

## Alternative Curriculum lessons

In SIMS and other MIS, 'Alternative Curriculum' lessons are lessons which any student, in any year, can be placed in. Unlike normal lessons, these lessons do not belong to a particular year, they have 'whole-school eligibility', so that in the MIS you can place any student in any of them.

Here are some examples of Alternative Curriculum ('A/C') lessons:

- You maintain a 'Study' group in the Library each period, for both Year 12 and Year 13 students who do not have lessons in that period. These Study 'lessons' may be staffed or unstaffed.
- You have extra 'withdrawal' lessons for English and/or Maths, taught by SEN staff, which anyone, from any Year, can join rather than going to their usual 'mainstream' lesson.
- You have peripatetic Music teachers that you want to timetable.
- You have an 'Isolation Unit' to be staffed and timetabled.

A/C lessons may be staffed or unstaffed. They usually have a Room but they don't have to. It is usually best to assign the A/C lessons after the rest of the timetable has been completed.

This PDF shows you how to enter and schedule Alternative Curriculum lessons in **TimeTabler**. Make sure you have used Check for Updates to get the latest version.

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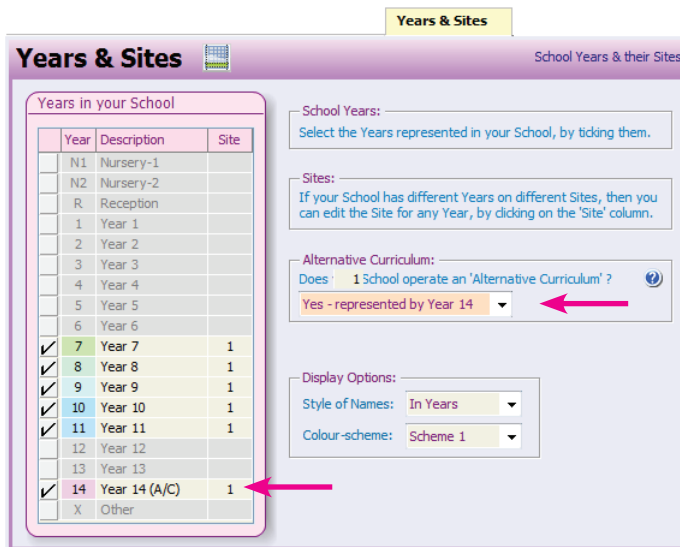
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# Adding to your Basic Data

## 1. Add an extra Year, for the A/C classes.

Go to School Structure Years & Sites, (Section C5 in the printed Manual) and in the area titled 'Alternative Curriculum' select a Year 14 (or any Year which is not a real year in your school).

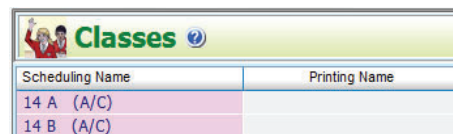
This extra (dummy) Year will be used by **TimeTabler** for scheduling the Alternative Curriculum classes, but will **not** be exported to your MIS (as it is not a real Year).



## 2. Add Classes for the A/C lessons

Go to the Classes Screen (Section C10 in the Manual) and add one or more classes.

If you are going to have up to 3 different A/C groups running at the same time then you need to add 3 classes here (eg. 14A, 14B, 14C).



For example, add **14A** if you want to add 'Study' lessons for Year 12 & 13; **14B** if you wanted to add SEN withdrawal lessons in Maths; **14C** if you wanted to add cover for an Isolation Unit, **14D** if you also wanted to add violin lessons with a peripatetic teacher, etc.

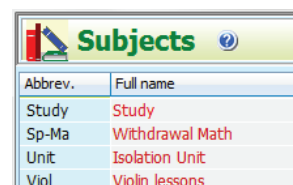
If in doubt use fewer classes rather than more in the first year of using this feature.

See also the example on the next page.

## 3. Add Subjects for the A/C lessons.

Go to the Subjects Screen (Section C6 in the Manual) and add one or more subjects.

For example, 'Study' for some Study lessons; 'Sp-Ma' for Special (SEN) Maths; 'Unit' for lessons in the Isolation Unit; 'Viol' for violin lessons, etc.

