

PAL MENTOR HANDBOOK



TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS MENTORS

"I have really enjoyed learning new skills and putting them into practice, this has given me a boost and encouraged me to seek progressing into a formal teaching postgrad degree. I have built confidence in my skills and every session I learn something new and constantly adapt the way I run the sessions, so the student gets the most out of PAL."	 Chrissie Joy, PAL Mentor for IMH (trained Sept. 2022)
"PAL has been an amazing experience. It has enabled me to help my fellow students settle into university life and reinforced my understanding of the topics covered in the early days of my degree. I have made some great lifelong friends, both students and staff!"	 Debby Mercer, PAL Mentor for IEH (trained Jan. 2021)
'I've so enjoyed being a PAL mentor for the university not only do I get to share my own experiences but I'm able to help & direct others new learners to go through university, I was a mentor out of university however university has given me more skills to be able to continue with mentoring outside of university & I'm excited to getting back into it.' Sherrell Dillion, PAL Mentor for IICL (trained Oct. 2022)	'PAL has added a new skill for me as I put it out in the world. It boots up your confidence, your communication level, teaching you to be patient & listen to what others have to say.' Rahima Zafar, PAL Mentor for IICL (trained Oct. 2022)

THE PAL SUPERVISOR TEAM AT UWTSO



Jo Kelleher

IMH

j.kelleher@uwtsd.ac.uk



Chris Fleming

IEH

christopher.fleming@uwtsd.ac.uk



Margaret Gordon

IICL

m.gordon@uwtsd.ac.uk

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

“It is fantastic to have students willing to give others their time and the benefits of their experience. Hopefully, the experience will be beneficial for yourselves and your own development as well as for the students that you will mentor.

“A key feature and strength of peer learning is your approachability and availability. I know also that in order to be in a position to act as a peer mentor you have had to commit to a comprehensive training programme so that you can appropriately identify wider issues and refer students into appropriate additional support as required.”



Rhys Dart, Director of Student Services

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WHAT IS PAL?

PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) derives from the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model developed at the University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC) in 1973 by Dr. Deana Martin. In the early 1990s the SI model was adapted for use in the UK and is mostly known as Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) or Peer Assisted Learning (PAL).

PAL provides **student-to-student support** whereby mostly first year students are supported in their studies by students from higher years (PAL mentors) from the same programme of study. PAL and similar schemes have proven to be effective at universities throughout the UK and internationally, across many disciplines.

The PAL model at UWTSD focuses on creating a sense of belonging in first years by helping them understand their studies; ease their transition to university; and develop graduate attributes in both mentors and participants thus improving student retention and enhancing learning.

More specifically, PAL mentors can assist first years in the following ways:

- Help them make sense of the subject discipline culture.
- Provide a friendly and safe space to discuss assignments and understand what is expected.
- Create opportunities to make friends within and across year groups.
- Understand what to expect from their course at level 5 and 6.
- Help them feel confident about moving on to the next year.
- Direct them to appropriate help and guidance if they are thinking about withdrawing from their studies or wish to change course.
- Take their studies further, and benefit from an enhanced student experience, one that nurtures their ambitions and aspirations.

PAL does not replace any form of interaction between staff and students but instead provides additional opportunity for all students to interact with their peers within the context of their discipline whether that be in the form of collaborative study groups or one-to-one, and with the option of attending face-to-face drop-ins or participating remotely via Teams. PAL supports the student experience both academically and socially, providing an opportunity for peer interaction and fostering a greater sense of community. It is aimed at benefiting all students, regardless of academic competency.

PAL sessions are intended to promote collaborative learning through exploratory discussion and provide an opportunity for mentors to share their experiences. Discussions are based on existing course materials – information that has already been received by the attendees or that which is in recommended texts. In this way, it helps to ensure that PAL mentors are not engaged in the delivery or teaching of new material. When discussing course work with first year students, PAL mentors facilitate discussion by encouraging

students to compare notes, clarify what they read and hear, analyse, criticise, question and seek verification of ideas. In addition to a focus on consolidation of subject knowledge, study and learning strategies are integrated in sessions. Mentors may offer help with skills such as revision and exam techniques or note-taking, but do not give specific answers to questions on course content.

AIMS OF THE MENTOR TRAINING

The purpose of the PAL training is to clarify the aims and nature of PAL at UWSTD and equip you with relevant facilitation and people skills. This is achieved through demonstration, participation, teamwork and opportunities to lead different types of learning activities. The supervisors model good interpersonal and facilitation skills during the sessions to help you establish a friendly but professional atmosphere at your PAL session

On completion of the training, you will hopefully feel confident setting up and managing your PAL activity in collaboration with your co-mentors; have a good understanding of the distinction between teaching and facilitating; understand how to signpost students to other services; and deal with challenging situations should occur.

Training also provides an opportunity for your PAL supervisor to work with you. By getting to know you and your style of working, supervisors can better support and enable the mentor teams to develop their skills. You will also meet your academic lead and spend time in your PAL subject team planning your PAL session. Your development as a PAL mentor continues throughout the year through session observations, debriefs and further training opportunities.

The European Centre for SI-PASS is based at Lund University, Sweden (<https://www.si-PAL.lu.se/en/frontpage>). Each year a National mentor/leader Conference is organised bringing together mentors from across the UK to share experiences, learn together and develop skills that will benefit mentors in delivering PAL and in their future careers.

REFLECTIONS ON PAL AS A PARTICIPANT

1. What is your own experience of PAL?
2. How did the PAL mentors structure/organise sessions?
3. How did your PAL mentors get students to participate?
4. What benefits did you gain from attending PAL?
5. What improvements would you like to see made to the PAL sessions?

Taken from University of Bath's PAL mentor training manual 2016-17

PRINCIPLES OF PAL

PAL in the UK is based upon the following principles:

Principle	Individual rank	Pair rank	Group rank
1. PAL is a methodology for learner support			
2. PAL is about creating a sense of belonging in first years			
3. PAL develops interpersonal skills, including listening skills			
4. PAL is confidential			
5. PAL is voluntary			
6. PAL is non-remedial			
7. PAL is participative			
8. PAL is content based and process orientated			
9. PAL encourages collaborative learning, rather than competitive learning			
10. PAL benefits all students regardless of current academic competency			
11. PAL gives privacy to practice the subject, make mistakes and build up confidence			
12. PAL gives opportunity to increase academic performance			
13. PAL is pro-active, not reactive			
14. PAL targets high risk courses, not high-risk students			
15. PAL decreases drop-out rates and aids retention			
16. PAL encourages learner autonomy			
17. PAL does not create dependency			
18. PAL integrates effective learning strategies with course content			
19. PAL enables a clear view of course expectations			
20. PAL works in the language of the discipline			
21. PAL challenges the barrier between year groups			

BENEFITS OF PAL

PAL sessions are student-facilitated and delivered in a supportive environment rather than offering a remedial programme or a quick fix strategy. They are:

- offered to all enrolled students on targeted programmes of study
- regularly scheduled
- pro-active and participatory
- delivered out-of-class
- voluntary
- only facilitated by trained and supervised PAL mentors
- only implemented by trained PAL Supervisors
- designed to work with the academic staff, not without or against
- sessions in which course content and academic skills are integrated.
- run by mentors who have demonstrated competence in this or a comparable programme of study

Benefits of PAL for mentors

- Mentors receive high quality PAL training
- Opportunities for personal and professional development
- Fantastic experience for CV
- Development of professional skills, such as communication, negotiation, and mentorship
- Consolidation of subject knowledge through the reiteration and facilitation of the course content
- Encourages ownership of learning
- Increased confidence and interpersonal skills
- Mentors receive recognition through certificates and non-monetary rewards
- They are rewarded through social events, incentives and enhanced relationships with academic staff and university key stakeholders

Benefits for employers

- Proactive graduates who demonstrate commitment
- Graduates with deeper knowledge of the subject area
- Graduates with enhanced employability and interpersonal skills

Benefits of PAL for students

- Provides opportunities for students to become more engaged in their course
- Encourages a greater sense of belonging to the institution
- Easier transition into University life
- Better understanding of course material
- Increased confidence
- Increased interpersonal skills
- Better grades
- Developing effective study skills and learning techniques

- Students as partners in their learning experience
- Can enhance the student experience
- Can increase grades
- Can reduce student drop-out
- Develops a community within a discipline
- Provides a non-assessed environment
- Is available to ALL students within the targeted programmes
- Is designed to support tutorials
- Provides privacy to practise the subject, make mistakes and build up confidence
- Opportunity to increase academic performance
- Is confidential
- Helps new students settle into university life by providing social, logistical and pastoral elements
- Is facilitated by other students acting as mentors
- Is content-based and process-oriented
- Encourages and promotes a happy environment
- Provides opportunities to make friends
- Encourages autonomous and deep learning

Benefits for Academic Staff and the wider University

- Opens a channel through which communication and feedback between teaching staff and students can occur
- Develops a community within a discipline
- Is designed to support tutorials
- Allows an academic to become involved in a holistic approach to study
- Challenges and breaks down the barriers between year groups
- Promotes engagement
- Can improve retention
- Can raise students' grades
- Utilises the language of the discipline
- Provides the opportunity to pick up on problems as they arise rather than at the end of the module
- Can result in fewer enquiries from students
- Encourages learner autonomy
- Encourages and promotes a happy environment

1. List at least 3 benefits for students who attend peer learning sessions such as PAL.

2. List at least 3 benefits for students who run the sessions.

3. List at least 2 benefits for the academic staff and the wider university.

4. What do you think are the differences between peer assisted learning mentors, student ambassadors, programme reps, wellbeing mentors and counsellors?

5. What do you think are the unique aspects of the PAL mentor role?

MENTOR ROLES AND BOUNDARIES

PAL Mentors:

- Deliver weekly PAL sessions to first year students from the same programme of studies either face to face or via Teams
- Commit *a maximum* of two hours per week to their PAL activity including the debrief sessions.
- Complete the mandatory training.
- Facilitate discussions with students around their course work helping them think more deeply about their subject area through use of questions, problem solving and debate.
- Demonstrate good study skills and learning strategies to mentees.
- Do not proof-read students work or tell them what to write.
- Are approachable, friendly and helpful.
- Attend debrief sessions on a regular basis.
- Maintain good communication with their PAL mentor team, including planning and delivering sessions together as well as communicating issues such as absences etc.
- Promote the scheme to 1st year students with the help of the supervisor and academic lead.
- Signpost attendees to other support and wellbeing services as required.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding student disclosures.
- Refer concerns about other students' wellbeing to the Wellbeing team asap.
- Discourage students from attending PAL as a substitute for lectures or seminars.
- Complete the electronic attendance registers during every session.
- Have the option to attend further training sessions throughout the year.
- Keep their mentor colleagues and supervisor informed if they make PAL sessions.
- Are free to withdraw from the scheme at any time or take time out. They should contact their supervisor asap to discuss.
- Complete an electronic skills evaluation form three times per year to track their skills development.
- Promote a positive image of the University and maintain a professional attitude at all times

Thinking about the duties of a PAL mentor and the boundaries of the role outlined above, answer the following questions:

What do you hope to get out of the training?

Are there aspects of the role that might challenge you?
What are they?

Which aspects are you looking forward to?

What questions do you have?

SIGNPOSTING

Either in the large group or in pairs, discuss your recommendations on where to refer students who report the following difficulties. Which of these scenarios is a safeguarding issue that should be shared immediately via the wellbeing referral forms:

[Cause for Concern Form](#)

[Wellbeing Support Request Form](#)

Where would you refer students with following concerns?

1. "Someone broke into my car and stole my CDs."
2. "English is my second language and I'm having difficulties following my lectures."
3. "I want to get involved in volunteering, but I don't know how to do it."
4. "My dad died recently and I've missed lots of lectures."
5. "I am dyslexic."
6. "I would like to find out if there are other students here who are also from my country."
7. "I'm having trouble with money and I'm worried I won't be able to afford my rent."
8. "I don't really get on with anyone in my halls and haven't met many people on my course who have anything in common with me."
9. "I'm not really enjoying my degree and I am considering dropping out."
10. "I played hockey at school... how do I find out about the University team?"
11. "I'm really enjoying my degree and am considering a career in the same field but would like to get some more experience."
12. "I am struggling to balance my work and am finding revision very stressful."
13. "My flat mates are really inconsiderate and I'm finding it hard to adjust to living in halls."
14. "I know I've failed my current module and I'm worried about being kicked off my course. I feel desperate." Student breaks down in tears.
15. One of your attendees keeps messaging you with questions.
16. "I am worried about a friend of mine. He's really depressed and keeps saying he wants to end it all."

GROUND RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Managing your sessions effectively means being clear about your role and your expectations of the students attending.

What do you think would be helpful ground rules for our training days?

How will you establish ground rules for your sessions?

TEACHING AND FACILITATION

While many aspects of facilitation and teaching overlap, there are certain crucial distinctions that need to be made. The PAL mentor role does not involve teaching in the sense of delivering new material to participants – this is strictly the domain of the lecturer. Therefore, the boundaries of the role need to be understood in order to both safeguard the mentors and participants. The facilitation role has many advantages over a didactic teaching approach, and understanding and learning how to adopt a facilitatory role has many positive applications both in educational, training and workplace settings.

'Facilitation:

- 1. the process of making something possible or easier;*
- 2. the act of helping other people to deal with a process or reach an agreement or solution without getting directly involved in the process, discussion, etc. yourself.'*

Definition from Cambridge Dictionary Online (2022)

Off the top of your head, have a go at answering these questions:

Teaching	Facilitation
• What is teaching? • How is it relevant to PAL? • What are the key characteristics? • What are the benefits of teaching? • What skills does a teacher need?	• What is facilitation? • How is it relevant to PAL? • What are the key characteristics? • What are the benefits of facilitation? • What skills does a facilitator need?

Taken from University of Bath PAL Mentor Training Manual 2016-17

To begin thinking about the differences between facilitation and teaching, categorise the following statements (use a cross to indicate your preference):

Statement:	Teaching?	Facilitation?
This role is creative, operating through learner participation and small group work.		
This person typically uses a lecture format or provides written feedback.		
A power hierarchy exists between this person and the learner.		
In this role, information is usually shared one way.		
This person helps learners draw upon and share their own knowledge, experiences and understanding.		
This person positions themselves as a learner alongside the student.		
This person is not expected to have deep expertise in the subject area.		
This individual is an expert who is expected to have substantial knowledge.		
This person has a good knowledge of learning processes.		
This role emphasises the use of space and processes as much as content.		

Taken from University of Bath PAL Leader Training Manual 2016-17

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHING AND FACILITATION

	Teaching	Facilitation
Knowledge	The teacher is an expert and is expected to have substantial knowledge.	No expert knowledge of the content is expected. Facilitators have good knowledge of learning processes.
Delivery	Lecture format or through written materials.	Creative, operating through participatory small group work. Use of space and processes.
Interaction	Typically one way – lecturer sharing information with student	Interaction is between participants, drawing upon experiences, knowledge and own understanding.
Relationship	A power hierarchy exists between teacher and student	Facilitators position themselves as learners with the students

Taken from University of Bath PAL Mentor Training Manual 2016-17

For more information about the differences between teaching and facilitation click on the following link: [Enhancing understanding through Teaching and Facilitation | Mapping Complex Information. Theory and Practice \(sheilapontis.com\)](https://sheilapontis.com/enhancing-understanding-through-teaching-and-facilitation-mapping-complex-information-theory-and-practice)

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Central to the facilitation role are communication skills. Communicating with others is a skill that tends to come with practice and since we are all different, assessing where we are with our own skills is important. Complete the following 'self-test' to establish your perception of your own communication skills:

Aspect of Communication	How Expert are you? (Aware 1? Competent 2? Expert 3?)	How frequently do you use these? (At least: every day? Weekly? Monthly?)
Understand and apply good interpersonal communication and active listening		
Establish rapport with those you come into contact with		
Awareness of non-verbal body language		
Give constructive feedback		
Recognise and manage conflict		
Challenging others' beliefs and views constructively		
Use interpersonal skills such as: influencing, assertiveness, facilitation		
Know when to maintain confidentiality and when to pass on information		
Recognise when others require help		
Write a few sentences in the adjoining box about what aspect of communication you feel you need to work on most and what aspects you feel confident about.		

Table amended from Chambers, R. et al, 2004.

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Hearing is the response to a sound and is passive.

Listening is paying careful attention to what someone is saying and is active.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, one of the most important of these communication skills is active listening. While we might associate the teaching role with lecturing and speaking a lot, both good teachers and facilitators listen carefully to what learners have to say and use questions to help draw out the students' knowledge and develop their ideas. Indeed, a good facilitator may talk much less than the participants in the group. Central to this role are listening skills, using questions appropriately to draw out pre-existing knowledge within participants and helping them to think critically and creatively about the subject area they are exploring.

As a PAL mentor you will be required to listen to the students you are working with for the relationship to work effectively. Listening is a skill we take for granted in everyday life, but active listening is a key part of facilitation; it takes concentration, energy and thought. It involves listening actively to the words a person says and the non-verbal communication they may express. Read the following section from the PASS Handbook and complete the task at the end.

TIP: Make sure when you listen you are empathetic. Students will not just ask academic questions but may also want to talk about personal issues. You may then need to refer or direct them to another service.

Things to remember:

1. Don't mistake not talking for listening
2. Don't pretend to listen; don't fake it
3. Try not to interrupt needlessly
4. Try not to pass judgement too quickly
5. Avoid turning arguing into an 'ego trip'
6. Avoid asking too many questions
7. Don't say 'I know how you feel' because you won't always know
8. Try not to overreact to emotional words
9. Try not to give advice

All these factors contribute towards developing and engaging active listening skills, which is a vital part of your PASS leader role. Active listening can be learned and practiced. The acronym **LISTEN** below may help:

Look: eye contact (but don't stare and be aware that some people find eye contact uncomfortable)

Interest: stay focused

Stay on track: stick to their agenda

Test your understanding: clarify & reflect

Empathise and Encourage

Neutralise your prejudices

Adapted from Bournemouth University PAL Guide 2016-17

Click on the link to listen to a YouTube video about listening skills below:

[How To Improve Your Listening Skills - YouTube](#)

Having now listened to this video, turn to your partner and use the skills described in the video to listen to that person without interrupting for 5 minutes. If that was easy, see if you can stretch to 10 minutes. This doesn't mean you have to be completely silent all the way through; you can nod, smile, say a word or make a short comment that shows you have listened to them, or even ask a short question to encourage them to tell you more. What you should avoid is changing the subject or jumping in with your opinions and analysis. Then swop roles with your partner and repeat the exercise.

Once you have both tried this exercise, write a short reflection on what you noticed, below. We have included some questions to help you.

Reflection on listening exercise...

How did you feel while the other person was talking?

To what extent were you able to keep focus on what the person was saying?

How aware were you of body language, yours and the other person's, and tone of voice?

Did the other person comment on how you were listening?

To what extent did listening affect how you felt towards the person?

OPEN AND CLOSED QUESTIONS

As already stated, appropriate use of questions is a central plank of your mentor skill-set. We often think of questions being directed to the teacher/lecturer because we tend to see imparting knowledge as their role. Yet we often know more than we realise about a subject and articulating and sharing what we do know is a great way to start developing that knowledge further. This is the basic approach of academic peer mentoring programmes such as PAL.

Find out how much you already know about closed and open questions (also known as convergent and divergent questions) by completing the empty sections in the box below. If you feel you don't know anything, try educated guessing before seeking out more information.

	Closed Questions	Open Questions
Give a brief description or definition.		
List the advantages of each.		
List the disadvantages of each		
Give at least two examples of each type of question.		

Now read the extract on open and closed questions on pages 42-43 from the book *Small Group Teaching* written by Exley and Dennick (2004). You will find the article in the documents and resources Tile 5 on the PAL Mentor Training Moodle page. You can then add more to your answers in the box above.

OPEN QUESTIONS: AN INVITATION TO TALK

Open questions allow the other person to elaborate on information of their choice. A closed question, on the other hand, emphasises content and can often be answered in a few words or with a yes or no response. Open questions are preferred to stimulate conversation as they allow the person to whom you are listening to 'lead' the conversation. For instance, 'Did you understand the main points of the first lecture on International Development?' is a closed question. An open equivalent might be 'Could you explain to me what you thought the most important features of the lecture were?' How, where, why, what, who, which, can you etc. are all useful ways of starting an open question.

USING QUESTIONS IN PRACTICE

Thinking about your course subject area:

1. What specific questions might foundation or first year students want to ask of PAL mentors in your course programme (think back to your own first year and the questions you wanted to ask, to help you come up with examples)? List 2-3 examples

1.
2.
3.

2. In what ways do you think you might be able to assist those students in your role as a mentor if students were to ask you those sorts of questions? How might you respond to help them find their own answers?

--

3. What sorts of questions do you think would be most helpful to encourage discussion and problem solving for your subject area? Give examples.

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EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

Knowing which types of questions to use in different situations will help to facilitate effective group discussion. Some question types and their uses are outlined below.

WAIT-TIME

We've begun to look at your use of questions as a PAL mentor, but what about the flipside of this, the responses?

Have a look at this video from Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986): ["Anyone, anyone" teacher from Ferris Bueller's Day Off - YouTube](#).

Take a moment to think about the teacher's approach to asking questions in this clip. Why didn't the students respond to his questions?

A key aspect of effective questioning is **Wait-Time** which refers to the period of time someone needs to think, process information and come up with an answer. One of the most daunting things a facilitator or teacher can face after asking a question is silence. They may be tempted to fill the silence by answering their own question, particularly if they are nervous.

However, don't be afraid of that silence! A good rule of thumb after asking a question is to count to 5 (at least) in your head before re-phrasing or asking the question again - 10 seconds is even better. But try not to stare at people while you are waiting for a response; instead, you could have a look round the room, look at your notes or take a sip of a drink during this time (try to make it look natural!).

TIP - Avoid sounding too critical. Be aware of your tone of voice and how it sounds. Use your body language to show you are curious and confident.

There are two types of wait-time:

- The time the mentor waits after a question
- The time the mentor waits after a response

Extensive research has demonstrated that the quality and quantity of students' verbal responses increases significantly if teachers and facilitators regularly use at least three seconds of wait-time (Ingram and Elliott 2016). Wait-time after a response seems to be even more significant than wait-time after a question. So, if you can resist the natural temptation to jump in too quickly to answer or rephrase, student learning improves. Increased wait-time probably allows the brain more opportunity to consolidate information and deeper processing of information.

Increased wait-time results in:

- More student answers and more accurate answers.
- Answers are more elaborate, reasoned and supported
- Students listen to each other more
- More speculative responses
- More questions and participation from students

You may worry about what to do if no-one responds. After waiting 5-10 seconds with no responses, you could try one of the following:

- Repeat the question
- Rephrase the question
- Simplify the question
- Ask a student to attempt to rephrase the question
- Break down the question into component parts
- Make the question more specific
- Ask students what it is about the question that they don't understand

After each alternative, wait 5-10 seconds.

Now watch the video produced by Manchester Met Uni about Wait-Time for their PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) Leaders.

[PAL Leader Techniques - Wait time - mmutube](#)

List as many advantages to the PAL participants as you can find or think of for a leader waiting after they have asked a question.	List as many advantages to the PAL participants as you can find or think of for the leader waiting after a response has been given by a student.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

The learning strategies and activities that PAL mentors use are designed to promote student-to-student interactions. However, it is important not to assume that students are gaining understanding just because they are interacting with you or each other. Instead, mentors need to check for understanding by asking the students to confirm what they have learnt.

If you ask a closed question like, 'Do you understand?' you are likely to just get a yes or no answer. This is not very effective because students are sometimes uncomfortable admitting if they don't understand something. Instead try to ask open-ended questions that require students to think and demonstrate their understanding.

It is important for students to be able to explain concepts and ideas in their own words so that the mentor knows that students have understood before moving on.

Methods to check for understanding

- Maintain a relaxed level of eye contact with students during the session (but don't stare!). This can help you see when a student is becoming confused.
- Ask them to summarise a concept that has been covered. If they struggle, ask other students to help them.
- Ask for a volunteer to write the main points of discussion on the board.
- Ask a question that requires understanding to answer it correctly
- Ask students to rephrase the question that you originally asked, or a summary that another student gave.
- Ask for real life examples or applications of a concept.
- Ask for a similar problem, metaphor or analogy.

There will be times when students will expect you to provide direct answers to their questions and there may be situations when it is appropriate for you to answer questions. However, in general, students should be discouraged from taking the easy option of being told what they want to know. If the mentor simply answers all the questions, then PAL sessions will quickly become reduced to a question-and-answer session with the mentor re-teaching course material. If the level of direct questioning becomes a problem, it may be worth reminding students that a key objective of PAL sessions is for students to discuss course material, and that your job is to help them do this.

The video below sets out approaches for checking for understanding and also provides a nice overview of Bloom's Taxonomy which is covered later on in this handbook.

[PAL Leader Techniques - Checking for Understanding - mmutube](#)

REDIRECTING QUESTIONS

Redirecting questions involves the mentor resisting answering a question and posing another question to redirect it back to the group. This technique is based on the assumption that we all learn better when we have to explain something to someone else.

Common examples include:

- Does anyone know the answer to that question?
- Can anyone find that answer in their notes?
- What do you think about that?
- Can you be more specific?
- Are you sure?
- Can you give us an example?
- What do you mean by that?
- Can anybody help X answer that question?
- What was said in the lecture about this?
- What information would you need to answer that?
- Let's try and work that out together

More academically challenging questions:

- What are we trying to find out here?
- What do you need to do next?
- Can you suggest another way to think about this?
- Could anyone add something to this?
- What kind of exam question might come from that lecture?
- What is it? (i.e. definition)
- What is its purpose?
- When would you use it?
- When have you done something like this before?
- Would you like to add something to this answer?

Some of the above material has been adapted from *Group Facilitation Skills for Student Leaders* (1998) by J.E. Brooks-Harris & K.G. Shollenberger. University of Hawaii website, <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~jharris/facilitation.htm> and from materials at www.peerlearning.ac.uk

INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

To make it easier for students to admit they are having difficulty the facilitator should think about open questions that could be used to promote discussion. The closed question, 'Is everything OK?' prompts the answer 'Yes.' So try the open question, 'What can I do to help?'

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

This section offers a general overview of the types of questions you might find useful to ask of students to encourage learning and communication within the group. Please read through and then complete the task at the end.

An essential part of any facilitation activity, including PASS, is the appropriate use of questions. The key to encouraging discussion is to ask participant students questions that make **them** do the thinking and talking – and then actively listen to their responses. Questions test the students' knowledge, clarify information, and stimulate expression of ideas and arguments. However, during your early sessions, students may expect you to provide answers to their questions and there are times when it is appropriate to do this, especially in matters that relate to settling into University etc.

