What to look for in an Options program

Screens

The program should:

- be intuitive ✔
- have uncrowded, friendly screens ✔
- use colour to help you to identify items ✔

Help & Support

The program should:

- have a Help button to give immediate and interactive Help on each screen ✔
- have a fully-illustrated Manual, with Worked Examples ✔
- have a dedicated HelpDesk, staffed by experienced timetablers ✔

Entering and Analysing the data

The program should:

- allow quick entry or import of students' Names ✔
- allow the students' Choices to be entered quickly (eg. 5 min per registration group) ✔
- allow students/parents to enter their Choices on-line from home ✔
- include a Reserve choice if you wish ✔
- check the data against Rules that you have set up ✔
  eg1. You must choose a Language.   eg2. If you choose HSC1 then you must choose HSC2 as well.
- provide an analysis (clash table) of the students' choices ✔

Building a Options Pattern

The program should:

- allow you to set up Rules to be applied ✔
  eg1. Art and Graphics must (or must not) be in the same block.
  eg2. HSC1 and HSC2 is a double option and groups must be populated consistently.

- allow you to design a Pattern of Options Blocks, ✔
  - **manually**, or ✔
  - **automatically** (3 different modes), ✔
  - or a mixture of these, always following the Rules that you set up, ✔
- show group sizes, and report on groups which are too big or too small ✔
- show students' allocations, missing students, satisfaction rates, etc ✔
- allow you to manipulate the blocks and groups easily, ✔
  - with tools to 'equalise', 'shuffle', 'bunch', 'split', etc. ✔
- allow easy addition/deletion of students who arrive/leave later ✔

Printing and Exporting

The program should:

- give printouts of the blocks, groups, students fitted, students unfitted, etc ✔
- export to HTML, Excel, Word ✔
- provide mail-merge letters to parents, to inform them ✔
- print Individual Student Slips, Individual Student Timetables ✔
- print Group Lists for teachers for the start of term ✔