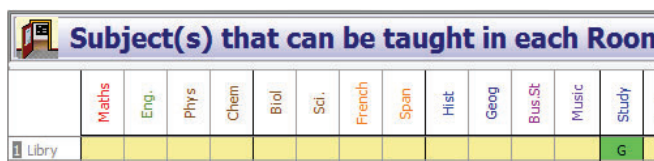


And optionally:

## 4. Add Rooms for A/C lessons, if needed.

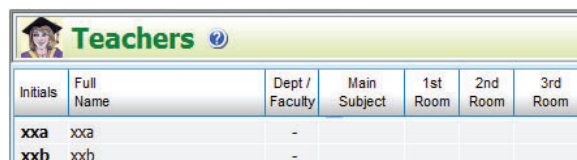
Go to Rooms Screen Preferred Rooms for each subject, and specify a room if one is needed.

For example, 'Library' for the subject 'Study':



## 5. Add dummy Teachers if they are needed.

If you wish to have some A/C lessons *without* any teacher then you will need to add a dummy teacher. See the explanation on page 5.



Go to the Teachers Screen (Section C9 in the Manual) and add one or more dummy teachers. These dummy teachers must have a format like xxa, xxb, xxc, etc, so that **TimeTabler** knows to ignore them in an export to your MIS.

For example, **xxa** for any unstaffed 'Study' periods for 14A; **xxb** for any 14B lessons without a teacher, etc.

## Entering the A/C activities on the Batches Screen

You can enter all of them in one Batch or you can enter a batch of activities for each collection of Alternative Curriculum lessons. *For example*, one Batch for some 'Study' lessons (as shown below), and a separate Batch for SEN Maths Withdrawal, etc.

### Example (in 3 steps)

In this example we are entering a set of 'Study' periods, to take place in the Library. Students from Years 12 & 13 are expected to go to the Library if they don't have a scheduled lesson. There are 30 periods in the week. In this (slightly unusual) example we want Period 1 and Period 5 each day to be supervised by a named person (KJo, the Sixth Form Tutor, assuming he is free). However for the other 20 periods we want **TimeTabler** to automatically choose a teacher who is free.

### Step 1.

Go to Activities ►► Activity Batches ►► New and from the drop-down list choose 'Year 14 (A/C)':  
Click Continue, to open the Curriculum Diagram.

### Step 2.

Click on the Pure Class Wizard:

Select **Class** 14A (in this example):  
Use a Single period **lesson**, S:  
Select the **Subject** (in this example 'Study'):

Enter a **Description** (eg. 'Study Period'):

Enter a **Prefix** for the **TGNs**.

The TGNs will be produced automatically. They are necessary for the export to an MIS. In this example we have entered a Prefix of 'Stu', so **TimeTabler** will automatically produce TGNs like 'Stu/Mon1', 'Stu/Mon2', 'Stu/Mon3', etc. (You can manually edit them later if you wish.)

Click on **Lessons in week** : Choose Periods, to see this screen:

Click on this screen to choose (only) period 1 and period 5 each day, as shown here:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Monday	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tuesday	1	2	3	4	5	6
Wed	1	2	3	4	5	6
Thurs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Friday	1	2	3	4	5	6

Then click on the '**Staffing**' Tab, and (in this example) select Teacher KJo (the 6th Form Tutor):

Click 'Add now'.

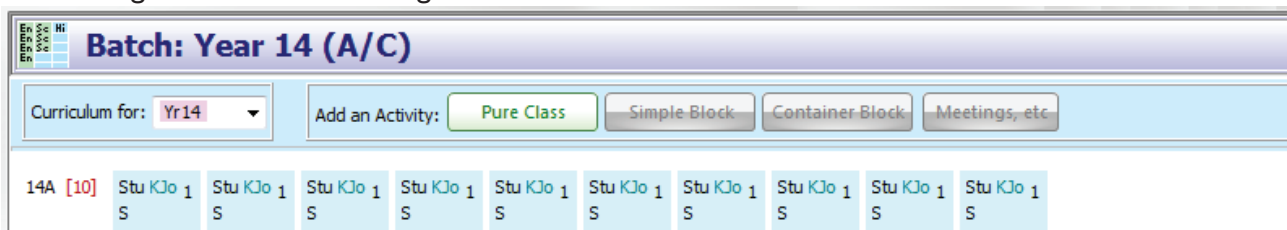
Teacher	Subject	Set
1 KJo - Mr K. JOHNSON	Study*	

This step ensures that there will 10 periods of 'Study' in this Batch, with teacher KJo, and that they will be treated as 'Fixed Points' activities, pre-assigned on the schedule to periods 1 & 5 each day.

continued...

