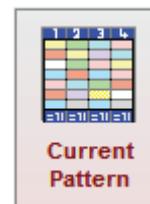# New Features in *Options 2020*

'Roam' feature [+→ Roam]

When working on your Current Pattern, have you ever wondered what would happen if you moved a Group from one Block/Column to another?
Now, with the new 'Roam' button you can easily try it out and see the possibilities.
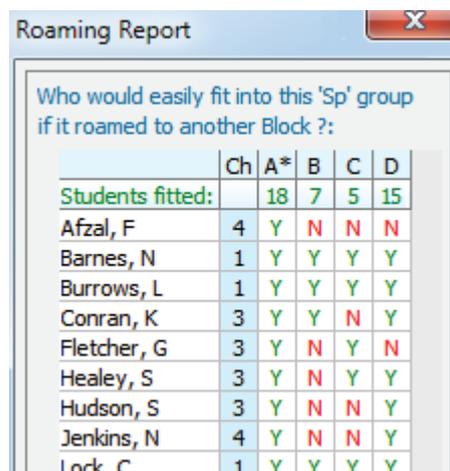
For example, if the pattern is:

and the Spanish Group
in Block A is highlighted,

and the [+→ Roam] button is pressed, then you are shown a Report:

There are 4 possible codes:
Y = Yes, the student will fit in this group if it moves to the new Block
N = No, the student won't fit in this group if it moves to the new Block
O = Yes, the student will fit …but there is another group of this same Subject in that block, and the 'Equalise' function would place him/her in the other group (but you can shuffle students between the 2 groups to get a different balancing of students if you wish).
B = Yes, fitted in a group of this subject but in a different block.

You can see that for this Spanish group:
- the current Block A is the best position (all 18 students fitted),
- second best would be in Block D (15 students would be fitted),
- if you moved the Spanish Group to Block D then Farzana Afzal [Spanish is her 4th 'Ch'oice] and Gary Fletcher [his 3rd Choice] would not be able to study Spanish.

You can export the table to HTML or Excel if you wish to discuss it with the Head of Subject.

If nevertheless you decided to move this Spanish Group to Block D then just:
- click on the 'D' column header, so the column turns yellow, and
- click on the Apply button,

and Spanish will be placed in Block D.   You can then try 'Roam' on another group.

Note that 'Roam' does not take account of Max/Min Group Sizes.
None of the effects of using 'Roam' are saved until you 'Close' the screen and say 'Yes' you want to save the changes. Just say 'No' if you don't want to keep the results of your experimenting.

Students & Choices Screen

At Students & Choices Screen ⇒ Move you can: Archive a Student (ie. suspend temporarily, perhaps if you are not sure whether they will be returning next year).

At Students & Choices Screen ⇒ Other Checks ⇒ Archived Students, you can: List any Archived Students.

At Students & Choices Screen ⇒ Other Checks ⇒ Archived Students, you can: Un-Archive every student with a single click.

At Students & Choices Screen ⇒ Students Details ⇒ select {All Students} if you want to view all the students as a single list. Hover your mouse to see which class they are in.
To print them as a single list, go to Print -> Student Allocations and un-tick 'Separate classes'.

Importing Students

At Students & Choices Screen ⇒ Import students the display has been improved and you can now import 'Comments' and 'Notes' if these are in the imported Excel or CSV file.

continued...

AutoCreate Screen   Auto-Create

 Style ▾   The AutoCreate Screen now has a Style button, which allows you to:
- Choose a different font,
- Change the height of the screen.
You can also change the height by dragging the bottom edge.

 Go   **Speed**

AutoCreate does a truly enormous number of calculations, and in some big schools with a large number of blocks/columns, even with a good computer the length of time needed may be inconvenient.
So we have looked for ways to reduce the time for large schools (in addition to the methods described in your Handbook on page 36).

Rules shortcuts:
If you start AutoCreate with 3 or more Rules which might slow the solution-finding process, then you are asked if you would like to:

• run AutoCreate with shortcuts (select 'Try Shortcuts'),
or
• run the full AutoCreate search as you'd intended (select 'Continue').

The first of these (temporarily) takes various shortcuts …to reduce the processing time, but it may not find all the solutions. Note that if you do choose 'Take shortcuts' then it will still make sure that all the patterns it suggests obey your Rules.
If you use 'Try shortcuts' and the result looks promising then we recommend that you then do a run without shortcuts to see if you get better solutions.

Subjects Screen

Faculties / Colours
Rather than use the default names of 'Faculty 1', 'Faculty 2' etc you can rename them at Subjects Screen ➟ Defaults ➟ Rename Faculties/Colours:

or at Basic Data Menu ➟ Faculty/Colour names:

Suspend a Subject
You can Suspend a Subject, to say that you don't (for now) want AutoCreate to include any groups of this subject when it creates its patterns.
To suspend a subject, just set its 'Max. Groups allowed' to zero, on the Subjects screen. To un-suspend it, enter a non-zero number again.

