

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 attainment² and mental health³.

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

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)

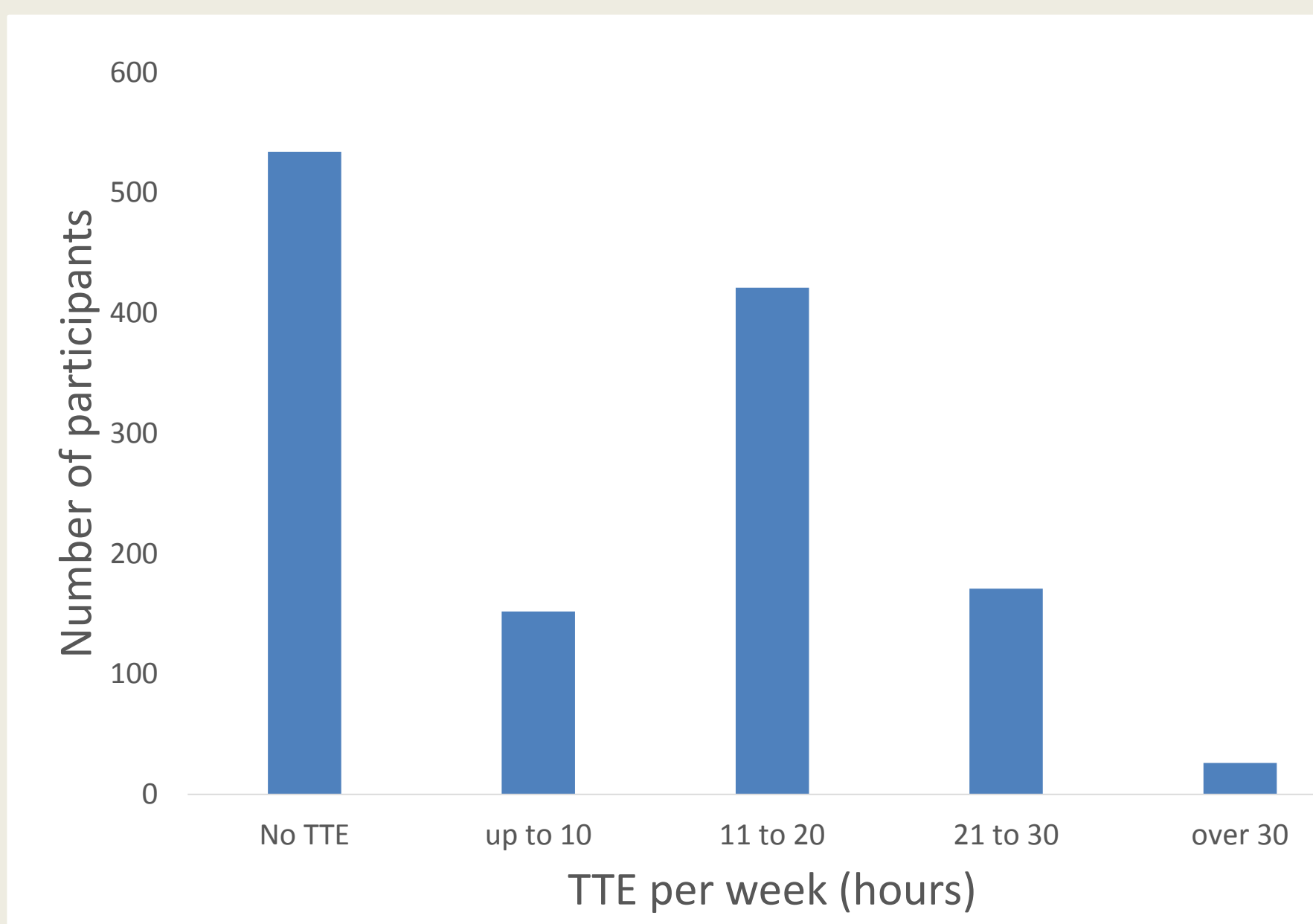


Figure 1: Time spent in TTE by study participants (n=1477)

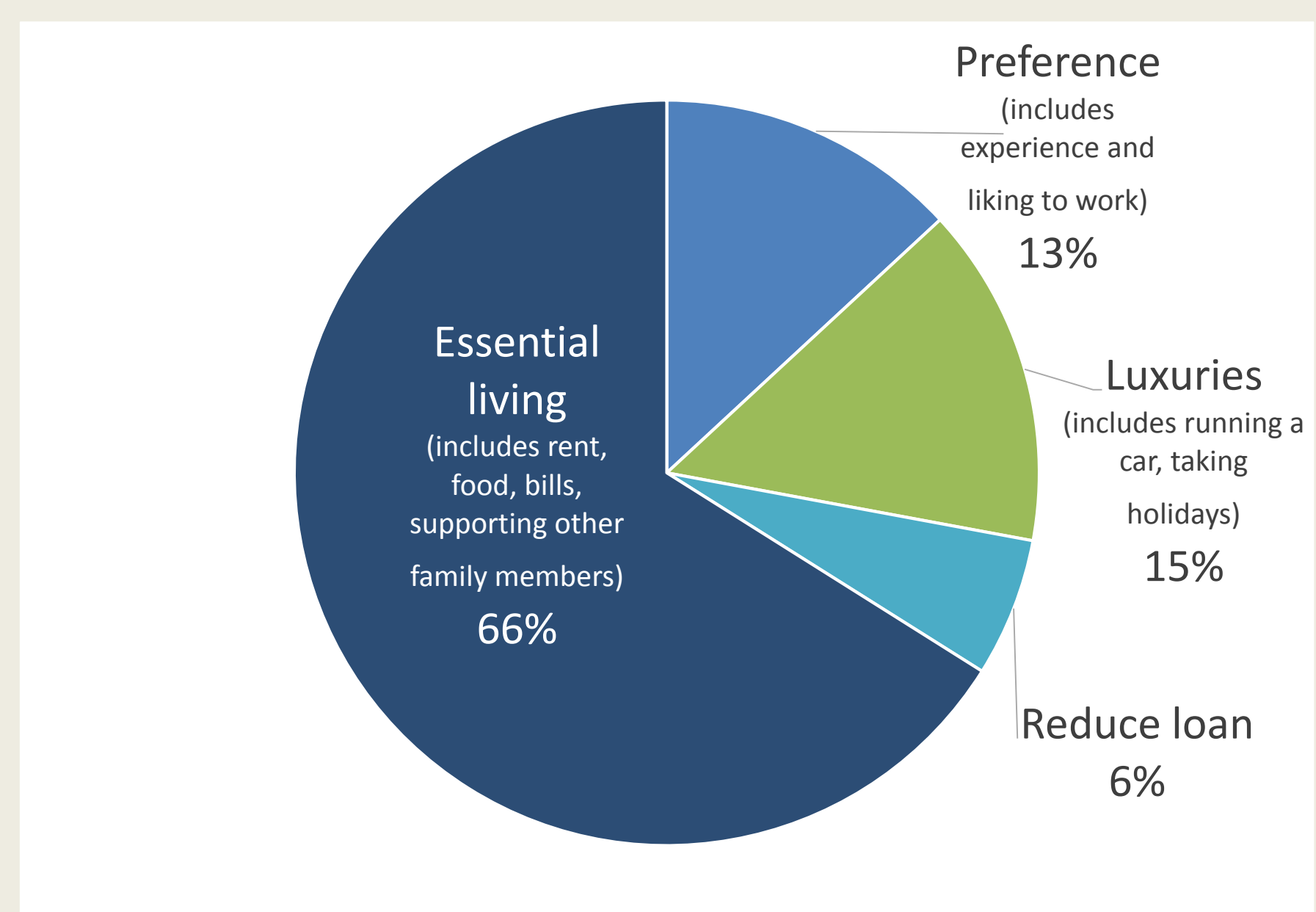


Figure 2: Reasons for working during term time (n=831)

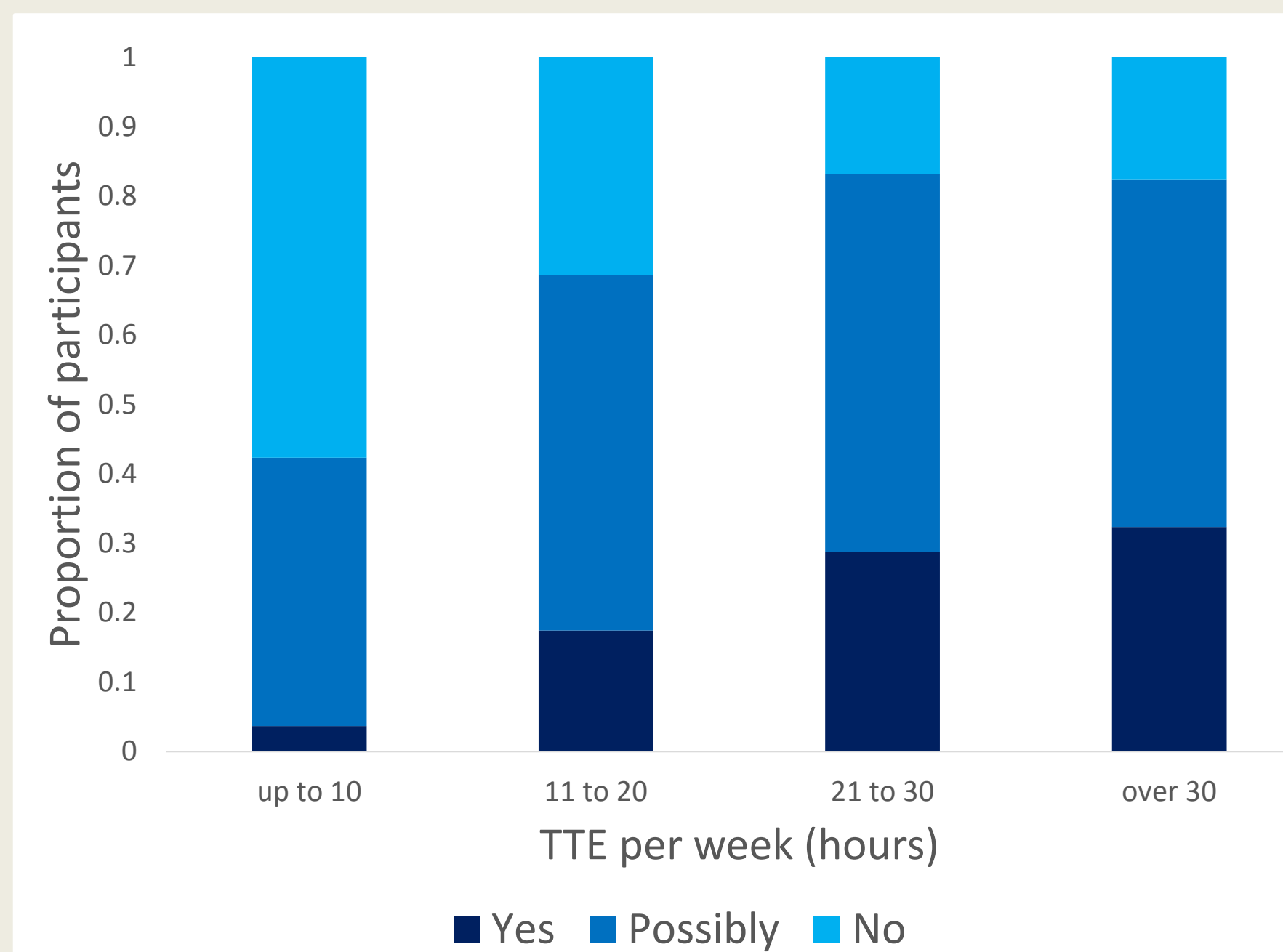


Figure 3: Proportion of participant answers per category to 'did TTE impact your ability to be academically successful?' (n=840)

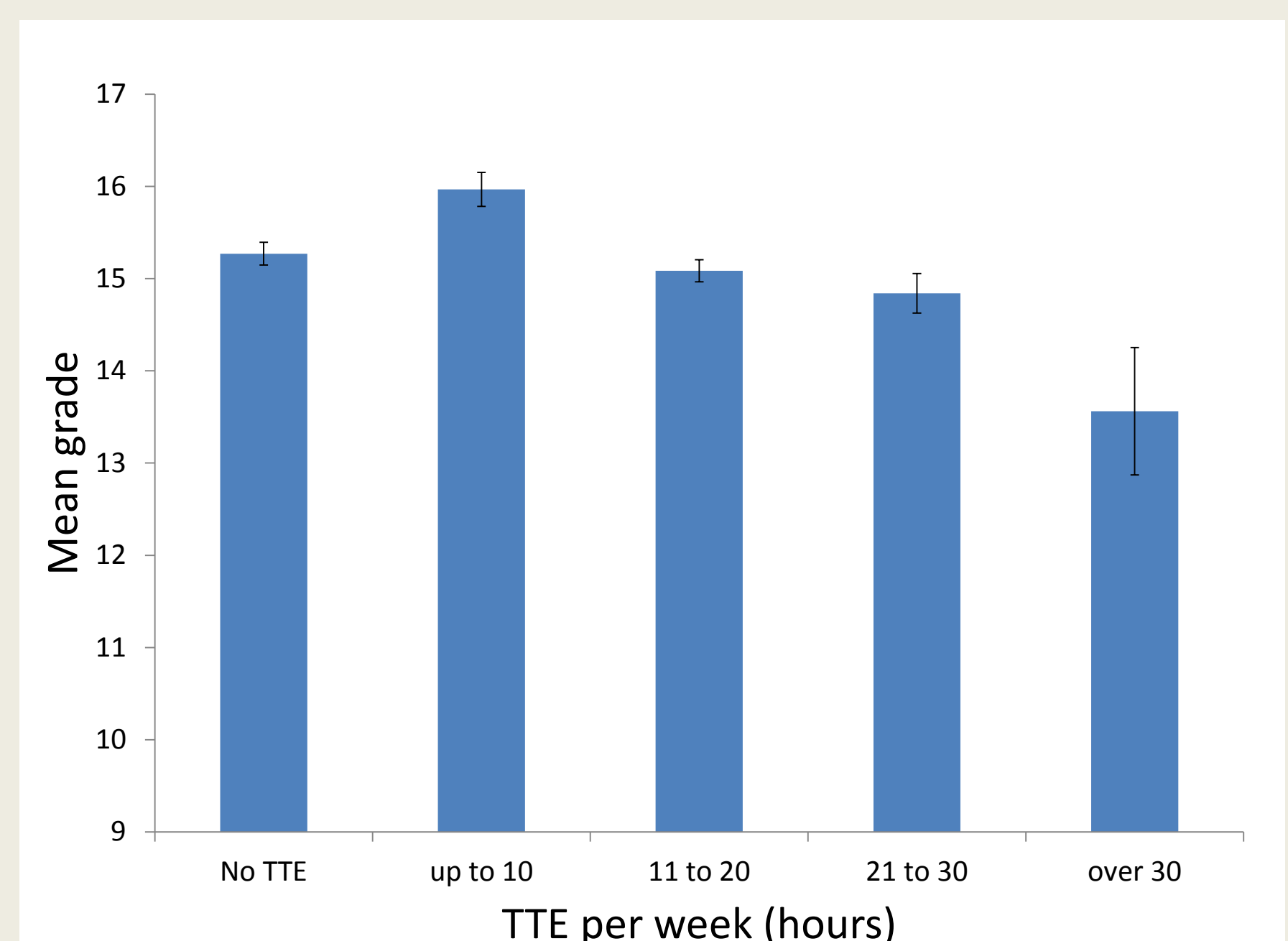


Figure 4: Mean grade attained by full time students in TTE categories (n=1304). No significant difference between 'no TTE' and 11-30 hours of TTE; TTE >30 hours, mean grade significantly lower than 'no TTE' (Fisher's LSD, p=0.005); TTE of ≤10 hours, mean grade significantly higher than 'no TTE' (Fisher's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

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 study³ 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.

References:

1. Endsleigh Student Survey <https://www.endsleigh.co.uk/press-releases/10-august-2015/>
2. Callendar, C. (2008) The impact of term-time employment on higher education students' academic attainment and achievement, Journal of Education Policy 23:4,359-377, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02680930801924490>
3. Carney, C., McNeish, S., McColl, J. (2005) The impact of part time employment on students' health and academic performance: a Scottish perspective, Journal of Further and Higher Education 29:4,307-319