Entering a Batch, continued...

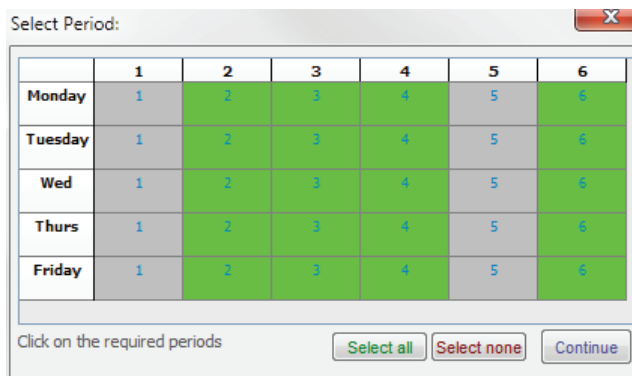
At this stage the Curriculum Diagram looks like this:



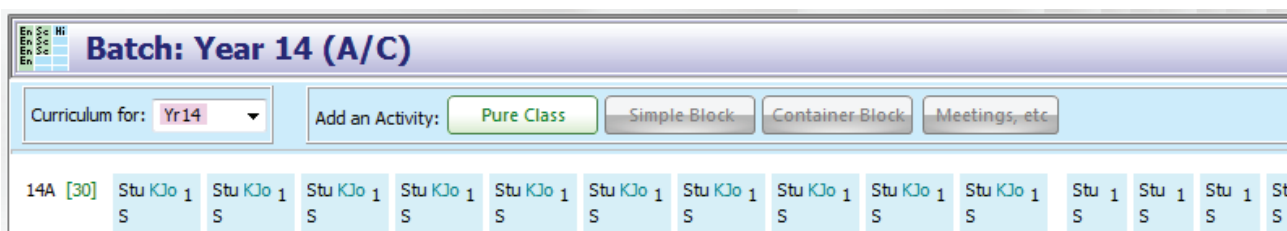
### Step 3.

In the same Batch, repeat all of Step 2, but now:

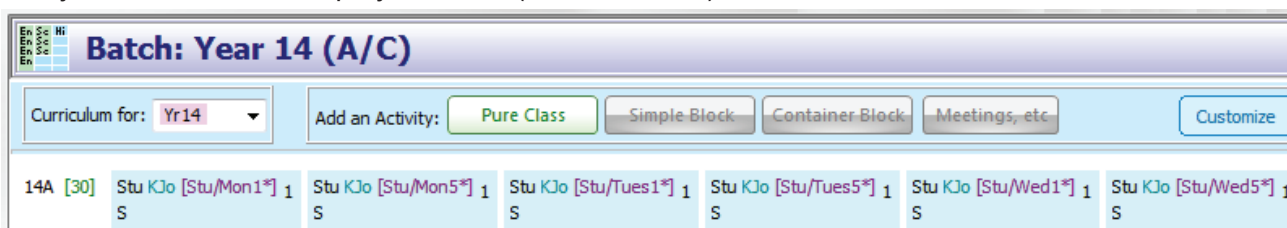
- Select the remaining 20 periods of the week, as shown:  
Make sure that it complements the periods chosen on the similar screen in Step 2.
- Do **not** enter any Staff. This means that we want **TimeTabler** to choose a (free) teacher for each of these 20 periods (see page 5). (You can edit the staff later if you wish, see p 5.)



The Curriculum Diagram now has more activities, like this:



or if you switch on the display of TGNs (via Customize), then:



(You can Edit any of these activities in the usual way, by double-clicking on it.)

So the batch now contains:

- 10 periods of 'Study' to be pre-assigned to periods 1 & 5 on each day, with teacher KJo, and
- 20 periods of 'Study' with no teacher assigned. **TimeTabler** will look at these unstaffed lessons and during scheduling (see page 6) it will auto-allocate any teacher who is free in each period.

This example is slightly unusual in having these two types of lessons. In practice you may often have have only one type or the other.

In this example we have entered 30 alternative curriculum lessons to fill up the entire 30-period week for Class 14A, but you don't have to do this.

In this example we said we needed a teacher for each lesson, but if some or all lessons don't need a teacher then use the 'xxa' method described on the next page.

