

*Institutional Research Monthly-Friday Fact (IR-MFF), Issue 08-2017*

*Office of the Provost, Nazarbayev University*

### **Do Students who Devote less Time to Academic Activities Earn Lower Grades?**

In the February 2017 issue of the IR-MFF, we observed that students devoted less time to academic activities than expected under Carnegie standards. The present analysis defines this gap as the percentage difference between the minimum number of hours expected under [ECTS standards](#) (25 hours for each ECTS credit) and actual student time allocation. We examine the relationship between this gap and student term GPA, using data on 1,700 undergraduate students who participated in spring 2016/2017 surveys.

Overall, undergraduate student allocated 36% less time (per week) to academic activities than expected under ECTS standards. Figure 1 shows that students whose gap between expected and actual time allocation was small spent, on average, only 9% less time than expected under minimum ECTS standards. In contrast, those whose gap was large spent, on average, 60% less time than expected.

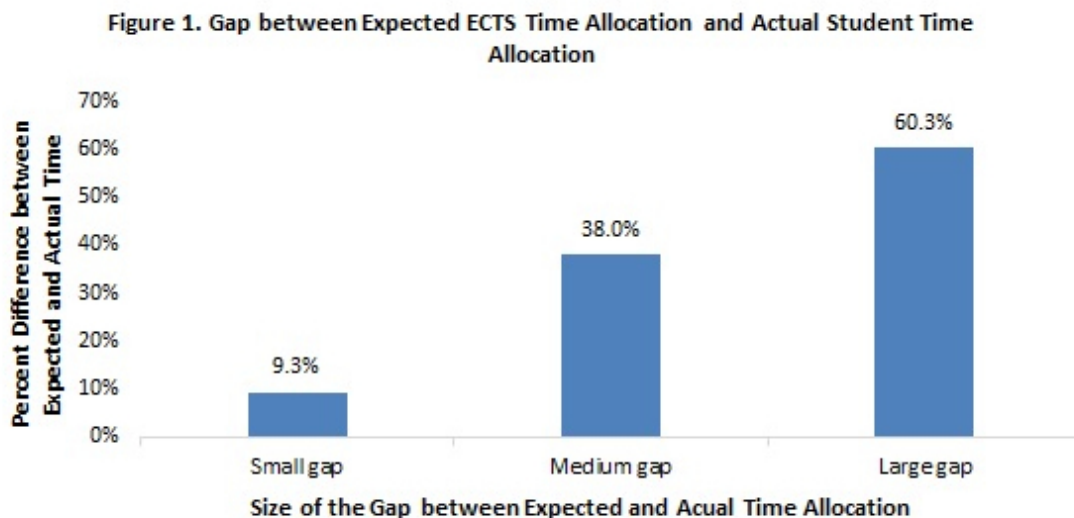
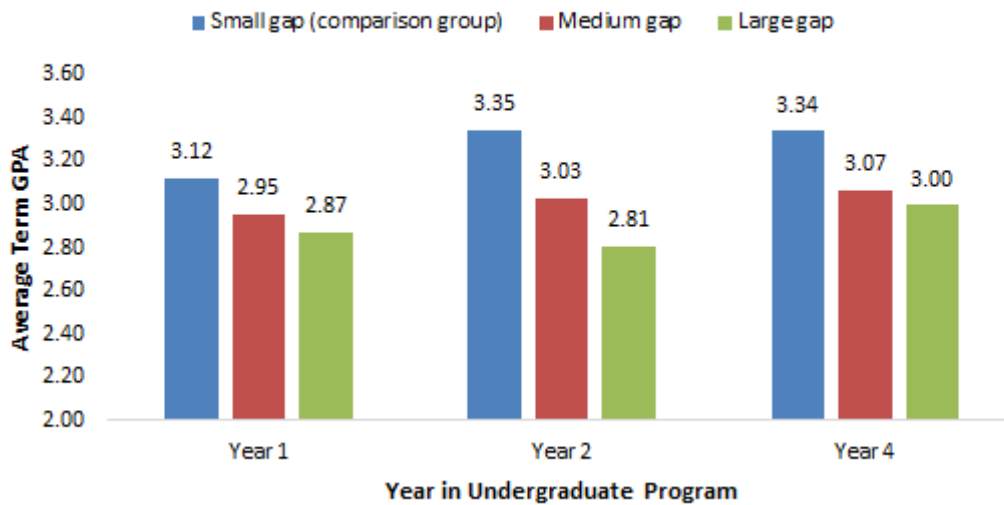


Figure 2 shows average term GPA based on the gap between expected and actual time allocation. Average GPA was significantly higher for students whose gap between expected and actual time allocation was small than it was for those with medium and large gaps. This difference was particularly pronounced in second and fourth years.

Figure 2. Average Term GPA Based on the Size of the Gap between Expected ECTS Time Allocation and Actual Student Time Allocation



In sum, as the gap between the amount of time students are expected to allocate to academic activities and the amount they actually allocate to these activities increases, academic performance decreases. This result does not necessarily imply a cause-effect relationship.

Time allocated to academic activities is not a measure of student learning. However, it is, as empirical studies have demonstrated, a *key input* in the acquisition of knowledge and competencies. It is important that (1) students strive to maximize time investment (quantity/quality) in academic activities; (2) faculty/programs ensure that coursework and learning outcomes are benchmarked at an appropriate level; and (3) faculty expectations for students are clearly communicated and reinforced.

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We invite you to write to IR ([ir@nu.edu.kz](mailto:ir@nu.edu.kz)) and (1) share your thoughts and experiences relative to the topic under discussion in this **IR-MFF** issue and/or (2) suggest a question/topic that you would like us to address in a future issue of the **IR-MFF**. A PDF version of the current IR-MFF issue is attached to this email.

The IR-MFF is published every last Friday of the month or, if the relevance and timeliness of the topic require, earlier (August through November and January through April). Analyses are *limited to 300 words or less (narrative text) and one or two graphs/tables*. If you need more detailed information (methodological or otherwise), please contact IR at [ir@nu.edu.kz](mailto:ir@nu.edu.kz).

