discussion appendix 3). This is expected, as when principals sign the R1 for work programs, they agree to meet the 55 hours a semester or 220 hours for the course of study.

Real contact time is reduced, in the majority of cases (see discussion appendix 3) but not substantially enough to affect the delivery of senior secondary subjects in most instances.

Time devoted to assessment is variable, with practical orientated subjects spending more time in assessment than others. This is because of the continuous and integrated nature of learning experiences that support and combine the production of assessment tasks (e.g. the making dimension in Art).

Many schools are already pursuing variable progression rates for students.

Analysis of data

Question One

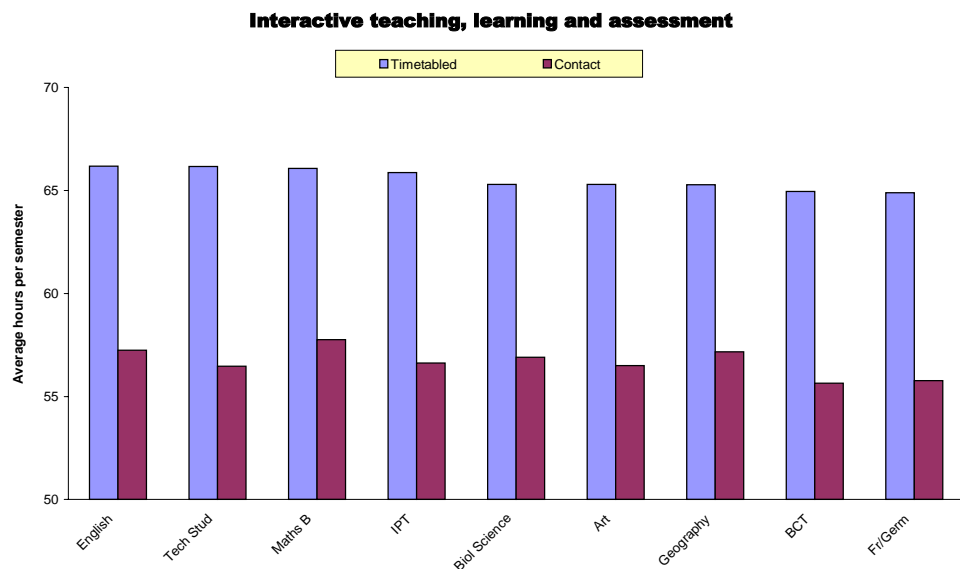
Part A: Indicate, in hours, the timetabled time and real contact time, per semester, for interactive teaching, learning and assessment for each of the subjects listed below:

Subject	Timetabled time (hrs)	Real contact time (hrs)
Maths B		
Geography		
English		
Biological Science		
Art		
BCT		
Technology Studies		
IPT		
French/German		

Part B: Comment on your responses.

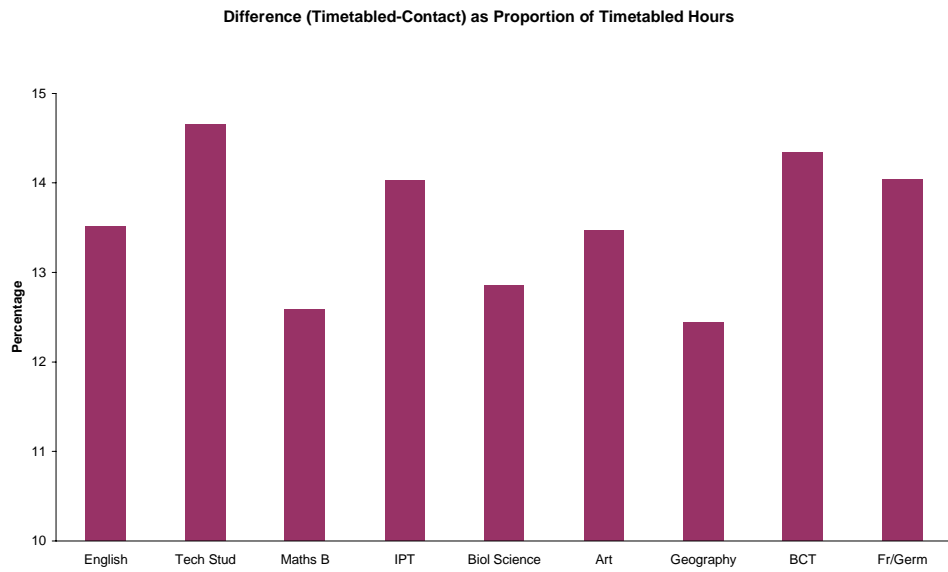
Part A: Results

The following graph presents the mean time in hours for timetabled school time compared to the mean time in hours for real contact time for each of the sampled subjects.



An average of around 65 hours timetabled time appears common for the sampled subjects, with real contact time averaging about 57 hours.

The following graph presents the differences in the means for each subject as a percentage of the timetabled time.



The percentage differences in the mean for subjects ranges from approximately 12.5 per cent to 14.75 per cent.

(For further graphic comparisons see appendix 3.)

Part A: Discussion

The difference in the mean time for timetabled school time as compared to the mean time for real contact time appears to vary between eight and ten hours across the range of subjects.

Part B: Results

The responses to Part B were categorised as follows:

A = planned time is based on 20 week semesters

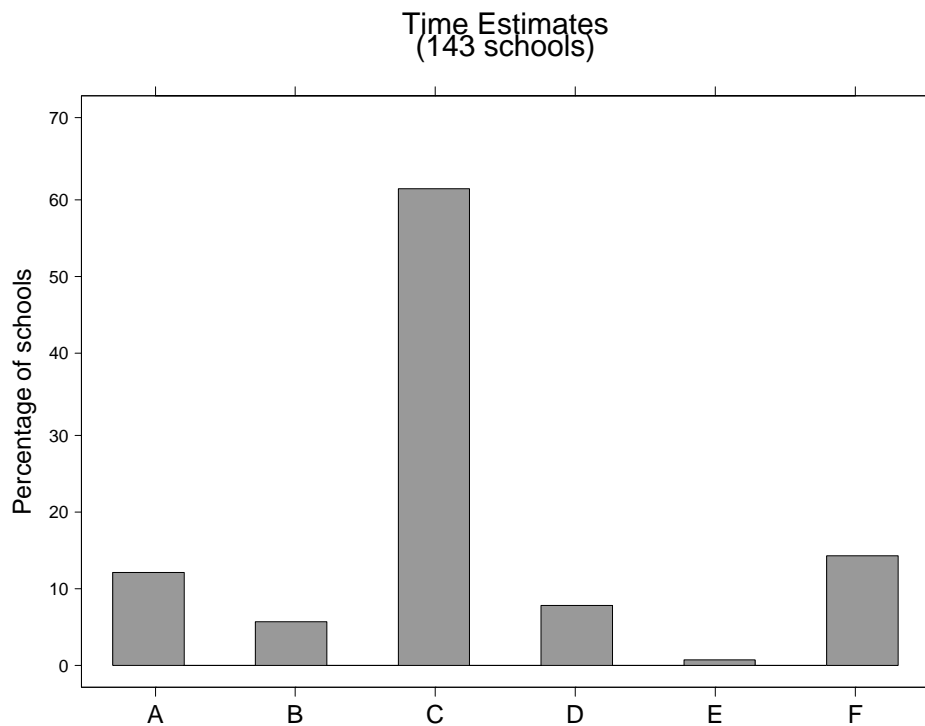
B = planned time is based on Semester 1, 2002

C = real time is impacted mostly by interruptions such as public holidays and school-based activities

D = real time is affected to differing degrees in different subjects according to the varying stages of the two-year cycle

E = real time is affected by student behaviour

F = real time for individual students is affected by their involvement in other activities



Sixty-one per cent of schools replied that interruptions were the result of public holidays and other school-based activities, such as excursions, school sporting commitments and special events.

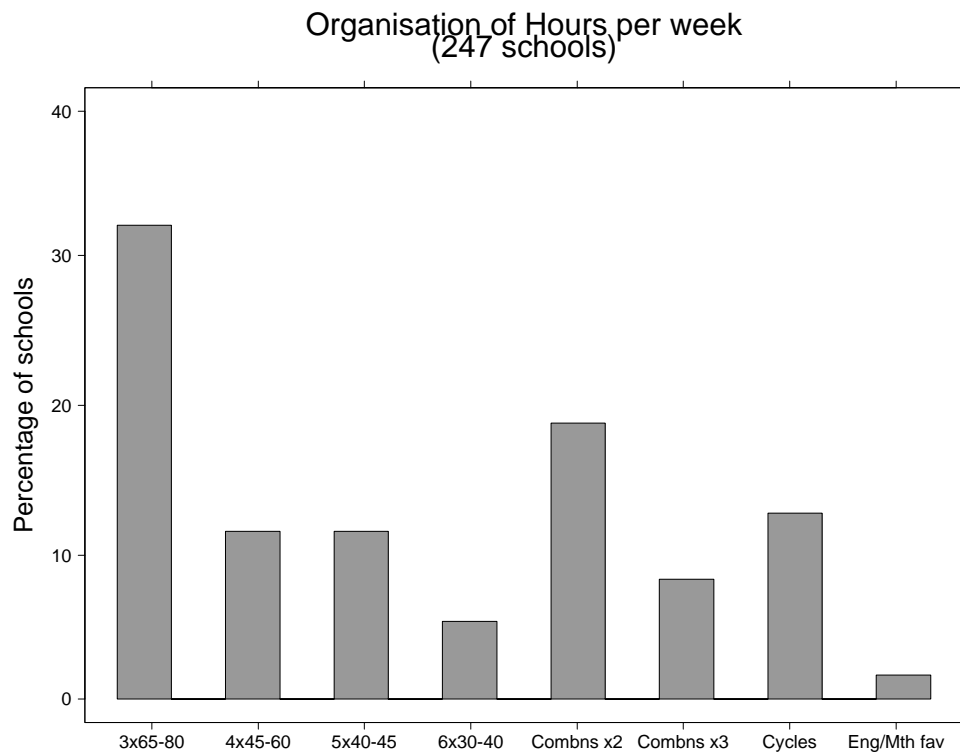
Question Two

Indicate how this real time for interactive teaching and learning is organised per week, e.g. 3 x 70-minute lessons, 4 x 55-minute lessons etc.

Results

There was a diversity of responses to this question. To cater for the range of approaches the following categories were defined:

- A. 3 x (65 – 80) minutes
- B. 4 x (45 – 60) minutes
- C. 5 x (40 – 45) minutes
- D. 6 x (30 – 40) minutes
- E. Combinations x 2
(for example)
 - 1 x 90 minutes and 3 x 45 minutes
 - 2 x 35 minutes and 1 x 70 minutes
 - 2 x 63 minutes and 1 x 84 minutes
 - 4 x 40 minutes and 1 x 35 minutes
 - 2 x 85 minutes and 1 x 45 minutes
 - 2 x 72 minutes and 1 x 43 minutes etc.
- F. Combinations x 3
(for example)
 - 1 x 80 minutes, 2 x 40 minutes and 1 x 30 minutes
 - 1 x 90 minutes, 3 x 50 minutes and 2 x 45 minutes etc.
- G. Cycles
(for example)
 - 8 x 40 minutes in an 8-day cycle
 - 6 x 70 minutes in a 9-day cycle
 - 9x 45 minutes in a 10-day cycle
 - 7 x 55 minutes in a 10-day cycle
 - 1 x 90 minutes, 2 x 45 minutes and a 1 x 60 minutes in a 10 day cycle
 - 9 x 50 minutes in a 10-day cycle
 - 8 x 50 minutes in an 11-day cycle etc.
- H. English and Maths favoured
(example)
 - 4 x 42 minutes for English and/or Maths, while other subjects receive 3 x 42 minutes
 - 5 x 55 minutes for English and/or Maths, while other subjects receive 4 x 55 minutes etc.



More than half the schools sampled, nearly 69 per cent, have a number of lessons with set durations scheduled each week. Of these, about 32 per cent are opting for fewer lessons of longer duration.

Combinations are the next most popular organisational format with 26.7 per cent.

Cycles that operate for longer than a week were operating in 12.6 per cent of schools.

In a small percentage (1.6 per cent) of schools, English and Maths were favoured in time allocation.