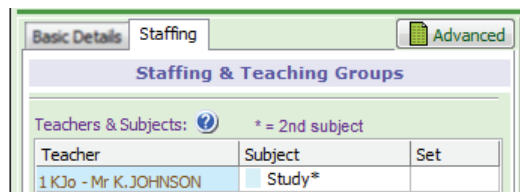
### 3 ways of entering the Staffing

At the previous stage, of entering Alternative Curriculum activities into a Batch, there are 3 ways in which you can enter the staffing:

#### 1. Specific Teacher

If you want a specific Teacher to take all the lessons of the A/C activity, then go to the 'Staffing' Tab in the Wizard [as in Step 2 of the example] and add the Teacher (or Teachers\*) in the usual way.

Every lesson will be given that same Teacher.



\* If you wish you can also add Assistant Teachers, in the usual way, either before scheduling via the 'Advanced' button in the Wizard, or after scheduling via the Edit Details Screen (see below).

#### 2. Any Teacher, auto-allocated

If you don't mind who takes a group, and you are happy to leave it up to **TimeTabler**, then just leave the A/C activity unstaffed, as in Step 3 of the example.

As each lesson is scheduled [see the next page],

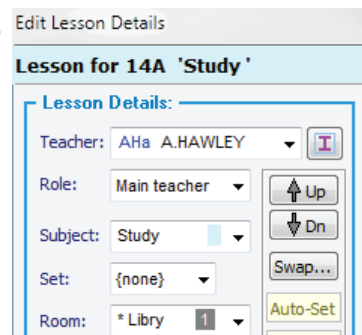
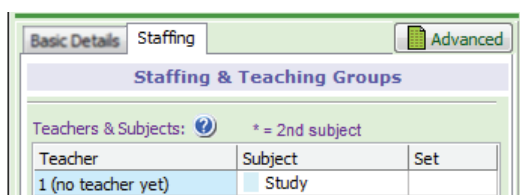
**TimeTabler** will search on the existing timetable and find a free teacher for this lesson, and allocate this Teacher automatically for you.

Note: If you use this method, you should schedule these A/C lessons after the main timetable is completed, when **TimeTabler** knows who is free in each period; otherwise it may give them all to the same teacher, who appears to be free all week.

Of course when you look at the result you may feel that some of the auto-allocations are unsuitable. Look at the **Class Timetable Screen** (HelpMovie 44) to check this.

To change the Teacher for any activity, double-click on the cell to see the Edit Details Screen, and select a new Teacher from the drop-down list:

Note that those marked with an asterisk\* are not free.



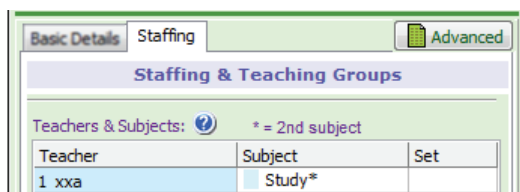
In making this editing you will want to:

- Ensure that each Teacher is within their maximum Teaching Load. You can see the current Load, and any Maximum that you have previously entered, by going to:
  - either the Statistics Screen (HelpMovie 27),
  - or the Staff Loading Chart (HelpMovie 29).
- Ensure that each Teacher's PPA time or free periods have a good well-spaced rhythm. You can see the current rhythm by going to:
  - either the Quality Optimiser Report Screen (HelpMovie 49),
  - or the Staff Timetable Screen (HelpMovie 43).

#### 3. No Teacher

There are maybe some A/C activities which do not require a Teacher. *For example*, Sixth formers who can be trusted in a 'Study' group unsupervised. To handle this situation,

- Add some extra 'dummy' Teachers on the Teachers Screen. They must be called **xxa**, **xxb**, ...**xxz** (add as many as you need, up to 26). See part 4 on page 2.
- When entering the A/C activity, at Step 2, on the 'Staffing' Tab, use Teacher **xxa** etc. If there is a possibility that two unstaffed A/C activities could occur in the same period then you must use different dummy staff.



On screen and on your printouts, you will see the lessons with these 'pretend' Teachers.

But in the export to an MIS, these lessons will be exported **without** a Teacher, for those MIS such as SIMS that allow a lesson to be unstaffed.

## Scheduling

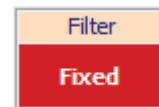
Scheduling is done in the usual way.

