Getting Around in Astra Schedule

The Main Window

To launch Astra Schedule, double-click on the Astra Schedule shortcut icon on your desktop, or choose it from the Programs folder in your Start menu.

The **Astra Schedule** main window will appear.

**Note:** You may get a warning about Events when you open Astra for the first time and Astra will open to the events tab. If this happens, click OK on the warning and choose the blue Sections tab. You will learn how to customize your view in the following pages.
The Tabs

The body of the main window is a spreadsheet-like grid, with three main tables (referred to as "tabs"):

- **Sections Tab**: A list of all course sections
- **Rooms Tab**: A list of each room that can be scheduled on campus
- **Events Tab**: A list of non-academic events on campus

The tabs, located near the top left corner of the Astra Schedule window, allow you to navigate between the Section, Room and Event tables. Click on the tab of the table you wish to view. The selected tab and related data will appear.

**Note**: If your main window does not appear like the one above, click the Sections tab, because there is a good chance that you were viewing a different tab.

Records vs. Fields

When viewing the tabs, keep in mind that each ROW represents a database record, and each COLUMN represents a field in the database. These terms (record and field) will be used throughout this manual.

Color Codes

The records in the tabs are color-coded by status.

**Status Codes – Definitions**

- **Scheduled**: A section that has a building and room assigned to it. (Yellow)
- **Requested**: A section that has been marked as requested (DO NOT USE)
- **Do Not Schedule**: A section that has is scheduled as “TBA” (Pink)
- **Unscheduled**: A section without a building and room assigned, or with a building and room set as a preference. (White)

There is a way to change these colors but we advise you not to do so. If you call us and ask what it means when your sections are pink, we can tell you they are TBA sections. If you call us and ask us what it means when your sections are orange (after you decided to change all your colors), we will not be able to help you.
Sort Feature

You may sort the active tab by any column. For example, to see sections listed numerically by course number or alphabetically by title (as in the picture.)

1. Click on the gray column header (the field name – in this example, "Title"). The data will then be sorted in ascending order by that column header and a small directional arrow will appear beside the header.

2. Click on the same column header again. The data will be sorted in descending order by that column header and a corresponding directional arrow will appear beside the header.

The Database Layout Tool

In order to customize the way the database appears each time you open it, follow the instructions below.

1. Click the Database Layout icon in the upper toolbar (you may also select Database/Database Layout). The Database Layout window will appear. Clicking on a field in either panel highlights the field you want to move.

2. Click the right directional arrow to move fields from the "Fields Not Displayed" panel to the "Fields Displayed" panel. Click the left arrow to move fields from the "Fields Displayed" panel to the "Fields Not Displayed" panel. To view your fields in a certain order, click and drag any field (up or down) to the desired position.

3. The two check boxes at the bottom should both be checked to make sure you can see all of your sections and their meeting patterns.
Recommended Layout for a UNC-CH database

There are a number of fields that may be displayed in the database layout, most of which you do not need to view. The more fields that you have displayed, the longer it will take for your database to load. Following is a recommended layout to use, although you may set up your layout any way you wish.

Note: Choosing “Days Met” instead of each individual day will result in one column that will show TR or MWF instead of five columns that will show the letter under the day that the class meets.

To add the class number from Connect Carolina to your database, please see Appendix A at the end of this manual.

Choosing a Date Range or Term

Section data is viewed by academic term, or semester. Beginning in Fall 2010, terms will appear with 4 numbers (i.e. 2109).

1. Click the Select a date range/term to view icon in the upper toolbar (you may also select File/Select Dates). The Select Date Range to View window will appear.
2. Choose the term you would like to view.
3. Click OK.
4. Your grid will now be filled with data from the term that you chose.
Important: Always check that you are in the correct term while you are working in Astra Schedule. You can see the term you are working in on the upper left hand corner just above the list of sections. If you are working on Spring of 2011, be sure that you see “2112” on that tab. If the wrong term is shown, do the steps above again.

Modifying Section Meeting Patterns

1. Sections will roll from the previous year’s like term. The sections will appear in Astra with all of the rolled information from the previous year. However, there will be no roll of terms until Fall of 2011. Until then, each term will need to be completely recreated.