Question Three

Part A: Indicate the proportion of timetabled time given over to assessment used for reporting purposes in each of the subjects listed below:

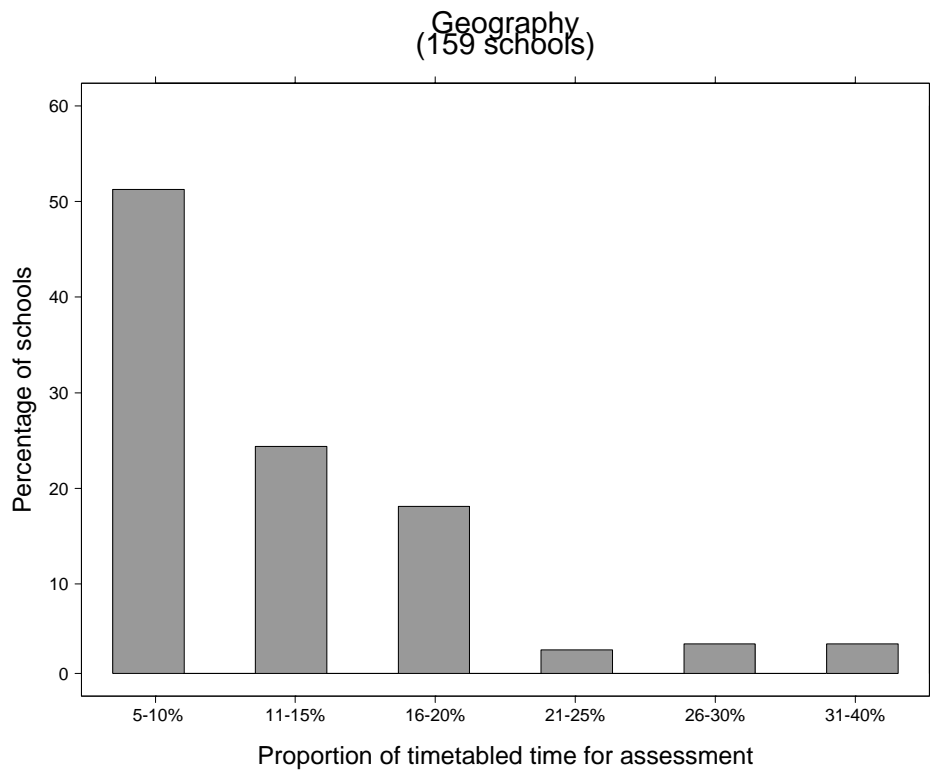
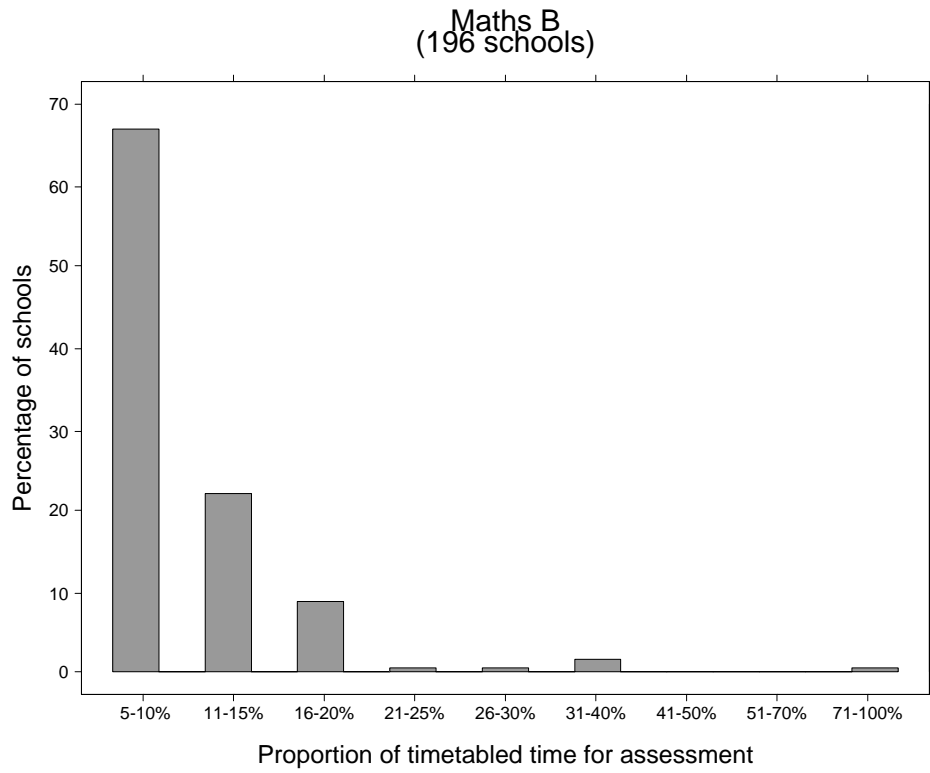
Maths B	___%
Geography	___%
English	___%
Biological Science	___%
Art	___%
BCT	___%
Technology Studies	___%
IPT	___%
French/German	___%