Normally the Alternative Curriculum batch(es) will be loaded into the existing mainstream timetable **after** that has been completed.

ie. the A/C activities will be added to the existing timetable, at the end.



Because the A/C Batch includes Fixed Points (as decided by you, by ticking the green cells as shown at Steps 2 & 3 of the example), the Fixed Points Filter is automatically switched on (on the Visual Builder Screen).

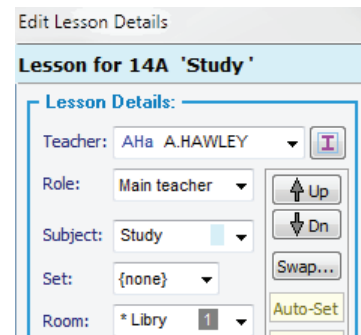


You can usually just press Function Key <F2> to assign the lessons quickly.

We advise you to look carefully at the result, on the Class Timetable Screen, and make any necessary adjustments using the Edit Details Screen, as described in part 2 of page 5.

This allows you to improve:

- The Teaching Load for each Teacher,
- The rhythm of their PPA / Free time.



**Printouts** are produced in the usual way.

The A/C lessons will appear against Class 14A, etc.

Any lessons showing a (dummy) teacher in the format **xxa** etc will be shown on the printouts, but will normally **not** be included in the export to an MIS.

Note also that Year 14 will **not** be sent to your MIS as an actual school year, as your MIS does not need to have and will not recognise a Year 14.

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Question:

What if my 'Study' Group is only for the Sixth Form (Years 12 and 13)?  
ie. I don't need or want 'whole-school' eligibility.

Answer:

*Either:* just tell your MIS / Office Staff to put only Sixth-formers in this 'Study' Group,  
*Or:* don't use this A/C feature; use 'vertical' classes instead (HelpMovie 17).

continued...

# Exporting

There are 2 possibilities:

1. Some MIS require you to manually enter the Alternative Curriculum lessons after the main timetable has been imported.
2. Other MIS (see below) will accept the A/C as part of the export file produced by **TimeTabler**.

## 1. To add the A/C timetable to your MIS manually.

For these MIS:

- Enter & assign activities as in this PDF, so that **TimeTabler** does the work of allocating staff and completes a viable A/C timetable for you.
- Go to Print ➡ Master Class timetable for the A/C Classes (14A, etc) and get a printout.
- Then use the printout to add the A/C manually to your MIS.

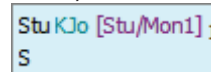
## 2. To Transfer the A/C timetable to your MIS electronically.

Some MIS are known to accept an import file, and where we know such details we give them below.

In general an export to your MIS will only be successful if each A/C activity has a TGN, and if the TGN is unique. **TimeTabler** produces a unique TGN for each activity automatically so there should be no need for you to edit any TGN manually, and we recommend that you don't try.

For some MIS, SIMS especially, the length of the TGN is severely limited (to 9 characters).

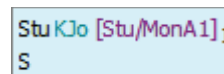
The format (see p. 4) is `Stu/Mon1` [meaning: subject Stu, on Monday-period-1]:



StuKJo [Stu/Mon1] 1  
S

### Two-week timetables

Because of the limited length (9 characters), if you have a 2-week timetable then the format of the Day Names (on the School Structure Screen, HelpMovie 11) must be: `MonA, TueA, WedA, ThuA, FriA, MonB, TueB, ...etc.`



StuKJo [Stu/MonA1] 1  
S

### Export to SIMS

This uses the same format as Nova-T uses, and any lessons with a Teacher in the form `xxa, xxb`, etc will not be included in the export.

After importing the file into SIMS (as explained in the usual export Documentation & HelpMovies), you or the SIMS Manager should be able to put **any** student, in any Year, into any of the Alternative Curriculum groups.

### Export to other MIS

We have written to the MIS providers with full details of the A/C file structure. However at the time of writing we are not sure which MIS have implemented a suitable import.

For example, at the time of writing RM Integris are testing the import but we have not yet heard the result. iSAMS have said that the A/C should import fine, while WCBS say they will need to do some work before it will import into PASS/3sys/HUB.

As we get more news of implementation by each MIS we will add more news here.

We advise you to contact the HelpDesk for your MIS and ask them if the Alternative Curriculum import (with 'Global eligibility' or 'Whole-school eligibility') has been implemented yet.