Effective communication is a blend of key skills – listening, observing, asking open and closed questions, checking understanding, clarifying and responding. Open questions are the most effective when phrased in a non-judgmental way, intended to help the listener reflect and think before responding. Closed questions, where the answer is simply yes or no, also have an important role to play in clarifying and checking understanding, e.g. 'What I think I heard you say is...' (example of reflecting back). 'Is that correct?' (closed question).

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ENCOURAGING AND PROBING QUESTIONS

These kinds of open questions will get a discussion going, help students think more critically, and encourage them to process information beyond the superficial level of delivering the 'right' answer. Students will interact with their course material by clarifying it, putting it in their own words, and relating it to other knowledge

Examples:

- What makes you think that?
- Why do you think that?
- Can you tell me how you arrived at that answer?
- What makes you think theories about... explain the role of...?
- What had you planned to do next?
- What do you think would happen if...?
- Do you think that will work?
- Can you suggest another way to think about this?
- When have you done something like this before?

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

Clarification questions are used when a student's answer is vague or unclear. The mentor asks the student for meaning or more information. Often the simple process of telling you about the problem will make it clear where they are going wrong. It's important to listen carefully and check your own understanding

Examples:

- What do you mean by...?
- Could you explain that in a little more detail?
- Can you be a bit clearer about that?
- How would you explain that in an essay or exam?
- Anything else you would like to add?
- Can you be more specific?
- In what way?
- You used the word 'dialogic' there. What do you mean by that?
- Could you explain the idea of functional knowledge domains in some more detail?
- In what way would you use Java to display this information?
- Are you saying that...?

CRITICAL AWARENESS QUESTIONS

These questions are used when the mentor suspects the student does not fully understand or wants the student to reflect more deeply on an answer.

Examples:

- What are you assuming here?
- Could you give an example of that?
- Do you have any evidence to support that?
- How could you investigate the truth of that?
- How would you do that?
- Are you sure?
- What do we need to know in order to solve the problem?
- How might someone argue against that point?
- What makes you think that?
- How have you come to that conclusion?
- Can you give an example of how X works?
- Are you sure ... is relevant in this instance? Why? How might someone argue against that point?
- What makes you think X is a good strategy?

REFOCUSING QUESTIONS

Another way to clarify student ideas is to use refocusing questions. These encourage the student to see a concept from another perspective by focusing on relationships.

Examples:

- How is that related to...?
- How does that tie into ...?
- How does that compare with ...?
- If that is true, then what would happen if ...?

SOCRATIC QUESTIONING

This type of questioning can be a useful tool to lead students to correct answers. This is where the PAL facilitator uses open questions to break down difficult concepts into small chunks of information that students can answer more easily. Instead of asking “How do we address this whole problem?”, ask first “What is the first thing we need to do to understand this?” It is much more effective to spend a session closely dissecting a lecture or exercise bit by bit than trying to answer the big question at the start.

SOCRATIC QUESTION EXAMPLES

Socratic Question Type	Examples
Clarification questions	• What do you mean by...? • Could you put that another way? • What do you think is the main issue? • Could you give us an example? • Could you expand upon that point further?
Questions about an initial question or issue	• Why is this question important? • Is this question easy or difficult to answer? • Why do you think that? • What assumptions can we make based on this question? • Does this question lead to other important issues and questions?
Assumption questions	• Why would someone make this assumption? • What could we assume instead? • You seem to be assuming_____. • Do I understand you correctly?
Reason and evidence questions	• What would be an example? • Why do you think this is true? • What other information do we need? • Could you explain your reason to us? • How did you come to that conclusion? • Is there reason to doubt that evidence?
Origin or source questions	• Have you always felt this way? • Has your opinion been influenced by something or someone? • Where did you get that idea? • What caused you to feel that way?
Implication and consequence questions	• What effect would that have? • Could that really happen or probably happen? • What is an alternative? • What are you implying by that? • If that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
Viewpoint questions	• How would other groups of people respond this question? Why? • How could you answer the objection that _____ would make? • What might someone who believed _____ think? • What is an alternative? • How are _____ and _____'s ideas alike? Different?

Handout compiled by Thomas Jacques-Butterworth and Jasmine Jacques-Butterworth 2016

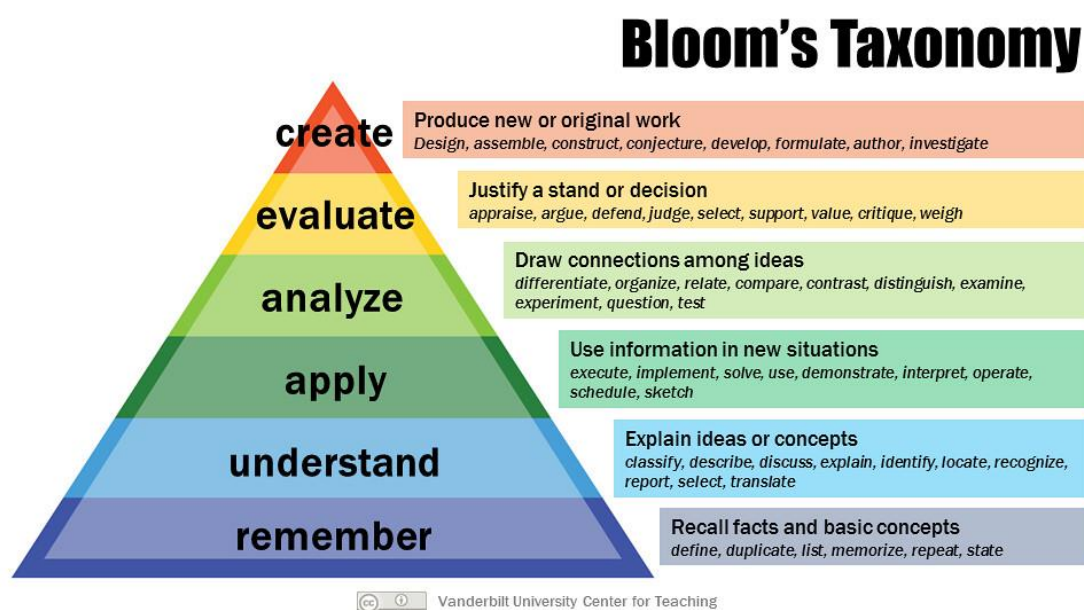
Don't worry too much about whether you are asking the perfect questions. Theory is all very well, but what is more important is that you encourage lively and helpful discussion.

Some of the above has been adapted from Group Facilitation Skills for Student Mentors (1998) by J.E. Brooks-Harris & K.G. Shollenberger. University of Hawaii website, <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~jharris/facilitation.htm> and from materials at www.peerlearning.ac.uk

LEARNING APPROACHES AND STYLES

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

In 1956, a group of educators led by Benjamin Bloom created a taxonomy (a method of categorising concepts or ideas in a hierarchy) to help educationists think about the level of abstraction or intellectual challenge presented by a question. Bloom's taxonomy is still considered to be a fundamental tool in all forms of education today and it provides a useful structure for categorising types of questions. Below is a visual representation of a widely accepted update of Bloom's taxonomy by Anders and Krathwohl (2001), complete with key words that might be used in questions from each category:



Of course, complex models such as these are very much open to critique. We offer a simplified version of it as part of the PAL Mentor training as a tool to help you think about how you can use questions in your PAL sessions.

