



## Using the Student Star™

Completing the Student Star is meant to be a helpful process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful basis for agreeing actions with students. The Star is a flexible tool that relies on the judgement of the tutor or other worker using it, and on a degree of understanding and trust between student and worker. Although the Star is designed to be used one to one, we are not prescriptive about the setting or how long it should take – the aim is to have a genuine interaction with the student. It consists of:

- The Star Chart and Action Plan
- The User Guide with brief and detailed scales for each of the nine outcome areas.

**Make sure that you have received training in using the Student Star** and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how they are used in your college. It is vital that workers using the Student Star understand and use the Journey of Change underpinning it as this will support consistent results and reliable outcomes data for your college to use.

**Introduce the Student Star to students** using the resources flexibly, including:

- Talking the student through the points in the introduction to the User Guide
- Devising a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- Use the Journey of Change to explain the stages step by step. You can physically walk them through the steps of the journey. Many people find this a helpful way to understand the Journey of Change
- Consider opportunities to introduce and discuss the Star before the session in which it is completed, possibly in a class, tutor group or other group setting
- By giving students who are literate and interested a copy of the User Guide to read before the session.

Emphasise that 10 is the top of the Star scales but not the end of the journey and people should continue to improve after they have reached this stage. Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

***“The Student Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and needs – there are no right or wrong answers.”***

***“It shows us where you are now and where you want to be in the future.”***

***“The Star tells us what you need in key areas in order to improve where you are now, and it helps you and the college make that improvement.”***

The aim is to complete the Star collaboratively, selecting appropriate examples from the scales. Some students will want to approach the tool cognitively, reading it through and discussing their life in terms of scales. Others might be able to explore aspects of their life less directly through storytelling, pictures or therapeutic techniques.

The star helped me see what I have achieved.

**Young person,  
Groundwork Trust**

The Star records progress towards the outcomes identified by the SEND pathfinders as key in improving life chances: employment, independent living, community inclusion and health.

**Manager,  
Ruskin Mill Trust**

Visit [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)  
**Contact [info@triangleconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@triangleconsulting.co.uk)  
 or 020 7272 8765**

**Ensure that the right person is completing the Star with a student.** This should be somebody who has an ongoing relationship with them and responsibility for their social and emotional well-being rather than solely for their academic or task-related progress. Where possible, the same person should complete the Star with the student at reviews.

**Allow enough time and consider the environment in which it is to be completed.** The Star is best completed without interruptions and in a setting in which the student feels comfortable. The aim is to support a meaningful discussion rather than complete it as quickly as possible; if the student is engaged and the student and tutor disagree on certain points, it may be better to complete the Star over two or more sessions.

**Be creative and use a range of resources.** Workers have used drawings, or tokens that can be moved around the Star to represent the student – edible ones go down well – and enlarged versions of the Star. Although it is also possible to work through each of the Star points verbally, reading out the descriptions or using relevant examples to describe the steps to the student.

**Use the Student Star to encourage self-reflection.** This can be done by asking students to explain where they are on the scales and why, taking the time to challenge them appropriately and discuss their views. Whilst the approach is collaborative, it is vital that the tutor is aware of their higher status. Their aim is to assist the student in gaining insights into their own world, and this needs to be done skilfully.

**Recognising external factors.** It is important to recognise that although the Star focuses on the student and college, there may be societal factors holding them back. These may be around work, benefits, acceptance and/or access to the resources and support they need. Acknowledge these in the discussion and use the notes section to record them. Your college may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

**Be positive and non-judgemental.** Used well, the Star will support a conversation that covers potentially sensitive aspects of a student's life, such as friendships and self-worth. Ensure that the student does not feel they are being judged and that their voice comes across. Clarify that, unlike academic or other subjects they study at college, the aim is not to get the highest score, but to understand where they might need extra or different help, and to celebrate what they have achieved.

**Use the Journey of Change when deciding where a student is on their journey.** There are two versions of each of the nine Star scales; the easy-read version uses colours and numbers to support using the Star collaboratively with students. The detailed scales are intended as a resource for workers but are worded so that they can be meaningfully shared with students for clarification.

**Differences of opinion are helpful starters for discussion.** If a student struggles with low self-esteem, they might place themselves towards the start of the journey and need reminding of their achievements. Others might not recognise or admit how they are behaving and might place themselves unrealistically high. Tutors may then reflect back to them evidence of discrepancies between their behaviour and their views, paving the way for a meaningful discussion and a more realistic assessment from which progress is possible.

**Draw on the experience other workers have of the student.** For example, in a residential college you may want to consult those working with the student at home, or consult those teaching other subject areas, as students may respond differently depending on the context.

**Listen and challenge appropriately but agree to differ if necessary.** You might feel that the Star does not accurately show the student's situation, or even their own view of their situation, for reasons including a desire to get the highest score, or fear either of their parents' or others' disapproval or of sanctions. Or things may be fine from their perspective even when the professional opinion is that there is an issue to address.

**If you cannot reach agreement, record both readings.** This can be done either during the session with the student or afterwards. As the student comes to trust you more, they may be more willing to explore their concerns and fears and your view and theirs may converge in areas where your readings originally differed.

**When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape.** If working on paper, mark each scale point on the Star Chart and join the points. If working on the Star Online, when all areas are completed a button will appear asking you to generate a completed Star.