



Starfish Faculty Staff Guide | Helping You Support Students (a/o 8-7-25)

- ★ **What is Starfish?** Starfish is PennWest's online student support system that connects faculty, advisors, and support staff with students to promote academic success. It allows you to raise flags for concerns, give kudos for positive feedback, refer students to services, and document outreach.
-

★ **Set Up Your Profile & Consultation Hours**

Step 1: Update Your Profile and let students know how you're available to help.

- From [My.PennWest.edu](https://my.pennwest.edu) find the Starfish tile and log in. Go to the **three-lined menu** (≡) in Starfish
- Click on **Your Name > Edit Profile** and scroll to the **About** section and complete **My Biography** and **General Overview**

Step 2: Post Your Consultation Hours so students can easily schedule time with you.

- [Office Hours and Appointment Handout](#)
-

- ★ **Documenting Student Meetings: 3 Ways** Use **Appointments**, **Tracking Items**, or **Notes** to document student interactions. This keeps a clear record and shares information across PennWest.

Start by documenting through **Appointments** or **Tracking Items** when possible. Use **Notes** only if there isn't an appointment or tracking item to comment on.

1. **Appointments:** Use **Outcomes** and **SpeedNotes** to track meetings or mark **No Show** (this sends a follow-up email)
 2. **Tracking Items:** Open the student folder, click the Tracking link and hover over the item to add comments
 3. **Notes (Use Last):** Select **General Shared Note** to document and share an interaction. You can send a copy of the note to the student
 4. Keep all documentation **fact-based and professional**. Use your best judgment with personal or sensitive details
-

★ **How do I raise a Tracking Item (Flag, Kudo, Referral, or To-Do)?**

1. Open the **My Students** tab
 2. Search for a student or select multiple students
 3. Choose **Flag**, **Kudo**, **Referral**, or **To-Do**
 4. Add comments (these may be visible to students or staff, depending on the item)
 5. Click **Save** – The system will automatically send emails based on the action selected
- Kudos** send compliments or encourage students with positive reinforcement. [Kudos Handout](#)
Flags alert students and Student Success to academic concerns
Referrals connect students directly to specific support offices
To-Do's help guide students with actionable steps

★ **How do I view student Tracking Items or Notes?**

- Open the **My Students** tab and select the student
- Select the **Tracking** link or **Notes** and hover over any item for details

★ **What happens after I raise a Flag or Referral?**

- Students receive a PennWest email notification and a Starfish notification
 - Student Success will attempt outreach (2+ times over two business days) the next business day after the initial item has been raised. If there is no student response, the item is cleared, and you'll be notified
-

★ **Advisee Management**

- Locate, filter and email your advisees with these tips. Advisee [Video](#) and [Handout](#)
-

★ **Recording Classroom Attendance in Starfish**

- Faculty can record, edit, and review attendance in Starfish by selecting a section and meeting time, marking student statuses, and saving the record from the Attendance tab
- Students who **miss three or more classes** are **automatically flagged** and notified
- Flagged students receive **emails with resources** like Success Coaching, tutoring, and academic support

★ What is Roster Verification (Week 1)?

- During the first week of classes, faculty confirm student attendance for federal financial aid purposes. On-campus students must attend in person, and online students must engage in D2L Brightspace. If marked as not attending, students receive an email from the Registrar's Office with next steps.
- [Roster Verification Handout](#)

★ What are Progress Surveys (Week 4)?

- Faculty complete **progress surveys** (during week 4) to provide feedback on current letter grades. Students may receive an email with feedback, and in some cases, a Success Coach may follow up to offer support. Faculty can also raise items outside of surveys at any time.
- Progress Surveys serve as an additional layer of Roster Verification, especially for reporting last dates of attendance, ensuring compliance with federal financial aid requirements.
- [Progress Survey Handout](#)

★ Helping Students Resolve Registration Holds

The **Starfish Student Folder** includes a link to a **PDF guide** for resolving registration holds.

- The link appears **only when a student has a REGISTRATION hold**.
- Use the guide to understand the hold type and refer students to the correct campus contact for help.
- [Registration Hold Handout](#)

★ How can students Ask For Help in Starfish? (Raise Your Hand Feature)

- Students can use the **Raise Your Hand** feature to request online help.
- Student can click the ≡ menu (top left) and select Raise Your Hand.
- Some requests trigger automated responses, while others connect students directly with staff.
- Click [HERE](#) for the student handout or watch this short student [VIDEO](#).

★ How can students make a Tutoring or Writing Center appointment in Starfish

- Students click the ≡ menu (top left) and Courses
- Scroll down to the specific course to see available resources for that course
- Click on Schedule an Appointment
- If Peer Tutoring isn't available, students can access Tutor.com via D2L Brightspace by going to the appropriate course shell, and find Tutor.com under the Resources menu

★ Who is part of a Student's Success Network?

Students have a customized Success Network comprised of a group of **instructors, advisors, librarians, and Success and Career Coaches** committed to helping students succeed. These are the people students can turn to for academic support, guidance, and resources.

- It also includes support areas based on student involvement, such as: **Athletics, Greek Life, Global Education, and Military & Veterans**.
- These connections ensure students have the resources they need to succeed both academically and personally.

★ Can parents/guardians access Starfish?

- No, parents/guardians do not have access to Starfish.
- However, students can share their progress with them directly. If parents/guardians have questions, they are encouraged to talk with their student or connect with the appropriate campus department.
- **What if a student wants to grant a parent or trusted individual access to their student records?** If the student is over 18, they can create a **proxy account** at PennWest. [Proxy Access Information](#)

★ Need Help?

Visit the **Faculty/Staff Starfish D2L Page** for how-to guides, videos, and cheat sheets.

Questions? Email starfish@pennwest.edu