# New Features in *Options 2021*

Monitoring for Gender Bias

There are occasions when you may need to monitor your Option groups for a gender bias.
For example, if you want to encourage more girls into Computer Science.

There are now several ways in which you can monitor possible gender-bias in specific subject choices. They are all intended to be 'light-touch' / gentle reminders, and do not change the way that **Options** chooses your pattern or assigns students to it.

To turn on the monitoring, go to: Customize Menu ➠ Record Sex/Gender and click 'Monitor Gender Bias': Or go to: Basic Data Menu ➠ Check for Gender Bias:

Tick 'Monitor' to turn-on the feature, and then click on the subjects shown, to choose which subject(s) to monitor (eg. Computer Science) :
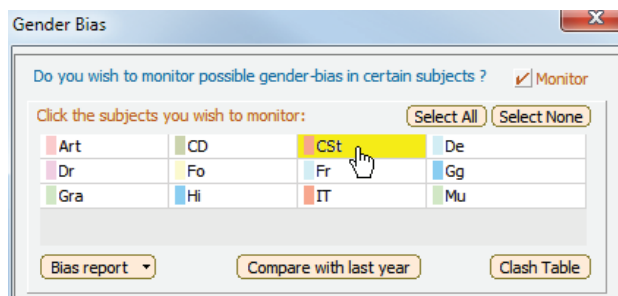
The following new features will then be available to you:

a) [Bias report ▼] Click this button to see the gender-bias in students choosing each chosen Subject.

The Report highlights subjects with high gender-biases in colour (>65% in blue, >75% in red).

You can also jump straight to this report via: Printouts ➠ Gender Bias Report.

b) [Compare with last year] With this button you compare the number of girls/boys taking each (monitored) subject this year, with **last year**, (if you still have last year's **Options** data in your list of Populations). *For example,* to see if any measures you have put in place since last year, have had an effect.

Go to Basic Data Menu ➠ Check for Gender Bias, click 'Compare with last year', and choose the earlier population/year that you wish to compare your current population/year with. Click 'Go'.

You are shown a report comparing the 2 years, for the subjects you have chosen to monitor. (Note: a total of '0' (zero) for a subject last year, may show that the subject was not offered, or was given a *different* subject abbreviation from this year, and so is not recognised as the same subject.)

c) [Clash Table] When you click on this button, the 'Girls/Boys' option is already selected for you, and the girls-biased subjects are coloured [default=pink], and the boys-biased subjects are coloured [default=green] (along the main diagonal). The deeper the colour, the greater the bias.

You can change the colours from the default pink/green at Customize Menu ➠ Record Sex/Gender. You can also see this table via: Clash Table Menu ➠ Gender Bias Clash Table.

d) Review & Counsel Screen: If the student you are reviewing/counselling, has chosen any of the subjects you are monitoring for gender-bias, you are warned (in blue along the bottom of the screen), with a note of how many girls/boys have chosen this subject.

The subject is also marked with an asterisk** in the summary at the top of the screen.

These are in addition the existing Monitoring features on the Style button of the Current Pattern Screen at :
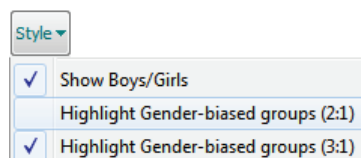
Amalgamate

There are now 2 ways in which you can 'amalgamate' (or combine) specific subject choices or groups, if it becomes necessary:

A   Amalgamate students' subject Choices after you have collected the data, and judged how many groups you should offer on the timetable (but *before* you have decided on a Pattern), or

B   Amalgamate students' subject Groups on an options Pattern that you have constructed.

Example 1 : An IB Diploma school may need to amalgamate SL and HL History into 1 group for **Options**.
Example 2 : A 6th Form College may wish to merge 2 similar (but uneconomical) courses.
Example 3 : A Scottish school might offer History at National N4 level and at National N5 level.
Each History pupil chooses one or the other, and the intention was to have separate groups. However, later, due to pupil group numbers (or staffing problems) you decide that History N4 & N5 must be taught as one single group.

They can be done (A) before an options Pattern is constructed or (B) after a Pattern has been constructed.
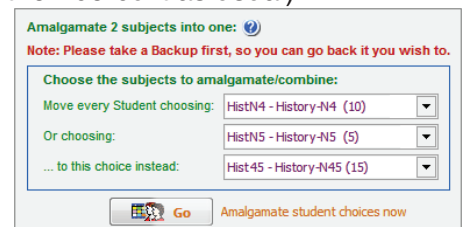
A.

Taking *Example 3*, then to amalgamate the Choices **before** the final Pattern is built:
• Enter 2 subjects in your Subject List as usual: 'HistN4' and 'HistN5' in this example.
• The students choose 'HistN4' or 'HistN5' (and trial patterns can then be built as usual).

If you decide that the 2 groups must be amalgamated:
1) First add a new subject (on the Subjects Screen). Eg. 'Hist45'.
2) On the **Students & Choices Screen**, choose: Tools ➟ Amalgamate Choices or Levels …and then choose as shown here:

The students will all now be considered to have chosen Hist45, and so when you use AutoCreate a single* Hist45 group will be created in your Pattern, with all these students in that group. (*Or however many groups of Hist45 you have specified)

To move just one subject leave the second box empty. To amalgamate more than 2 subjects, repeat it.

If your students have made Reserve choices you will be asked if you want to include them.
You are offered an Excel file, listing the pupils' original Choices ...you can Save or Print this.

To see the pupils' **original** Choices, go to: Basic Data Menu ➟ Original Choices (before amalgamation).

There are other scenarios in which this new feature is useful.   See the KnowledgeBase articles for details.
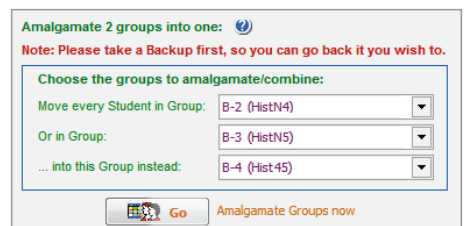A big advantage of method **A** is that you should need far fewer Rules, so AutoCreate is faster.

B.

Taking *Example 3* again, to amalgamate the Choices **after** a Pattern has been built.
Let's suppose that the 2 History groups to be amalgamated are both in Block/Column B:
1) First add a new subject (on the Subjects Screen). Eg. 'Hist45' .
2) Go into your **Current Pattern** and add a group of 'Hist45' into the same Column B (in the usual way on the Design Screen).
3) Highlight any group in Block B, and choose:
   More ➟ Amalgamate 2 Groups.
4) Choose the groups for HistN4, HistN5 & Hist45, from the drop-down choices, as shown:

Options then performs these tasks for you:
1. All students in the HistN4 group in Block B, have their choice changed to Hist45,
2. …and they are all moved into the Hist45 group.
3. Ditto for all students in the HistN5 group in Block B.

You can now Delete the empty HistN4 & HistN5 groups in Block B. To do this, click 'Re-Design', change those two groups to '-' (no subject) then Close. When asked if you wish to re-assign your students following your changes, say 'No'.

To see the pupils' **original** Choices, go to: Basic Data Menu ➟ Original Choices (before amalgamation).

Note: If you just want to merge 2 groups in the same Block with exactly the same subject then you can use Current Pattern Screen ➟ More ➟ Merge.
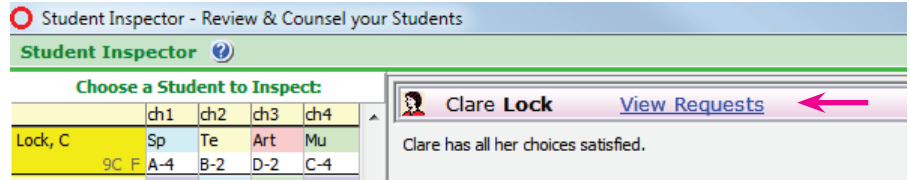
Customize Menu

This has been simplified – so several different options are brought together on a single screen with tabs.

Go to Customize ⟹ Customize Overview, and choose a Tab:
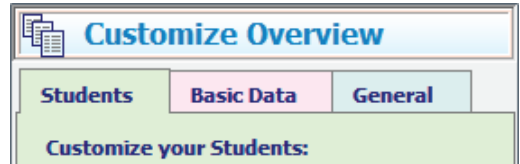
Review & Counsel Screen

If there are any Requests for the student you are viewing, a link 'View Requests' appears by their name at the top of the screen, to make you aware:

Click to review their requests.

The Requests can be about friends wanting to be in the same group, or about students who should be kept apart, by being placed in different groups where possible.

This can help you in deciding the best way to deal with this student on this screen.

Import Student Allocations

If you have an Excel file with a list of students and the TeachingGroups they are to be in, you can now import this into *Options*. The import will place each student in the correct group in each block.

(Note : you don't need this method if you are using either the traditional method of manually entering Choices on the Students & Choices Screen, nor if you are using TOOLS to collect students' Choices.)

If you use this method, follow these steps:

1) On the Current Pattern screen, give each group a TeachingGroupName (TGN). You can do this using the various features under the 'TGNs' button.

2) To import your file go to: TGNs ⟹ Import student assignments into TGs, and follow the instructions on-screen. When you have completed the information, press 'Go'.

At the end of the import, a report appears, in which you will be warned (in red or orange) if you have any problems, or if information was missing from your Excel file, *for example:*
(i) Duplicate student names or UPNs, or
(ii) A student does not appear in your Excel file, or
(iii) Not all of a student's choices have a TGN.
Then click Close & you will see the Current Pattern with the students assigned to their groups.

Students & Choices Screen

With the extra features now added to this screen, some of the options have been moved from '**Other Checks**' to a new '**Tools**' button:
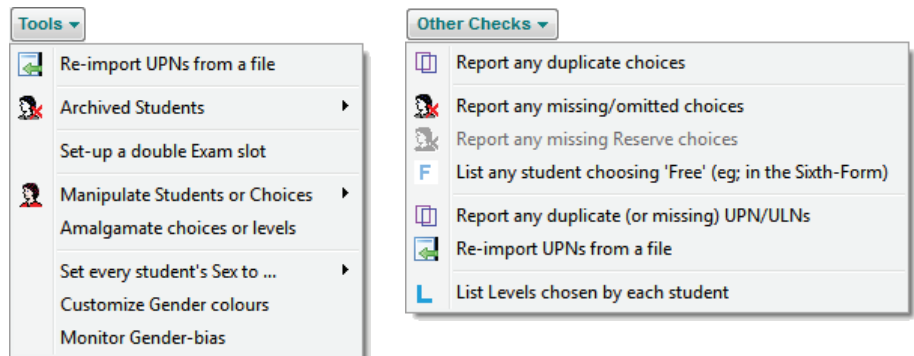
Take a moment to look at the listed features, to see what you may have missed:

# Miscellaneous, including features added late into *Options 2020*

Export to TASS
You can now export your student assignments to the TASS MIS. Go to File ➠ Export to MIS ➠ TASS.

Note: As well as TASS, this CSV format may be useful for other third-party systems, or your own reports?

Student names
The forename can now be longer (up to 20 chars) – as some schools record/import middle names too.
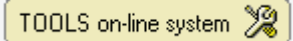
Import from TOOLS
This has been improved in minor ways. *For example,* it now warns you if a student name is missing.

Export to Excel
There are several screens in *Options* where your data can be saved to Excel, and previously the file was saved as a **.xls** file. Now it will (by default) be saved to the newer **.xlsx** format … but you can return to saving as .xls if you wish, via: Customize Menu ➠ Customize Overview ➠ General ➠ Export to Excel.

Roam
The Roam feature (looking at alternative patterns) has been improved, after feedback from Users.

Review & Counsel : Student Inspector Screen
It's now easier to view a single TutorGroup/Class at a time.
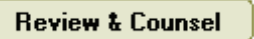
Social Distancing : Covid-19 features

- **Student Tracing**: This feature (on the Current Pattern screen) allows you to see quickly which students an infected person has been in contact with.

- IB or Year 12 : Collecting students'Choices on-line

- **Splitting groups** for social distancing: there are now extra features to help with this, at: Current pattern ➠ More ➠ Split all large groups.

   More details of all these features at: https://www.timetabler.com/covid-19/

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.

- The HelpScreens have been updated.

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