You can find out more by watching this video:

[Bloom's Taxonomy In 5 Minutes](#) | [Bloom's Taxonomy Explained](#) | [What Is Bloom's Taxonomy?](#) | [Simplilearn - YouTube](#).

Bloom's taxonomy helps to categorise questions that commonly occur in educational settings. The taxonomy provides a useful structure to help us think about the level of abstraction or intellectual challenge presented by a question or a task.

Competence	Skills Demonstrated
1. Knowledge	• observation and recall of information • knowledge of dates, events, places, major ideas • mastery of subject matter • Question Cues: list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
2. Comprehension	• understanding information • grasp meaning • translate knowledge into new contexts • interpret facts, compare, contrast • order, group, infer causes • predict consequences • Question Cues: summarise, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend
3. Application	• apply information • use methods, concepts, theories in new situations • solve problems using required skills or knowledge • Questions Cues: apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover
4. Analysis	• seeing patterns and organisation of parts • recognition of hidden meanings • identification of components • Question Cues: analyse, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer
5. Synthesis	• use old ideas to create new ones • generalise from given facts • relate knowledge from several areas • predict, draw conclusions • Question Cues: combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalise, rewrite
6. Evaluation	• compare and discriminate between ideas • assess value of theories, presentations • make choices based on reasoned argument • verify value of evidence • recognise subjectivity • Question Cues: assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarise

Once you are more experienced as a PAL mentor, you might like to consider ways of leading discussion according to levels of knowledge/understanding based on Bloom's Taxonomy. This can range from a basic factual memory (such as remembering names and dates) to critical awareness (such offering one's own opinions of theory based on an awareness of different arguments and evidence). One conception of the different levels of knowledge, together with question verbs, which might help access them, is given below.

Assessing knowledge (factual memory):

- define...repeat...recall...list...name...
- "Can you list the different methods of...?"

Assessing comprehension (basic understanding):

- restate...discuss...describe...explain...express...identify...locate...tell...
- "Can you explain why that is the case?"

Assessing application (applying understanding, using examples):

- interpret...apply...employ...use...demonstrate...illustrate...sketch...operate...
- "How would you apply this principle in a real life situation?"

Assessing analysis (critical awareness):

- distinguish...analyse...differentiate...appraise...calculate...experiment...test...
- compare...contrast...criticise...debate...examine...categorise...
- "What criticisms could you offer of this?"

Assessing synthesis (bringing ideas together):

- compose...design...formulate...construct
- "How would you design a programme/ experiment/ event of this nature?"

Assessing evaluation (applying own awareness to a situation):

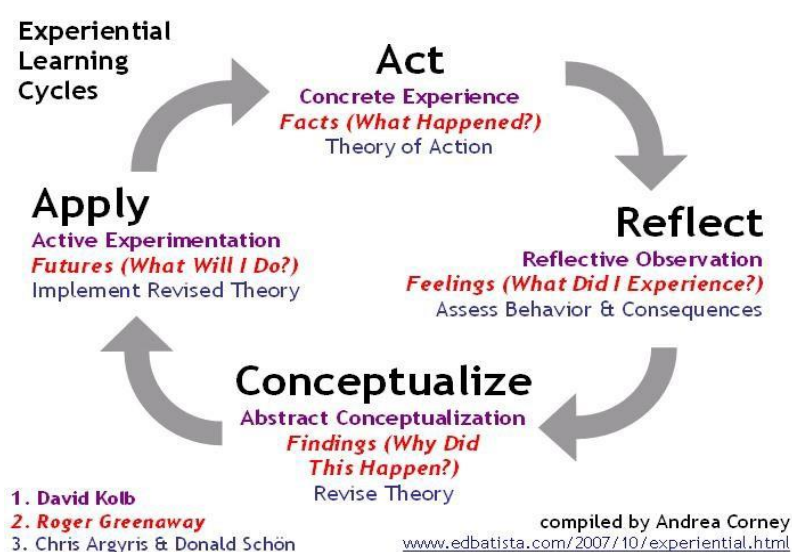
- judge...appraise...evaluate...revise...estimate...assess
- "How would you evaluate this as a theory/ approach?"

APPLYING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY TO YOUR SUBJECT AREA

Thinking about your subject area, choose two competencies from the left-hand column in Bloom's table (or the revised table if you prefer) that you think are the most important to your subject area and discuss why. If you feel that neither table captures some aspect of intellectual, emotional or creative intelligence essential for your subject area, make your own suggestions as to what sort of questions or activities might reflect this skill.

1. Top two competencies for your subject area:
2. Why are these competencies important to you?
3. Do you think Bloom was right to order the competencies as a hierarchy? Explain your answer to this question.
4. Are there any missing competencies in your opinion? What about emotional intelligence or interpersonal skills? Does Bloom's taxonomy capture these domains?

KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE



The Honey and Mumford Learning Style Questionnaire indicates what sort of learner you are based on Kolb's model. It can be found in the appendix at the back of this manual.

Learning Style	Attributes	Favoured Activities
Activist	Activists are those people who learn by doing. Activists need to get their hands dirty, to dive in with both feet first. They have an open-minded approach to learning, involving themselves fully and with bias to new experiences.	- Brainstorming - Problem solving - Group discussions - Competitions - Role-plays - Puzzles
Theorist	These learners like to understand the theory behind the actions. They need models, concepts and facts in order to engage with the learning process. They prefer to analyse and synthesize, drawing new information into a logical and systematic theory.	- Models - Statistics - Stories - Quotes - Background info
Pragmatist	These people need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. Abstract concepts and games are of limited use unless they can see a way to put the idea into action in their lives. They are experimenters who like to try out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they will work.	- Case studies - Problem solving - Discussion - Demonstrations
Reflector	These people learn by observing and thinking about what happened. They may avoid leaping in and prefer to watch from the sidelines, to stand back and view experiences from a number of different perspectives, collecting data and taking time to work towards appropriate conclusion.	- Paired discussions - Self-analysis - Questionnaires - Time-out - Observing activities - Feedback exercises - Coaching

DEEP, SURFACE AND STRATEGIC LEARNING

Research on student learning over the past 20 years has produced some impressive results in terms of what actually works. Where, previously, it was mainly focused around the activities of the teacher – the transmission model - it is increasingly recognised that what the student does is more important in determining what is learned.

This means a greater focus on participation, dialogue and interaction by students with course materials and with each other with the teacher as a facilitator of learning, intellectually critical, stimulating and challenging but within a learning context that emphasises support and mutual respect.

