Options

Book O3b:

Linking Options
to an MIS or third-party system

User Information

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MIS – Options Link

This document describes how to:

-- *import a list of students (and optionally their choices) and subjects **from an MIS into Options**, so that Options can work on those students to create the best Options Pattern*

-- *and then export the list of **students from Options back into the MIS***
-- *and also export the **groups those students have been placed in***

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Any Questions ?

If you have any questions, or would like to see an example export file, please ask Chris Johnson for more details; chris@timetabler.com.

1 Overview of the Export

Why use the export ?

This link allows students (and optionally their choices) which are stored in the MIS, to be imported into Options. Options can then do its work in creating the best pattern for those students and choices, before exporting where that pattern back to the MIS, with a note of where each student has been placed.

How do I link to my MIS ?

Stage 1:
- In your MIS: create the 'export to TT-Options' file (see your MIS documentation for how to do this)
- In Options: import this file: Go to "File → Import from … → *your MIS name*".

Stage 2:
Within Options, work with this data in the usual way. See the printed Options Manual for details.

Stage 3:
- In Options: export this file: Go to "File → Export to … → *your MIS name*".
- In your MIS: import this file (see your MIS documentation for how to do this)

File format

Both import and export files are CSV files.

The format is available upon request.

Overview: Allowing Options and the MIS to 'talk to one another'

This link allows the User / School to:

1) Transfer existing Student data from the MIS to the *Options* module.
   Optionally, the Students' **Choices** may also be included in the transfer, if they have already been collected by the MIS. [The Students' Choices can be collected in the MIS before this transfer, or they can be entered in the *Options* module after the transfer, for example by using our *TOOLS* on-line system which Students access over the internet from their homes).

2) *Options* then does its work to find the best pattern for these students and choices.

3) The complete solution / options pattern is then transferred back into the MIS in order to populate the Groups/Sets in the MIS.

2 Extra Notes

(1) Double-Options:

Looking at "double-options", the way we handle it in our *Options* software is that if, for example, you have a subject BTEC that is a double-option, then you enter it as 2 subjects in your list of subjects: BTEC1 and BTEC2. A student who chooses this double-option is then entered as having chosen both BTEC1 and BTEC2. The user then decides whether he does or doesn't require BTEC1 and BTEC2 to be grouped consistently, and *Options* finds the best pattern.

So in this case, the MIS should send *Options*:
SU,BTEC1,"BTEC",
SU,BTEC2,"BTEC",

Options would then send back to the MIS a pattern that contained groups of BTEC1 and BTEC2, and each student would be placed in one BTEC1 group and one BTEC2 group, to complete his/her double-option.

Triple-options would follow the same idea (BTEC1,BTEC2,BTEC3).

(2) Maximum lengths of fields:

The max. length of a subject code/abbreviation is 6 characters – so in this example:
SU,Hi,"History",1
... "HI" could not be more than 6 chars.

The UPN/StudentID is limited to 13 chars

We also limit subject full names to 15 chars ("History" in the example) ... and student forenames and surnames are limited to 11 and 14 chars respectively. These may therefore be truncated when imported into Options, but this doesn't matter, as when re-exported to the MIS, the MIS will recognise the student by his/her UPN/StudentID.

Any questions to: support@timetabler.com