Starfish Faculty FAQs

What is Starfish, and why do we have it?
Starfish is an early warning and student tracking system that takes a holistic approach to student success, making it easier for The New School to coordinate and communicate among stakeholders, monitor student progress, and help students make wise choices. We rely on the campus community to utilize Starfish to help us identify students who need additional support.

Why should I take attendance in Starfish?
Taking attendance in Starfish serves four important goals:
1. Starfish helps faculty document and track attendance for their course(s). Starfish includes the Student ID photo so you can easily identify each student. Taking attendance in Starfish is quick as it defaults attendance to “present,” you only need to indicate the students who are absent or tardy. If everyone was present, open the attendance screen and press submit - attendance will be recorded for that date. Faculty can also download an attendance excel report, and filter students by their attendance status in Starfish.

2. Students and academic advisors are sent automatic notices if students have been marked as missing two or more classes. This does not require action from the faculty beyond entering attendance in the first place. Research consistently shows that class attendance in college correlates with both class grades and with overall GPA (Crede, Roch, Kieszczynka, 2010), so we want to identify attendance issues quickly and provide guidance to students as early as possible.

3. Students can see the exact dates they have been marked as absent or tardy for your course in their Starfish account, making their attendance standing clear and transparent and helping them take greater responsibility for their own performance in your course.

4. The Department of Education (DOE) requires The New School to accurately report on students’ last date of attendance for federal aid recipients in a timely manner in order to determine student’s federal aid refunds. We can access student’s last date of attendance in a timely manner via Starfish.

What is a Flag in Starfish?
Flags are raised by faculty to communicate a concern about a student. All Academic flags generate an email to the student with supportive language directing them to resources as well as recommended actions for them to resolve the concern. The email includes faculty comments, if made. In the case of Behavioral, Health, or Personal/Social Concerns Flags, students are NOT notified.

Why is there an Attendance Concern flag if I’m already taking attendance?
The Attendance Concern flag is helpful if you wish to document or emphasize specific attendance-related behavior. For example: Meghan has missed three consecutive classes and has not responded to my emails. I am not clear if it is her intention to drop the class, or remain in the course.

As noted above, if you are regularly taking attendance in Starfish, the Starfish system will generate an Auto-Attendance flag if a student is marked as missing two or more classes.
What is a referral in Starfish?
A referral is a way to tell a student to go to a specific office or access a specific resource.

Referrals are more supportive than just telling a student they should visit a particular office because they generate an email that tells the student how to connect with that office (where to go, who to contact, etc...) The system also lets the relevant office know you sent someone their way along with context for the referral.

Who can see flags?
Each flag has different viewing privileges and we limit viewing privileges to only roles who can actively work towards supporting the student for the particular item.

For example, the Director for Student Health Services has viewing privileges for the Health Concerns flag. In general, the student’s Academic Advisor will be able to view any flag for students assigned to their caseload so they have a holistic understanding of their students.

What am I supposed to do with flags after I have raised them?
In short, if the behavior changes or the issue is no longer a concern, you may clear the flag.

For example, if you raise a Missing or Late Assignments flag, and the student has since turned in their missing assignments, it would be appropriate to clear the flag.

What happens when I raise a flag or make a referral for a student?
In addition to the email that is sent to the student for academic flags, advisors and various support staff are also notified of your concern.
Some flags indicate more serious concerns than others, so depending on the nature of the flag and/or your comments, an academic advisor or staff member will follow-up and will “Close the Loop”, or will add a comment to the flag to share relevant information regarding the issue.

I raised a flag but nothing happened!
Not all flags require advisors to actively follow-up on the individual flag. That said, advisors are expected to note trends or patterns in student behavior; a student on academic probation flagged with an Attendance Concern flag in multiple classes will generate a different level of outreach than a high performing student who receives one Attendance Concern flag in one class. One of the great benefits of a system like Starfish is rather than having to search through an inbox looking for messages about a student, advisors are able to see a more comprehensive view of a student's progress throughout their studies in Starfish, which will help the advisor have more informed conversations with their students.
Even if you don't receive notification from Starfish or directly from an advisor, know that advisors and staff are making appropriate outreach to students, including phone calls, as necessary. Ultimately, the student has to accept advice, use the support services the advisor suggests, and attend classes and complete their work. Academic Advising will continue to work towards providing feedback to faculty via Starfish.
Can I get more one on one training?
Yes! If you have questions or would like more assistance, Haley Baron, who manages the system, is always happy to meet individually with faculty. She may be reached at starfish@newschool.edu or at 212-229-5150 x4764

We welcome your feedback! Please email us if you have questions or general comments.