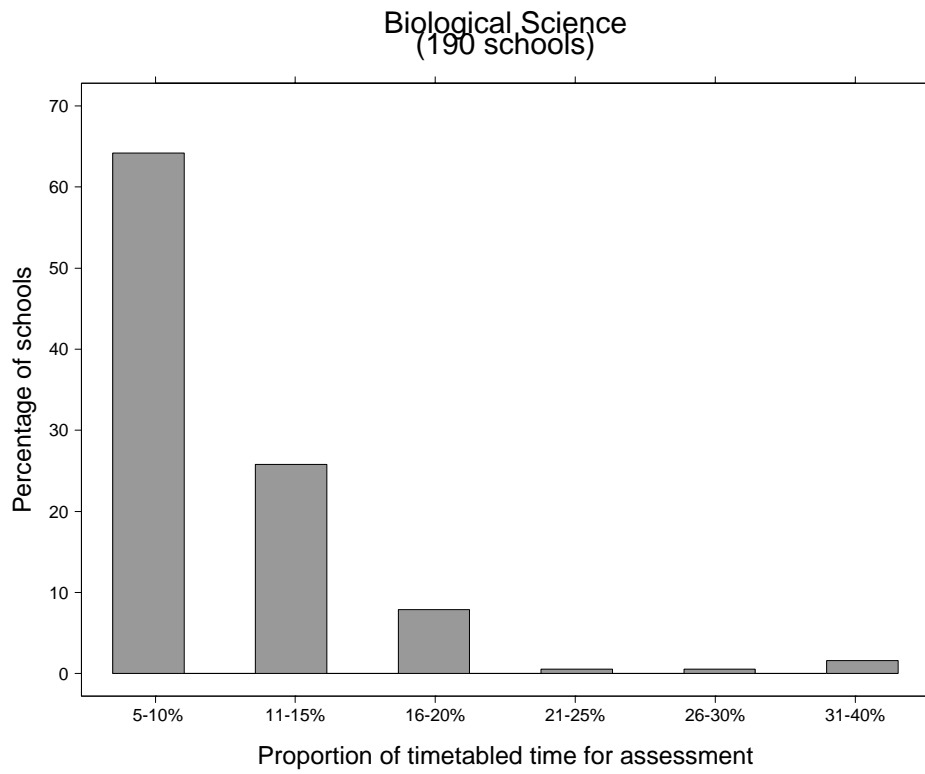
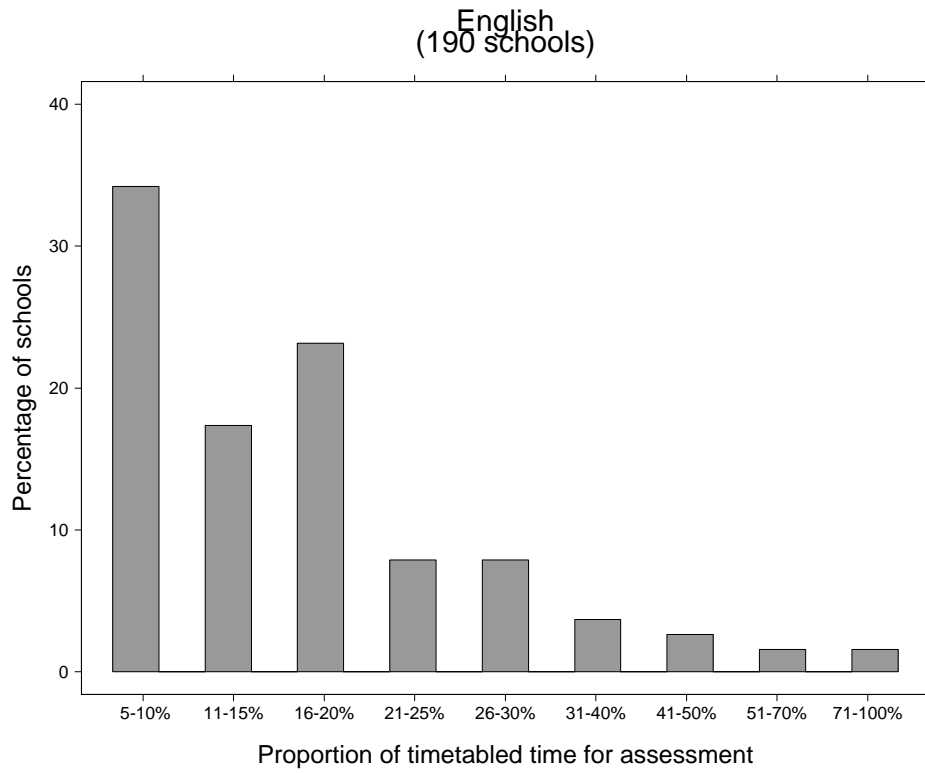
Part B: Comment on the above.

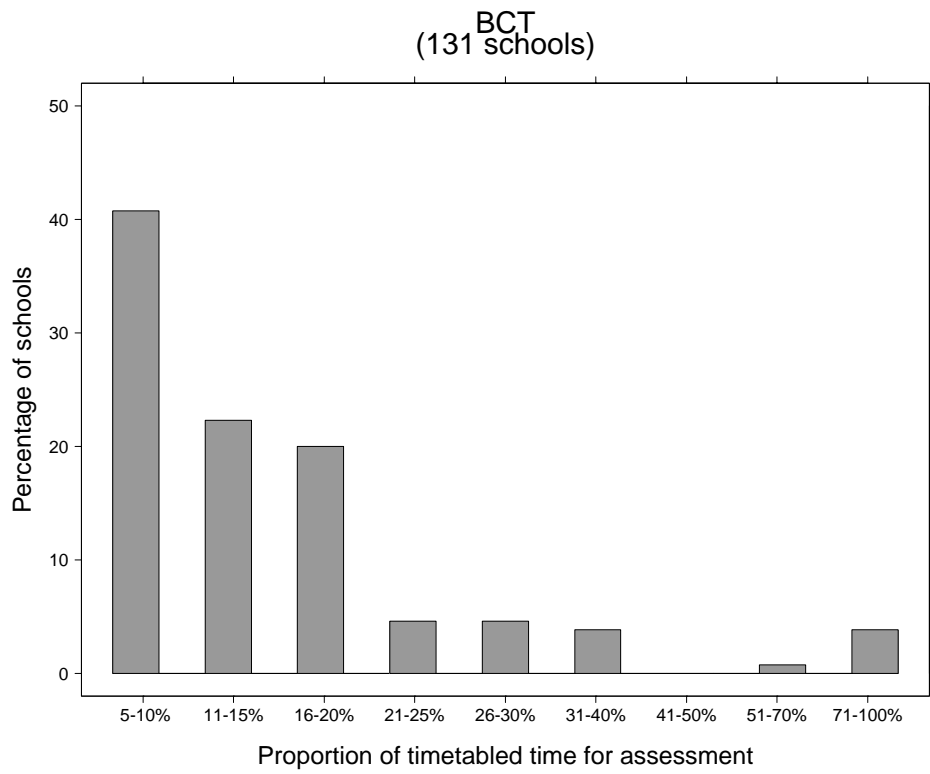
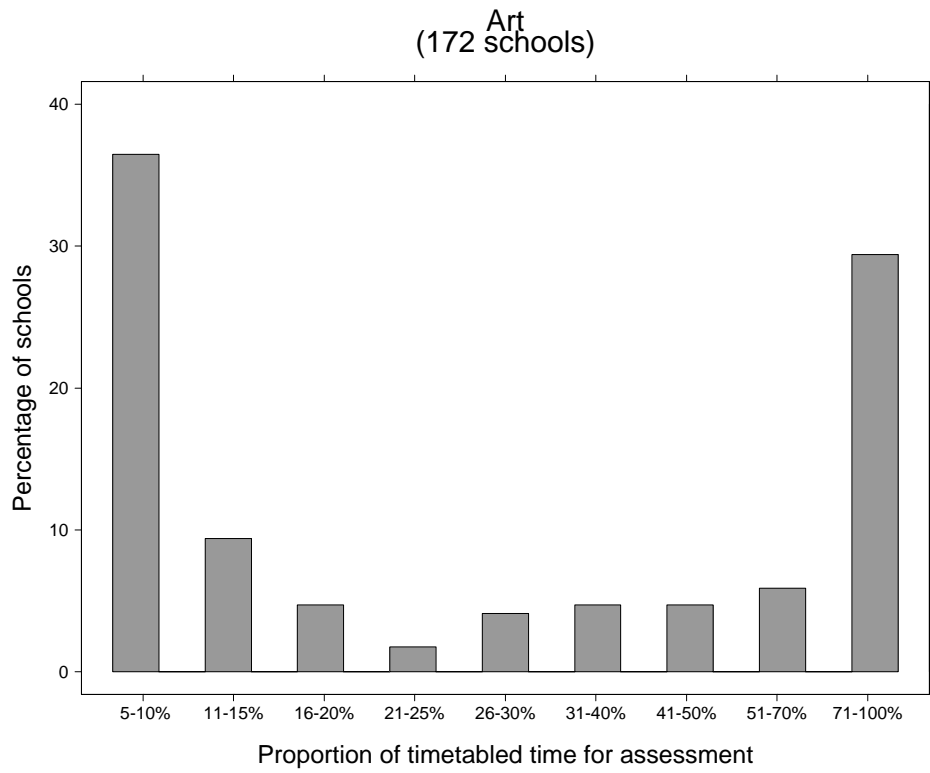
Part A: Results

