University of Aberdeen Undergraduate Term Time Employment

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Study aim: Investigate term time employment (TTE) and its effects in UoA undergraduates.

Previous studies indicate that ~30% of UK full time university students engage in term time employment (TTE)\(^1\); TTE can negatively affect both attainment\(^2\) and mental health\(^3\).

**Method**: Online survey, distributed to 7000 undergraduates in levels 2-5. Data on TTE were matched to grades recorded in the Student Record.

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**Results**

1477 participants were successfully linked to attainment data. 58% (n = 902) had a term time job; 42% (n = 646) did not.

(The survey was voluntary therefore these figures are very unlikely to reflect actual proportions of students in TTE either in Aberdeen or in the UK generally)

![Figure 1: Time spent in TTE by study participants (n=1477)](image1)

![Figure 2: Reasons for working during term time (n=831)](image2)

![Figure 3: Proportion of participant answers per category to ‘did TTE impact your ability to be academically successful?’ (n=840)](image3)

![Figure 4: Mean grade attained by full time students in TTE categories (n=1304). No significant difference between ‘no TTE’ and 11-30 hours of TTE; TTE >30 hours, mean grade significantly lower than ‘no TTE’ (Fisher’s LSD, p=0.005). TTE of ≤10 hours, mean grade significantly higher than ‘no TTE’ (Fisher’s LSD, p=0.005).](image4)

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**Discussion**: Although student perception of negative effects of TTE on attainment rises as TTE hours increase, this perception is not well supported by their actual attainment. A previous study\(^3\) concluded that feeling in control of working hours is more important to good mental health than a reduction in working hours – systems that increase flexibility of study hours should therefore help to address negative perceptions of the effects of TTE.

**Current recommendations**: Implement official recognition by the University that students undertaking TTE may require flexibility around deadlines for work.

Further investigate evidence that suggests a benefit to participation in ≤10 hours of TTE.

Promote ‘learning from work’ type courses to encourage recognition of skills gained while in TTE.

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**References**: