



Université
de Toulouse

A variant of the high-school timetabling problem and a software solution for it based on integer linear programming

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Outline

- 1 Problem statement
- 2 Problem formalization and ILP formulation
- 3 Tools and experimental results
- 4 Conclusion




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Timetable at the Toulouse 2 University Institute of Technology (IUT)

A particular type of High-School Timetabling problem.

Hierarchical division of student groups:

Lectures =>	 1st year 								2nd year 					
work (TD) =>	G1		G2		G3		G4		G1		G2		G3	
atory (TP) =>	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B

Classwork

Lectures

Features

- predefined course-group-teacher assignment
- different room pools (per type):
 - laboratories (6), classrooms (5), multimedia rooms (2), amphitheaters (1)
 - rooms in a pool are interchangeable
 - subject to availability constraints
- dense program:
 - e.g., 33h over 4.5 days for G1A
 - potentially long days: start at 8 AM, end at 6:40 PM
- many research professors and adjunct professors (main job in industry)
⇒ tight availability constraints
- Potentially overlapping time slots, e.g., 8-10 AM || (8-9:30 AM, 9h30-11 AM)
(may be modeled with disjoint time slots by subdividing them)

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Motivation for this work

First of all, **practical** !

- need of **convenient tooling**
- keep control over the resolution engine, in order to:
 - fine-tune the solution
 - add new types of constraints as they come up

⇒ **XLSScheduler**: an automatic generator

- based on open off-the-shelf ILP solvers (Cbc, Gurobi)
- interacting via easy-to-use data format (Excel), batch style
- reasonably generic (reusable, extensible...)

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Problem formalization

Time slots:

- *Slots* set (e.g., $\{Mo0800_0930, Mo0800_1000, Mo0930_1100, \dots\}$)
- *SlotTypes* set, $slType : Slots \rightarrow SlotTypes$ (e.g., use duration as type)
- $rank : Slots \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ defines partial order between slots. E.g.:
 - $rank(Mo1415_1545) = 4$
 - $rank(Mo1545_1715) = 5$
 - $rank(Mo1715_1845) = 6$
 - $rank(Mo1545_1745) = 5$
 - $rank(Tu0800_0930) = 8$
- $overlap \subseteq Slot \times Slot$. $(s_1, s_2) \in overlap$ (denoted $s_1 \parallel s_2$)
iff slots s_1 and s_2 overlap chronologically. E.g.:
 - $Mo1545_1745 \parallel Mo1545_1715$
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Teachers:

- *Teachers* set
- $tAvail : Teachers \times Slots \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$ defines teacher availability per time-slot.
- $tPref : Teachers \times Slots \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$ defines teacher preferences per time-slot.

Slots / instructor availability (=0,5 or 1) and preferences (=1)	BC	BE	BEV	BMF	BQ	BW	CH	DC	DDM	DE	DEF	DNB	DNH	FE	FQ	GN	GNP	GQ	GT	HQ	JQ	JP	KD	KEB	KNC	KQD	KT	LC	ME	MH	MO	
Mo 9-11 AM	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	
Mo 8-9:30	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	
Mo 9:30-11	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0	
Mo 11-12:30	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0	
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Mo 15:30-17	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	1,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0
Mo 17-18:30	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	1,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0
Tu 8-10 AM	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0
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Tu 9:30-11	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0
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We 8-10 AM	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,0	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0	
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We 15:30-17	1,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,5	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,0	
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Problem formalization

Student groups:

- *Groups* set
- $subgroup \subseteq Groups \times Groups$. $(g_1, g_2) \in subgroup$ denoted $g_1 \prec g_2$

Problem formalization

Rooms:

- *RoomCategories* set
- $rAvail : RoomCategories \times Slots \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ defines how many rooms of a particular category are available at each time-slot

Problem formalization

Courses:

- *Courses* set
- $courseTeacher : Courses \rightarrow Teachers$
- $courseSlotType : Courses \rightarrow SlotTypes$
- $courseRoomCat : Courses \rightarrow RoomCategories$
- $courseRoomNb : Courses \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$
- $courseGroupNb : Courses \times Group \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$. $courseGroupNb(c, g)$ defines how many sessions there are in the course c for the group g .
- $consecCourses \subseteq Courses$ (courses whose instances must be consecutive)
- $precedes \subseteq Course \times Course$. $(c_1, c_2) \in precedes$ (denoted $c_1 \ll c_2$) means all time-slots allocated to c_1 must chronologically precede the slots of c_2 .
- $courseAvail, coursePref : Courses \times Slots \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$

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- $consecCourses \subseteq Courses$ (courses whose instances must be consecutive)
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- $courseAvail, coursePref : Courses \times Slots \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$

Problem formalization

Courses:

- *Courses* set
- $courseTeacher : Courses \rightarrow Teachers$
- $courseSlotType : Courses \rightarrow SlotTypes$
- $courseRoomCat : Courses \rightarrow RoomCategories$
- $courseRoomNb : Courses \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$
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$\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} \in \{0, 1\}$ for $s \in Slots$, $c \in Courses$, $g \in Groups$

$\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} = 1$ iff group g has a course c in time-slot s

Hard constraints

All the courses are allocated a slot:

$$\forall c \in Courses, \forall g \in Groups : \sum_{s \in Slots} \mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} = courseGroupNb(c, g)$$

Hard constraints

No group has two courses in parallel (nor a course in parallel with another course of one of its super-groups):

$\forall s \in Slots, \forall g \in Groups :$

$$\sum_{c \in Courses} \left(\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} + \sum_{\substack{g' \in Groups \\ g \prec g'}} \mathbf{x}_{s,c,g'} \right) \leq 1$$

Taking into account slot overlapping:

$\forall s, s' \in Slots$ such that $s \parallel s', \forall g \in Groups :$

$$\sum_{c \in Courses} \left(\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} + \mathbf{x}_{s',c,g} + \sum_{\substack{g' \in Groups \\ g \prec g'}} (\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g'} + \mathbf{x}_{s',c,g'}) \right) \leq 1$$

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Hard constraints

There are enough rooms of each category for each slot:

$\forall s \in Slots, \forall t \in RoomCategories :$

$$\sum_{\substack{c \in Courses \\ courseRoomCat(c)=t}} \sum_{g \in Groups} courseRoomNb(c) \cdot \mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} \leq rAvail(t, s)$$

No precise room assignment \Rightarrow smaller model.