As the percentages reported by schools varied considerably, and as responses to 20 per cent were more common, the following groupings were used (there were no responses that indicated time spent in assessment to be less than 5 per cent):

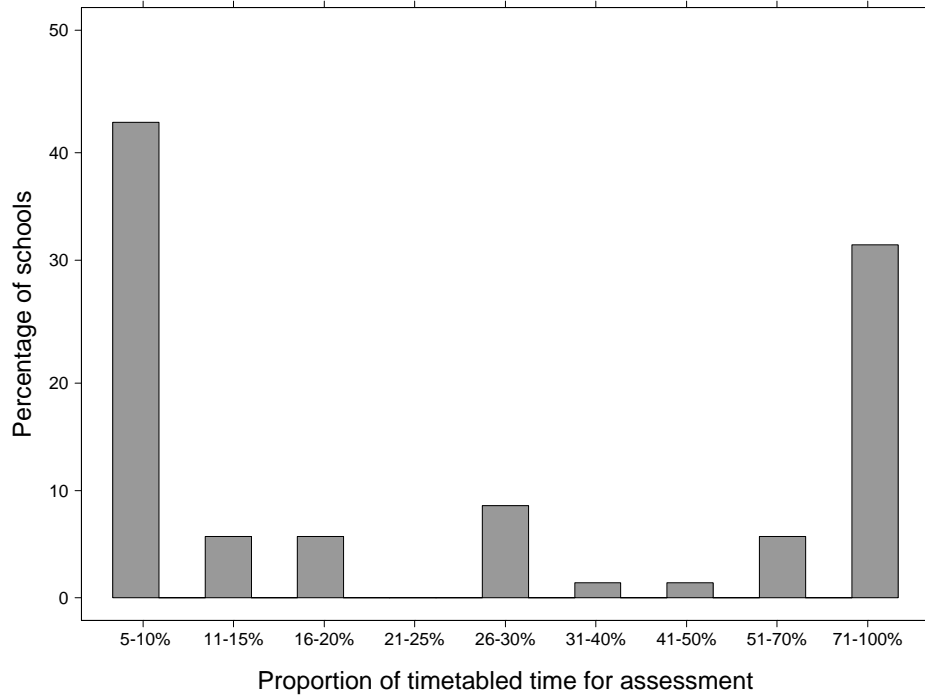
- A. 5 – 10%
- B. 11 – 15%
- C. 16 – 20%
- D. 21 – 25%
- E. 25 – 30%
- F. 31 – 40%
- G. 41 – 50%
- H. 51 – 70%
- I. 71 – 100%