2. Sections that did not roll from a previous year, but were created in PeopleSoft (Connect Carolina) during the current term, will upload into the Astra Schedule database within 10 minutes. Classes that are not given meeting times or days will not roll into Astra as TBA sections unless you add an instructor.

Sections cannot be added directly into Astra Schedule; they must come in from the PeopleSoft (Connect Carolina) database in one of the above ways.
Modifying Section Meeting Patterns

Opening a Course Section to Edit

1. Open Astra Schedule; check that you are in the right term; check that you are in the "Sections" tab; and find the subject that you need to work with. All courses you are authorized to modify should be listed as tabs at the bottom of the screen.

![Astra Schedule Interface]

2. Double-click on the section you want to edit. The Edit Section Information window will appear.
The “Summary” tab of the **Edit Section Information** window contains basic information about the section, such as location and instructor, as well as a list of scheduling preferences.

**Note:** Not all fields are able to be changed by Scheduling Officers. Read-only fields appear with grayed-out text.

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### TBA Sections

Courses that are not given a day and time in Connect Carolina will appear as TBA sections. TBA sections will appear in Ad Astra when they are added in Connect Carolina if you add other information to the course such as an instructor or a note. If you don’t add any further information to the course in Connect Carolina, the section will not appear in Ad Astra.
Modifying Room and Feature Requests

Scheduling a Room using the Available Rooms Tool

The *Available Rooms* tool is for use by departments who have rooms that they control ENTIRELY (Departmental Rooms), or who have Preferred Scheduling in General Purpose Classrooms. Access to this tool will only be available to these departments and only during the Course Schedule Maintenance period.

The Available Rooms tool is used to schedule, not request, a room for a section, meaning that the departments described above will be able to place their classes in their rooms and not request that the Optimizer find a room for them. This tool can be used to change the room assignment from a rolled class, or to add a new room assignment to a new class section.

**To schedule a section using the Available Rooms tool:**

1. Double-click the section you want to schedule. The *Edit Section Information* window will appear.

2. Click the *Assign Available Room* button next to the “Building” and “Room” fields in the upper right area of the window.

3. The *Available Rooms* window will appear. The “Available” field (column) will be yellow for rooms that are available for the times and days selected for this section.

4. You will want to find rooms based on Max Enrollment, so choose this option in the bottom of the window. *By using “Enrollment” (which is zero at this time) you could schedule a room that is too small for your course’s max enrollment.*

5. Click on the row of the room into which you would like to schedule the section. The entire row will be highlighted.

6. Click *Select*. Clicking this button will automatically schedule the section into the room you have selected.

**Note:** Do not schedule recitations in your Scheduling Priority Rooms. Instead, use the Scheduling Preferences area (described below) to request a room for a recitation.
SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Room Type
Room Type will automatically show “Classroom” and a weight of 10. All General Purpose Classrooms have a classification of “Classroom” in the Room Type field. The software will not place the class in a room if this Room Type is changed.

Weighting
Weights on preferences define the strength of a preference for (or desire to avoid) an attribute. Weights are used in the Optimizer as part of the calculation that determines the best room(s) available.

Higher weights mean stronger preferences. A “10” weight means that the selection is ideal. A “5” is half as desirable as a “10.” A “-10” means that the selection will never be considered. Weights from “9” to “1” are considered, and the attribute will be avoided as the number is reduced.

Selecting “limit search to list” on Feature and Building/Room preferences will prompt Astra Schedule to only consider the selected attributes.

The only Schedule Preferences you can change are Feature and/or Building/Room.

To request a room
1. Double click on the Building/Room field.

2. The Selection of Room Preferences window will pop up.
Use the drop down menus to choose the desired building and room.

**Note:** If you want to put a section in a room that is not on file, choose ‘XX’ in the building and room preference menus and set to a weight of 10.

3. Place the sliding weight bar at 10. This will tell the system that the room you have selected is your highest preference.

4. You may choose up to 3 alternate rooms, with less weight, if you wish.

5. If you only want the class to be scheduled in this (or these) room(s) and no other room, check the “Limit Search to List” box on the right.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**
- If you check the “Limit Search to List” box, the software will try to schedule the class in the requested room, however if it is not available the class will appear on our “unable to place” list. **We recommend setting the weight to 10 but NOT checking the “Limit Search to List” box.**

- When choosing classrooms, you are making preferences ONLY. By filling out this window you are submitting a **request** to the system to have your class placed in your preferred rooms. There is no guarantee that your section will be scheduled in this room. Viewing the weekly room grid before setting preferences will help minimize conflicts during room assignments, but will not completely eliminate them.

