1.Describe in how the CSP was formulated, namely the variables, domains, and constraints considered.

Variables: aulas

Domains: {dia da semana, Hora, Sala, turmas}Concatenação

Constraints: A mesma turma não pode ter aulas à mesma hora

A mesma sala não pode ter aulas ao mesmo tempo

A mesma disciplina não pode ter aulas do mesmo tipo no mesmo dia

A primeira aula do mesmo tipo tem de acontecer primeiro que a segunda

Falar de ordenação pelas horas!

2.Indicate which heuristics and constraint propagation (inference) methods were used, and justify your choice.

After analyzing the available heuristics, the ones chosen were the MRV (Minimum Remaining Values) and the LCV(Least Constraining Value), since they were the ones that made more sense in this problem. The choice was between the MRV, the degree heuristic, the least constraining value and the first unassigned variable first. The last one is the simplest strategy, where the algorithm chooses the next variable available to process, without any other criteria. This is hardly the best choice.

For the degree heuristic, it attempts to reduce computational cost by selecting the variable that is involved in the largest number of constraints on other unassigned variables. Has for this strategy, since our problem doesn’t have a large number of constraints, this wouldn’t be a relevant comparison, giving that most of the variables would share the same number of constraints.

For the LCV is a complement to the variable selection heurist. Having the variable selected, the idea is to choose the domain element to branch that gives more possible options o the next variables to be processed. This way, a single solution is found faster.

Finally, the MRV is used as the variable selection heuristic. This method selects the variable with the least options remaining in its domain, for a faster converging solution. Choosing the variable that has the least options available is a optimized way to cause a failure faster, reducing the number of backtrackings needed to reach a solution by reducing the number of unnecessary branches. The only fault in this heuristic is that it’s no help in choosing the initial variables to process.

As for the inference methods tested, they were the forward propagation and MAC(Maintaining arc consistency). The one chosen was forward propagation as it’s explained next.

The forward propagation is the simplest propagation method. It simply checks the chosen variable’s neighbor’s domains after a selection has been made and deletes the elements of the domains that incompatible with the value chosen. Although forward checking detects many inconsistencies, it does not detect all of them. The problem is that it makes the current variable arc-consistent, but doesn’t look ahead and make all the other variables arc-consistent.

The MAC inference method does just that, besides checking if the current variable is arc-consistent it also looks ahead. This makes it more powerful than forward checking, since a value choice can immediately cause an empty set in a certain domain, making it not viable, but it may not be in the direct neighbors of the current variable, and when this happens, the csp knows immediately to backtrack. It also has a heavier computational cost.

For this last reason and for the fact that forward checking and MRV have a natural compatibility, forward checking was chosen. Since our optimization algorithm implies running the csp several times depending on the result, it’s logical that it might not be a good idea for it to be to heavy to run. Therefore, the MAC was not a good option. It was verified that the same results were obtained for the available tests using booth inference methods, always having a faster result with forward checking.