Importing Subjects
At Subjects Screen ➟ Import you can now import 4 extra fields (max group size / min group size / max groups allowed / faculty/colour) if you have a file with these values stored.

Student Inspector Screen   Review & Counsel

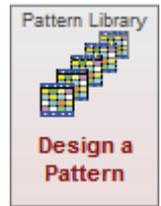This screen (at Review & Counsel) is improved with better display of students' 'Notes' and 'Comments'.

Show/Hide and Show Notes work as before. Hide/Show   ✔ Show Notes

A new 'Auto' button allows you to check if the student's Choices could be fitted better, *while* you are counselling the student. Auto   Choices: (3/4)

Feasibility Report

The pattern you create in *Options*, has (in the end) to fit on the timetable against blocks in other years. *For example,* if you are creating a pattern for Year 12 in *Options*, it has to fit against the existing (effectively already fixed) Year 13 pattern.

We have introduced a 'Feasibility Screen', which should help you to see whether a particular pattern suggested by *Options*, is likely to work for you when you get to the timetabling stage.
In the example below we'll compare a new (being developed) Pattern for Year 10, with an existing Pattern for Year 11.

First, if the existing Year 11 Pattern does not exist in your Pattern Library, then enter a mock-up of it by going to:
Design a Pattern ➠ New (enter a Name) ➠ View Pattern ➠ Enter a copy of the existing Year 11 Pattern. Click 'Close' and 'Yes' to Save it (without allocating any students).

Go to 'Design a Pattern' ➠ Feasibility to see a screen with these headers:

Step 1: Click on the 'Set Subject Limits' button and for each Subject, enter the maximum number of Teachers/Resources that are available to teach at the same time.
For example, if you have 2 Music Teachers you might enter 2. But if you have only one Music Room (or one of the teachers is Part-time) then you might enter 1.

Step 2: Choose the 2 Patterns you wish to compare:

Step 3: Then click on [Run Feasibility Report] to see a Clash Table:

It shows you whether the Yr 10 blocks will fit against the Yr 11 blocks.
The colours mean:
Green   no problem with these blocks co-existing
Yellow   1 problem, marked with **
Orange, Red, Pink   2, 3, 4 or more problems.

At the right-hand side the
Top 10 Permutations are listed for you:

Obviously the ideal is to have more than one 'zero-clash' permutation.

At the bottom you have a choice of other displays: View: ⦿ Show all groups ◯ Show number of problems ◯ Suggestion-1 ◯ Suggestion-2

Taken together these analyses should help you to anticipate potential timetabling problems.
Note however that this analysis does not take into account Container Blocks, Bands, Part-timers and other Staff Unavailability, variations in period-breakdown, the effect of other years, day structure, etc.

Pattern Screen

The Pattern Screen has been improved in several ways:
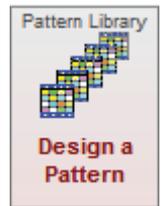
Compare The Compare button shows more information, so that you can compare 2 Patterns to decide which is the better for your students.
The bottom of the screen shows:

And if you click on any Group in either Pattern, all Groups of that Subject are highlighted.

Click on **View** to see the Students with their Choices and their Placements. Students in red do not yet have all their Choices satisfied.

Flag The Pattern Library Screen now has a 'Flag' column which allows you to colour-label an interesting Pattern, to whatever is meaningful to you.

Clear The Clear button gives you some quick ways of clearing out old unwanted Patterns.

Rename or Move the Blocks

After clicking on **View Pattern** and then **Rename or Move Blocks** you are given the choice to:
- Rename a Block. *For example,* instead of the default A, B, C... you could use P, Q, R...
- Re-order the Blocks, by dragging them to a new position with your mouse.

You can also do this at Customize Menu ➡ Rename or Reorder Blocks.

Miscellaneous, including features added late into *Options 2019*

★ Warning beeps & chimes: these can be annoying for some users / on some computers – so (as in *TimeTabler*) you can now turn them off (or, off for all but the most important warnings).
Go to Customize ➡ Warning beeps.

★ Subjects & Students: both these screens now have a **Style ▾** button that allows you to customize the height of the screen & the font used on these screens.

★ Export to Progresso / CloudSchool : this has been improved.
Export to PASS/3Sys was added. See: https://www.timetabler.com/export/Exporting-From-Options/
We are continuing to press the MIS not listed there to add an import; please assist us by exerting your own pressure as customers of those MIS. Where it exists, it is a huge time-saver.

Reserves:

★ TOOLS: you can now export/import **two** reserve choices to/from TOOLS.

★ Swapping-in Reserves: now includes more complicated swap-ins, and so finds more solutions.

★ Clash Table: if you double-click on a subject, you can click 'Show Reserves' if you wish.

Other news

- The free **Gold-Start** Support for New purchasers continues, and in addition New timetablers in existing schools can now purchase this enhanced support, or the new **Gold-Start PLUS**.
Details at: www.timetabler.com/gold-start and on the Upgrade Order Form.

- If you have your own ideas for the WishList, please send them to us.

- The HelpScreens have been updated.