**Requesting Room Features Using Scheduling Preferences**

Room features are special room attributes that are a permanent part of the room, such as projection screens, whiteboards, or special A/V equipment. Seating types can also be specified, for example: Tables & Chairs/Moveable or Tablet Arm Chairs/Fixed. Only those features that are important in room selection should be defined and selected. Weights can be set from “-10” (avoid) to “10” (strongly prefer). For features that allow quantities, select a desired number of that feature.

**Note:** Excessive use of room features can limit the ability of the Optimizer to find an ideal room for the section.

**If you do not want the class scheduled in the same room as the previous term, or if it is a newly added section, and you are not requesting a specific room, you should request equipment**

1. Double-click on the field under “Feature.” The **Selection of Room Features** window will appear.

2. Use the drop-down menus to choose up to three preferred room features.

3. Use the sliding weight bar to set the weight of preference for each feature.

**Please note:** If you set a weight of 10 for Features and the preference can’t be found, the section will not be scheduled. We recommend setting a weight at 9.
Data Export from Astra Schedule

HOW TO

Export the Database into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet 1

Exporting the Database into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet

Astra Schedule has the ability to export data into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet to be used in generating in-office reports and schedules.

1. Use the **Database Layout** tool to change your database view to the way you want it to be exported to Excel. (See “Getting Around in Astra Schedule” to learn how to use the Database Layout Tool.) You can always go back and change your view to the way you prefer to see it on a daily basis.

2. When your database appears the way you want it to appear in Excel, you may prepare for one of two options for exporting:

   a. **Export selected records:** You may select one record (section) by clicking on it to highlight it. You may select more than one record by holding down the “Ctrl” key while clicking on the records. Use this option when you do not want all of your records to be exported into the Excel spreadsheet. For example, if you want to generate a report of only one professor’s classes. This is how the resulting Excel spreadsheet will look if you export only selected records:

   ![Excel Spreadsheet Screenshot](image)

      | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
      |---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
      | Subject | Course | Section Num | Instructor | Section Cluster | Import Id | Title |
      | AFRI | 266 | 001 | NYANG’ORO, J | | NCGU20079AFR1266 001 | CONTEMPORARY AFRICA |
      | AFRI | 996 | 001 | NYANG’ORO, J | | NCGU20079AFR196 001 | INDEPENDENT STUDIES |
      | AFRI | 891H | 001 | NYANG’ORO, J | | NCGU20079AFR1691H001 | HONORS RESEARCH |

   b. **Export all records:** You do not need to do any preparation if you wish to export all records to the Excel spreadsheet.

3. Click the **Export Grid** icon on the lower toolbar and it will ask you to name your spreadsheet and ask you where you want to save it. Save your spreadsheet in the location on your computer where you would like to keep it. The default location for
saving it will be in the *Astra Schedule* folder of your computer, *so be sure to change this!*

4. After clicking *Save*, Astra will ask you if you want to export *all* records by clicking “Yes,” or export *selected* records by clicking “No.” If you want to cancel the export, click “Cancel.” This can be counter-intuitive so be careful here. You can always redo the export if it does not come out the way you wanted it to.

5. The software will confirm the export and ask you to click “OK.”

**Note:** The report that is exported into Microsoft Excel is no longer live data. That is, any changes that you make to the Excel spreadsheet will not be actual changes to the course. Any changes to sections that you want made have to be done in Astra Schedule. This opportunity to export the grid into Excel allows you to maintain or post section records in your office, and is not used for anything else.
Appendix A – Adding Class Number from Connect Carolina to the database

Choose Database from the menu. Choose Database Layout

Check in **Fields Not Displayed** to see if USER 11 is there. If it is, highlight it and use the arrow to move it to Fields Displayed. This is a good time to check and see if you have both of those boxes checked!
You can move it anywhere you want in the list by highlighting it and holding down the left mouse key.

You can edit the name by clicking on the pencil and paper on the right.
Here you can see where Class Number is now at the beginning of my database.