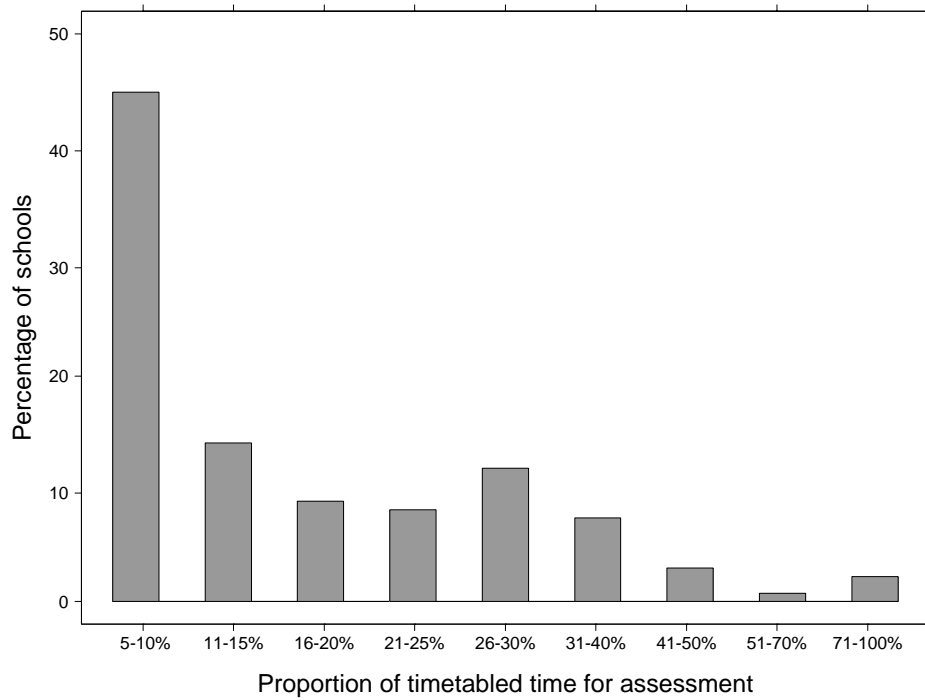


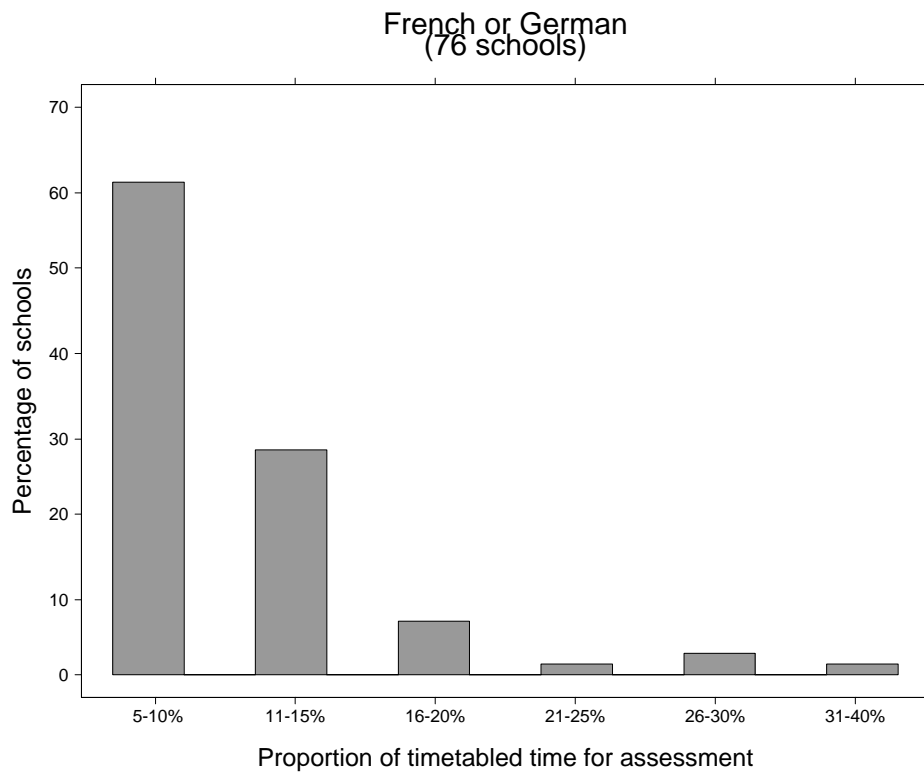


Technology Studies (74 schools)



IPT (136 schools)





In most subjects in most schools, it appears that up to 10 per cent of time is spent in assessment.

It is notable that for Art and Technology Studies, about a third indicate more than 70 per cent of time is spent in assessment.

Art and Tech Studies have higher median, mean and third quartile: they have significant proportion of schools indicating higher in-class assessment.

Geography, Biology and French/German have low maximum in-class assessment, but Geography is replaced by Maths B in having about 95 per cent of schools with less than 20 per cent in-class assessment.

Remaining subjects have 95 per cent of schools with less than 40 per cent (or Geography, Economics & BCT have about 75 per cent of schools with less than 20 per cent in-class assessment).

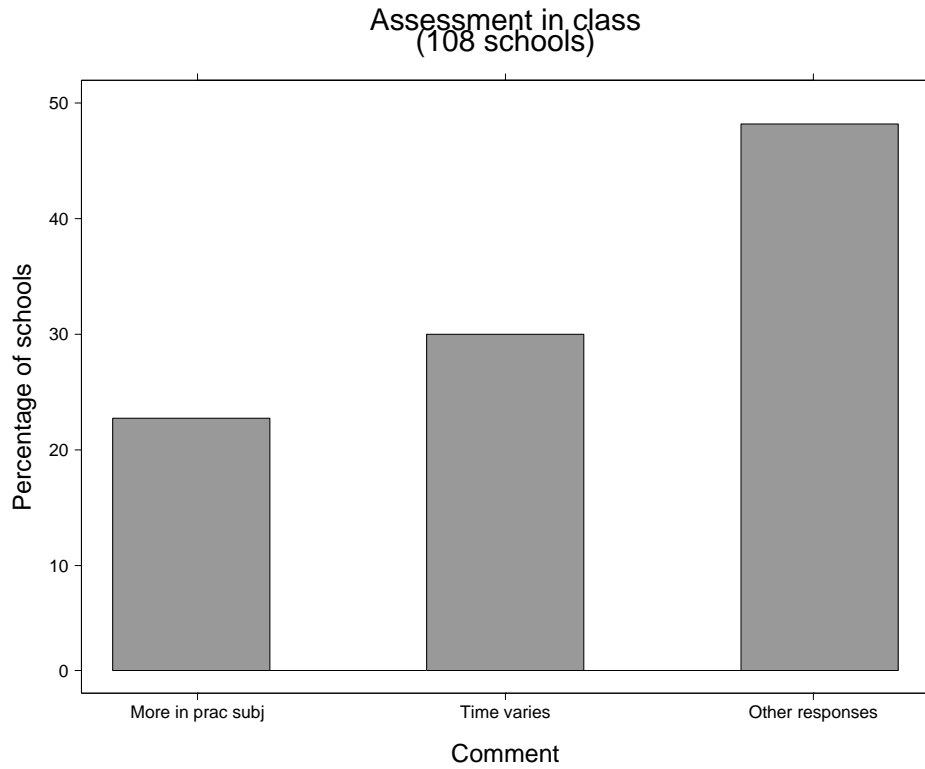
The plots grouped by similar means would be:

- Biological Science, Maths B & French/German
- Geography
- BCT, Economics, IPT
- Technology Studies, Art.

Part B: Results

The second part of this question was a comment on the above. The categories are as follows:

- A. Practical subjects spend more time in assessment in class
- B. Time varies
- C. Other



About a quarter of schools identified that more time was committed to assessment in practical subjects and about 30 per cent commented that the time varied from subject to subject. Fifty per cent of responses provided a variety of comments that could not be grouped.