A picture of three salient approaches to learning exhibited by students has emerged: **Surface, Deep and Strategic.**

- In the **surface** approach, the student takes a PALive view of learning as one of memorising and reproducing this for assessment.
- Students using the **deep** approach have an active view of learning and are concerned with giving meaning to what they encounter.
- Those using a **strategic** approach are versatile in choosing whether to operate at a surface or deep level in order to succeed in the 'system'.

Characteristics of students in the three approaches to learning

Surface Approach	Deep Approach	Strategic Approach
• Intention to complete task requirements • Memorize information needed for assessments • Failure to distinguish principles from examples • Treat task as an external imposition • Focus on discrete elements without integration • Lack of reflection about purpose or strategies	• Intention to understand • Vigorous interaction with content • Relate new ideas to previous knowledge • Relate concepts to everyday experience • Relate evidence to conclusions • Examine the logic of the argument	• Intention to obtain highest possible grades • Organise time and distribute effort to greatest effect • Ensure conditions and materials for studying are appropriate • Use previous exam papers to predict questions • Be alert to cues about marking schemes

Taken from University of Bath PAL Mentor Training Manual 2016-17

THE VARK MODALITIES

The acronym VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/write, and Kinaesthetic sensory modalities that are used for learning information. Fleming and Mills (1992) suggested four modalities that seemed to reflect the experiences of students and teachers. Although there is some overlap between them, they are defined as follows:

Visual (V):

This preference includes the depiction of information in maps, spider diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, labelled diagrams, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices, that people use to represent what could have been presented in words. This mode could have been called Graphic (G) as that better explains what it covers. It does **NOT** include still pictures or photographs of reality, movies, videos or PowerPoint. It does include designs, whitespace, patterns, shapes and the different formats that are used to highlight and convey information. When a whiteboard is used to draw a diagram with meaningful symbols for the relationship between different things that will be helpful for those with a Visual preference. It must be more than mere words in boxes that would be helpful to those who have a Read/write preference.

Aural / Auditory (A):

This perceptual mode describes a preference for information that is *“heard or spoken.”* Learners who have this as their main preference report that they learn best from lectures, group discussion, radio, email, using mobile phones, speaking, web-chat and talking things through. Email is included here because; although it is text and could be included in the Read/write category (below), it is often written in chat-style with abbreviations, colloquial terms, slang and non-formal language. The Aural preference includes talking out loud as well as talking to oneself. Often people with this preference want to sort things out by speaking first, rather than sorting out their ideas and then speaking. They may say again what has already been said, or ask an obvious and previously answered question. They have need to say it themselves and they learn through saying it – their way.

Read/write (R):

This preference is for information displayed as words. Not surprisingly, many teachers and students have a strong preference for this mode. Being able to write well and read widely are attributes sought by employers of graduates. This preference emphasizes text-based input and output – reading and writing in all its forms but especially manuals, reports, essays and assignments. People who prefer this modality are often addicted to PowerPoint, the Internet, lists, diaries, dictionaries, thesauri, quotations and words, words, words... Note that most PowerPoint presentations and the Internet, GOOGLE and Wikipedia are essentially suited to those with this preference as there is seldom an auditory channel or a presentation that uses visual symbols.

Kinaesthetic (K):

By definition, this modality refers to the “perceptual preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real).” Although such an experience may invoke other modalities, the key is that people who prefer this mode are connected to reality, “either through concrete personal experiences, examples, practice or simulation” [See Fleming & Mills, 1992, pp. 140-141]. It includes demonstrations, simulations, videos and movies of “*real*” things, as well as case studies, practice and applications. The key is the reality or concrete nature of the example. If it can be grasped, held, tasted, or felt it will probably be included. People with this as a strong preference learn from the experience of doing something and they value their own background of experiences and less so, the experiences of others. It is possible to write or speak Kinaesthetically if the topic is strongly based in reality. An assignment that requires the details of who will do *what* and *when*, is suited to those with this preference, as is a case study or a working example of what is intended or proposed.

Taken from the official VARK website <http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON LEARNING STYLES

Have a go at one or some of the learning styles questionnaires and use this space to make notes about your preferred learning style.

To what extent do the questionnaires reflect your own perception of your learning style?

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the learning styles outlined?

Are you aware of any other learning styles models?

SMALL GROUP LEARNING

Small group learning (SGL) places less emphasis on the presence of a tutor or teacher and more importance on collaborative learning through facilitation approaches, with discussion, sharing knowledge and problem solving at the heart of SGL. Rather than simply focusing on the transmission of knowledge, there are two core aspects to SGL, content and process. Process includes communication skills that are important for employment and professional development such as presenting, listening, responding appropriately, skillful use of questioning, reflection, and team-work. In contrast, the content aspect is concerned with deep learning and includes problem solving, diagnosing, theorising, evaluating evidence, analysing/synthesising material, formulating an argument, clarifying, understanding and becoming familiar with the rules of the discipline.

We consider the ideal size for small group work to be around four to six participants, a size that enables most participants to contribute comfortably. Any smaller than four and students can feel exposed and pressured and the quality of discussion can weaken. Much larger than six and the familiar pattern of more confident students dominating and quieter students withdrawing will begin to emerge. As PAL mentors you are taught a number of techniques to encourage everyone to contribute in a variety of ways, not just verbally. Your training in facilitation skills and small group work provides you with an extensive toolkit of participatory approaches which can deepen small group discussions. Participatory approaches also present opportunities for participants to engage in informal chats about areas of the module they are concerned about, or to ask those questions they feel unable to ask their lecturers. Mentors can help build participants' confidence, empathise with the difficulties they might experience with certain aspects of the module, and encourage them to problem solve.

But small group work is not just about constant activity and lots of talking. It is important to be aware that some students can find prolonged group interaction highly stressful for a variety of reasons including autism, social anxiety and simply being more introverted, thus there is a need to balance high levels of interaction with time for quiet reflection and some individual tasks. For example, in 'think, pair, share' a question is proposed to the larger group to be considered on an individual basis in the first instance with time to think alone (quietly) and jot down ideas. Students are then asked to pair up with another student to discuss and develop their ideas further. Finally, the pairs join other pairs to make up a group of approximately 6 people. At this point the task may be extended in some way by the mentors, and the groups may be asked to prepare a presentation of their ideas, findings or analysis to the whole group. The exercise allows participants to build up to a larger group task more gradually with individual and pair time to work out their own ideas in a non-pressuring way.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity	Type	Description
Summarise Lecture	Big picture	Get the group to choose a lecture they have attended this week and produce a summary. Encourage them to do this without looking at their notes but allow them to look if they are struggling.
Identify Big Ideas	Big Picture	Ask each student to share what s/he thought was the most important concept, idea or new information they learned during a lecture, seminar or PAL session. 'If you would only take one thing from the information present what would it be?'
Predict Questions	Big Picture	Put the students into groups of two or three and give them the task of writing a question for a specific topic. Ask the students to write their question on the board or flipchart on the wall and invite everyone to discuss each question. (Would your lecturer ask this question?, what is the answer? etc.)
Divide and Conquer	Problem Solving	This strategy is designed for difficult reading assignments. The assignment should be divided up into sections and each student (or group) is given a section to read and summarise. After they have all read the material, each student should read their summary out loud. Encourage students to ask questions and be prepared to help with things they have missed. Lastly, discuss the article as a whole.
Note Review	Study Skills	Students take turns reading a section of their lecture notes. Encourage other students to help with details missed or questions about the topic. Give students time to add information to their notes in between turns. Follow up with a short discussion of note-taking strategies that they find useful. Encourage them to include 'Questions for PAL' in their notes.
Outline Text Chapter	Study Skills	Students work in groups of 2-4 to make an outline using the headings from an important chapter from a textbook. Be sure to point out that the size and placement of the headings are important for determining the main ideas and supporting details. After you have this 'skeleton' ask them to read to determine the important points under each heading. If they have trouble determining the important points, have them turn the headings into questions and read to find the answers. Get groups to compare their findings.