Extra constraint for taking into account slot overlapping

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Consecutiveness:

$$\forall c \in \text{consecCourses}, \forall g \in \text{Groups},$$

$$\forall s, s' \in \text{Slots} \text{ such that } \text{rank}(s') - \text{rank}(s) \geq \text{courseGroupNb}(c, g) :$$

$$\mathbf{x}_{s,c,g} + \mathbf{x}_{s',c,g} \leq 1$$

Precedence:

$$\forall c, c' \in \text{Courses} \text{ such that } c \ll c',$$

$$\forall g, g' \in \text{Groups} \text{ such that } \text{courseGroupNb}(c, g) \cdot \text{courseGroupNb}(c', g') > 0,$$

$$\forall s, s' \in \text{Slots} \text{ such that } \text{rank}(s) < \text{rank}(s') :$$

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Hard constraints

Other constraints:

- The slots allocated to a *Course* have the right *SlotType*
- The teachers are available at the allocated slots
- A teacher does not have several courses in parallel
- Course availability per slot (*courseAvail*) is observed

Soft constraints and objective

Soft constraint: minimize use of unpreferred slots.

Objective = weighted sum of:

- cost incurred by the use of unpreferred slots of teachers

$$UT = \sum_{\substack{s \in Slots \\ c \in Courses, t = courseTeacher(c) \\ g \in Groups}} (tAvail(t, s) - tPref(t, s)) \cdot x_{s,c,g}$$

- cost incurred by the use of unpreferred slots for courses

$$UC = \sum_{\substack{s \in Slots \\ c \in Courses \\ g \in Groups}} (courseAvail(c, s) - coursePref(c, s)) \cdot x_{s,c,g}$$

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Other soft constraints: minimizing “long days”

Avoid days that start at 8AM to 6:45PM

- $Days$ is a set of the days of week
- $first : Days \rightarrow Slots$ maps each day to its first slot
- $last : Days \rightarrow Slots$ maps each day to its last slot
- $\mathbf{L}_{d,t} \in \{0, 1\}$ for $d \in Days$ and $t \in Teachers$: auxiliary variable ($\mathbf{L}_{d,t} = 1$ iff d is a “long day” for teacher t)
- constraint linking \mathbf{L} to \mathbf{x} :

$$\forall d \in Days, t \in Teachers :$$

$$\sum_{\substack{c \in Courses \\ courseTeacher(c)=t}} \sum_{g \in Groups} (\mathbf{x}_{first(d),c,g} + \mathbf{x}_{last(d),c,g}) - 2 \cdot \mathbf{L}_{d,t} \leq 1$$

- additional cost component weighted into the cost function:

$$LT = \sum_{\substack{t \in Teachers \\ d \in Days}} \mathbf{L}_{d,t}$$

Other soft constraints

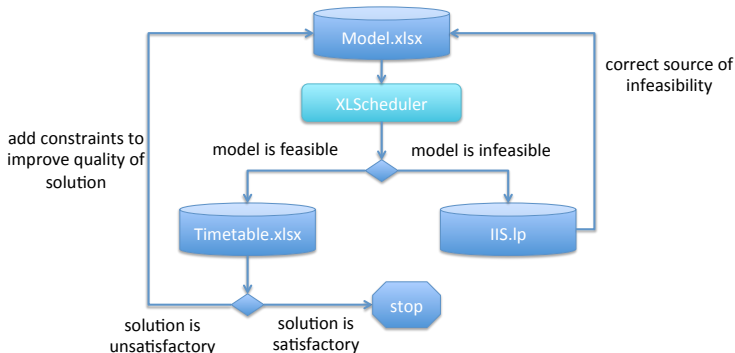
- Minimizing “long days” for students
- Clustering busy times
- ...

Outline

- 1 Problem statement
- 2 Problem formalization and ILP formulation
- 3 Tools and experimental results**
- 4 Conclusion

XLSScheduler tool

- Batch tool based on off-the-shelf ILP solvers (Gurobi or Cbc)
- Available as online service (Cbc-based, upon request)
- Workflow:



XLSScheduler tool

Input/Output format: convenient XLSX file format

Excel

Fichier

Édition

Affichage

Insertion

Format

Outils

Données

Fenêtre

</

Experimental results

- 2 versions of the tool:
 - Python / Gurobi (Python API + solver)
<http://www.gurobi.com>
 - Python / PuLP / Cbc
<https://projects.coin-or.org/Cbc>
- high speed (within seconds) and high quality for real-life workloads
- both solvers perform very well, but slow model creation with PuLP

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Conclusion

- practical approach for a relatively classical HSTT problem
- generic, extensible solution
- quick and good quality results
- possibility to troubleshoot and refine results

<https://www.irit.fr/~Iulian.Ober/XLSScheduler>

That's all folks!

Thank you!

Questions?