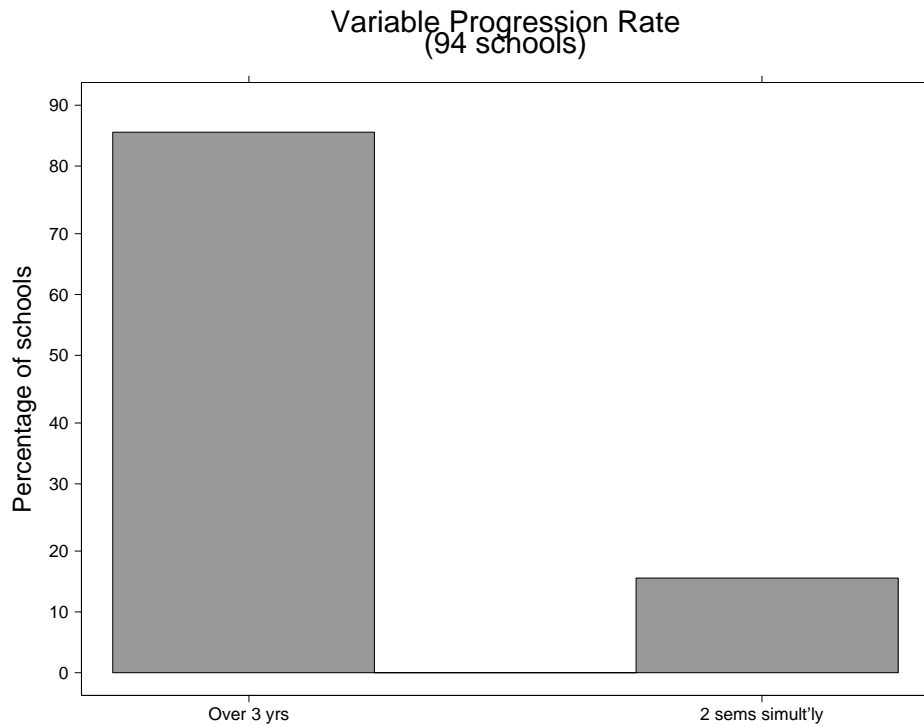
Question Four

Variable progression rate:

In the Information Statement 2/01 schools were notified of these possible variable progression rates:

- spreading senior studies over three years (i.e. Years 10, 11, 12 or Years 11, 12, 13)
- studying two semesters of a senior subject simultaneously.

Which of these, if any, are being implemented in your school?



Results

Ninety-four of the 257 schools that responded to the survey were already pursuing variable progression rates for post-compulsory students. Of the 94, 85.1 per cent were allowing students to complete senior over three years and 14.9 per cent were allowing students to study two semesters of a senior subject simultaneously.

APPENDIX I

Time allocation for Board subjects

At a Board meeting late last year a paper, “Time allocation of Board subjects, syllabus development, the development of standards of learning, certification: The rationale and relationships among them”, was submitted.

The Board decided to conduct a survey of schools to gather data about the actual hours of teaching and assessment that schools provide students in a sample of Board subjects.

What follows is the survey and it would be appreciated if it could be completed and returned to the Office of the Board by 15 March 2002.

A: Indicate, in hours, the timetabled time and the real contact time, per semester, for interactive teaching, learning and assessment for each of the subjects listed below:

Subject	Timetabled time (hrs)	Real contact time (hrs)
Maths B		
Geography		
English		
Biological Science		
Art		
BCT		
Technology Studies		
IPT		
French/German		

Comment:

B: Indicate how this real-time for interactive teaching and learning is organised per week, e.g. 3 x 70-minute lessons, 4 x 55 minute-lessons etc.

C: Indicate the proportion of timetabled time given over to assessment used for reporting purposes in each of the subjects listed below:

Maths B _____ %
Geography _____ %
English _____ %
Biological Science _____ %
Art _____ %
BCT _____ %
Technology Studies _____ %
IPT _____ %
French/German _____ %

Comment:

D: Variable progression rate:

In the Information Statement 2/01 schools were advised of these possible Variable progression rates:

- spreading senior studies over three years (i.e. Years 10, 11, 12 or Years 11, 12, 13)
- studying two semesters of a senior school subject simultaneously.

Which of these, if any, are being implemented in your school?

APPENDIX 2

Guide for data entry for spreadsheet

Time allocation for Board subjects

At a Board meeting late last year a paper, “Time allocation of Board subjects, syllabus development, the development of standards of learning, certification: the rationale and relationships among them”, was submitted.

The Board decided to conduct a survey of schools to gather data about the actual hours of teaching and assessment that schools provide students in a sample of Board subjects.

What follows is the survey and it would be appreciated if it could be completed and returned to the Office of the Board by March 15 2002.

Column A:

The form needs to be identified for future reference. Use either the school code if known or a number that is in the series of 2000 — e.g. 2001, 2002, 2456 etc.

Column B–J:

The timetabled time per subject. Subject codes are outlined below. Each column is its own subject. Codes are suffixed by P — e.g. MBP, GP, BCTP (P = planned time).

Column K–S:

Real contact time. Subject codes as previously stated plus suffix of R — MBR, GR, BCTR (R = real time).

A: Indicate, in hours, the timetabled time and the real contact time, per semester, for interactive teaching, learning and assessment for each of the subjects listed below:

Subject / Code	Timetabled time (hrs)	Real contact time (hrs)
Maths B MB		
Geography G		
English E		
Biological Science BS		
Art A		
BCT BCT		
Technology Studies TS		
IPT IPT		
French/German F/G		

Column T:

Comment on the above breakdown. Enter the letter of the category that best covers the comment.

A = planned time is based on 20 week semesters

B = planned time is based on Semester 1, 2002

C = real time is impacted mostly by interruptions such as public holidays and school-based activities

D = real time is affected to differing degrees in different subjects according to the varying stages of the two-year cycle

E = real time is affected by student behaviour

F = real time for individual students is affected by their involvement in other activities

B: Indicate how this real-time for interactive teaching and learning is organised per week, e.g. 3 x 70-minute lessons, 4 x 55-minute lessons etc.

Column U:

Indicates the organisation of the learning. Enter the letter of the category that covers the comment.

I. 3 x 65 – 80

J. 4 x 45 – 60

K. 5 x 40 – 45

L. 6 x 30 – 40

M. Combinations x 2 (for example) 1 x 90, 3 x 45; 2 x 35, 1 x 70; 2 x 63, 1 x 84; 4 x 40, 1 x 35; 2 x 85, 1 x 45; 2 x 72, 1 x 43

N. Combinations x 3 (for example) 1 x 80, 2 x 40, 1 x 30; 1 x 90, 3 x 50, 2 x 45

O. Cycles (for example) 8 x 40 – 8 day cycle; 6 x 70 – 9 day cycle; 9x 45 – 10 day cycle; 7 x 55 – 10 day cycle; 1 x 90, 2 x 45, 1 x 60 – 10 day cycle; 9 x 50, 10 day cycle; 8 x 50 – 11 day cycle

P. English and Maths favoured (example) 4 x 42 English and Maths, others 3 x 42; 5 x 55 English and Maths, others 4 x 55

C: Indicate the proportion of timetabled time given over to assessment used for reporting purposes in each of the subjects listed below:

Maths B	_____%
Geography	_____%
English	_____%
Biological Science	_____%
Art	_____%
BCT	_____%
Technology Studies	_____%
IPT	_____%
French/German	_____%

Columns V – AD: same subject codes as used previously (e.g. MB%)

- A. 5 – 10%
- B. 11 – 15%
- C. 16 – 20%
- D. 21 – 25%
- E. 25 – 30%
- F. 31 – 40%
- G. 41 – 50%
- H. 51 – 70%
- I. 71 – 100%

Column AE:

- A. Practical subjects spend more time in assessment in class
- B. Time varies
- C. Other

D: Variable progression rate:

In the Information Statement 2/01 schools were advised of these possible variable progression rates:

- spreading senior studies over three years (i.e. Years 10, 11, 12 or Years 11, 12, 13)
- studying two semesters of a senior school subject simultaneously.

Which of these, if any, are being implemented in your school?

Column AF: (VPR)

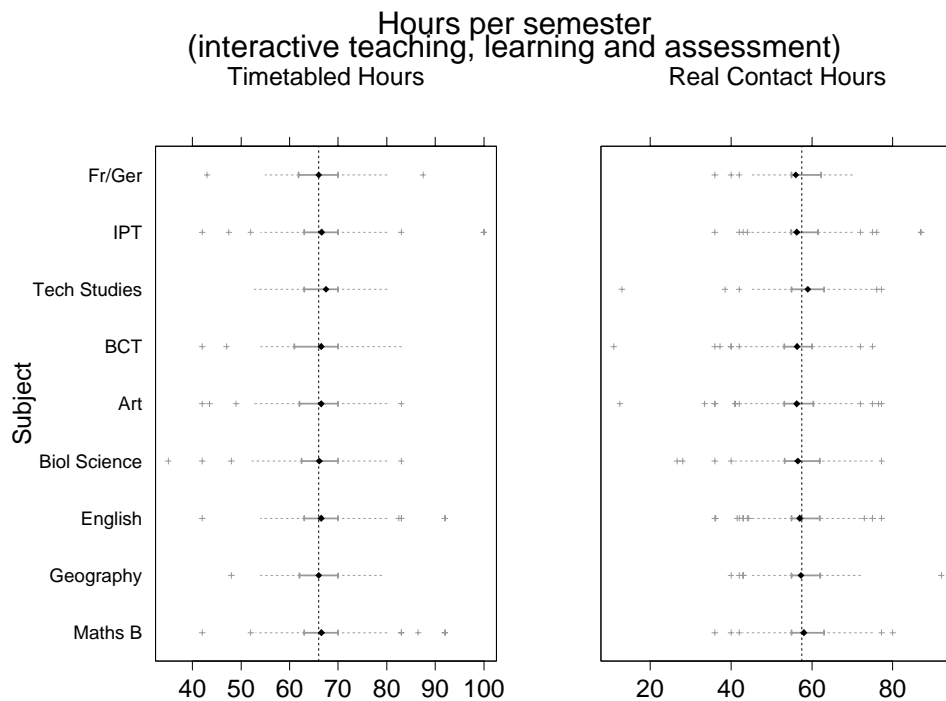
- A. spreading senior studies over three years (i.e. Years 10, 11, 12 or Years 11, 12, 13)
- B. studying two semesters of a senior school subject simultaneously

APPENDIX 3

In interpreting the following graphs, the dot in the middle of the heavy black line is the median. The heavy black line represents 50 per cent of the data, with 25 per cent either side of the median. The horizontal dotted line represents the spread of 95 per cent of the data. The vertical dotted line is the mean. The “+” represents schools that are outliers.

It appears that most schools, around 75 per cent, timetable for more than 60 hours per semester. This is significantly more than the required 55 hours per semester. An average of around 65 hours appears common. A majority of schools succeed in having contact time of at least 55 hours.

The information presented in the “timetabled” graph below is interesting in that it suggests that a number of schools are not meeting the 55 hours of timetabled school time including assessment per semester. It would suggest across the nine sampled subjects, in 29 instances across 16 schools, this time requirement is not met. However, in most cases on closer inspection of the data, the time given does not match the organisational strategy of the school. For instance, in one case, 3 x 70-minute lessons per week is indicated, but the total timetabled school time including assessment per semester is given as 51 hours. For an 18-week semester, this would be 63 hours rather than 51. Other inconsistencies that have led to this inaccurate data are: in one instance a school based calculations on a 12 week semester and in another instance time was already deducted for school interruptions.



Tuesday April 30 14:18:44 EST 2002, function=PlotTimes, file=/qshome/data.d/timeAlloc.d/timeByType.ps

For Maths, Geography, English, Biological Science, Art, BCT and IPT real contact time is reduced by approximately 20 per cent to that of timetabled school time including assessment per semester. Technology Studies and French/German are at about 6 per cent reduction. In the three instances where real contact time was reduced significantly, school data was recorded inaccurately. In instances where real contact time increased dramatically conclusions are difficult to draw, as schools didn't provide explanations. In one instance the school said that all excursions for the subject were done on weekends or outside of school time thus increasing the figures.