Note Cards	Study Skills	Note cards can be used for vocabulary, formulas, concepts, questions etc. Take a stack of cards to the session and have the students construct note cards. Be sure to show them how to make them and how to use them. Write the cue or question on one side of the card and the definition, description or answer on the other side. Note cards are portable and can be used as a quick review before tests and exams.
Learning Cells	Study Skills	This approach encourages students to think about content, generate thought-provoking questions and check for understanding. Students develop a list of questions and answers over course material and then get into pairs. A asks the first question and B answers. A offers corrections, clarification etc. B asks next question and A answers. The process continues until all the questions are answered Encourage students to ask more open-ended questions and vary the types of questions.
Mark the Textbook	Study Skills	In pairs ask students to jot down guidelines for how they currently mark their textbooks. In a large group discuss the following specific to your course: • Why read the chapter? • What are your goals reading the chapter? • Why mark the text? • What do you do with your markings? Pick a chapter from a textbook and have them read a few pages and apply the suggestions. Have the students compare their markings.
Taboo	Recall and Review	This can be very useful before an exam. Prepare note cards with vocabulary or identification words and one additional related word or term. At the session ask the students to divide into groups and split the notecards amongst the groups. One person must explain the vocabulary term to the other group members without using any of the words written on the note card. The group must then guess the vocabulary word based on the student's explanation. Each student should take turns explaining. After all the words have been guessed the groups should switch cards. You might ask the groups to add additional 'taboo' words to the cards to make the game more challenging. You could join the groups sporadically and play along.
Memory	Recall and Review	This works really well as a session opener. Prepare 12 -24 note cards. Half of the note cards should have vocabulary terms and the other half should have corresponding definitions. The PAL mentor should shuffle the cards and place them face down. Students turn over 2 cards at a time until a match is found. Once a match is found have the student remove that pair of cards and allow another student to take a turn.

3:2:1	Recall and Review	Also useful before an exam. Have each student come up with 3 topics they know well enough to teach, 2 topics they do not understand and need further assistance with and 1 possible test question. Then have each student write their 3:2:1 topics on the board. Most of the time topics will overlap allowing students to 'teach' each other where they need additional assistance. Follow up with discussion of the possible test questions.
Write a Practice Quiz	Recall and Review	Divide students into two or more groups. Each group should write a practice quiz for another group including answers on a separate sheet. Groups can exchange quizzes and complete them then compare their answers. Allow discussion time for any areas that are unclear.
One-Minute Paper	Recall and Review	This is intended to help students realise what they know and don't know. The group agree a topic and then the mentor asks the students to write on that topic. It is not intended to be a piece of polished writing but about putting their thoughts on paper in their own words. Each student then shares their response with the group. The mentor may then encourage discussion about the differences and similarities between students' ideas.
K.W.L.	Organisational	Helps students to activate prior knowledge and link to new information to make connections with what is already known. Once the agenda has been set each participant should title 3 columns: What I Know, What I Want to Know and What I Learned. Students complete the first two columns at the start of the session. At the end of the session they go back and review the two columns, make any corrections, note any questions that are unanswered and complete the third column.
Timeline	Organisational	This technique utilises visual representation to improve the processing of material. Begin with a horizontal line that represents the continuum of time. Important events are inserted relevant to each other, creating points on the line. Points should be marked with relevant facts such as date, brief description of the date and significant person(s) and/or events.
Double Timeline	Organisational	Construct a general timeline of events as above- students then add material from the lecture/notes/reading/discussion on a second line directly below the main time line.

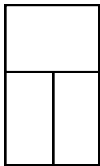
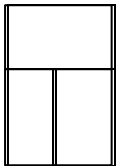
Based on activities developed by Texas A&M University (slc.tamu.eu)

ROOM LAYOUT FOR SMALL GROUP WORK

Consider where you would place yourself in the following furniture arrangements and how this layout could impact your PAL group. Fill out the left-hand column on your own and then reach a group consensus.

What I think...

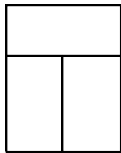
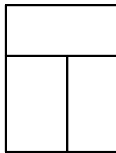
How would this affect group discussion?



How would this affect group discussion?

What my group thinks...

How would this affect group discussion?



How would this affect group discussion?

What would be your ideal room layout?

CHANGING THE ROOM LAYOUT

There is no reason to accept the furniture in a classroom as immovable but in order to get a discussion going you may find it useful to reorganise the room to suit your session.

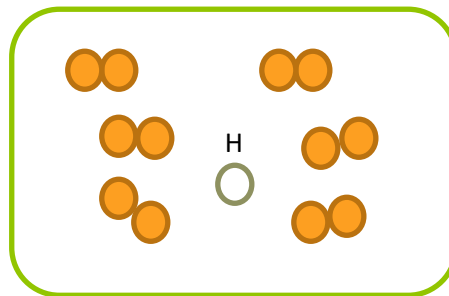
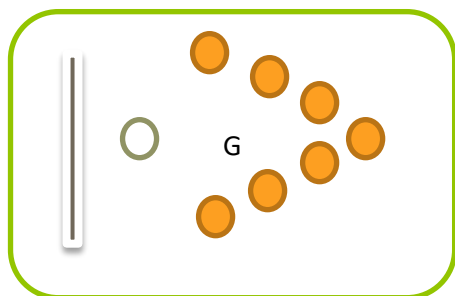
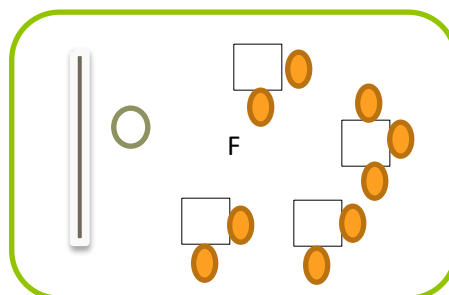
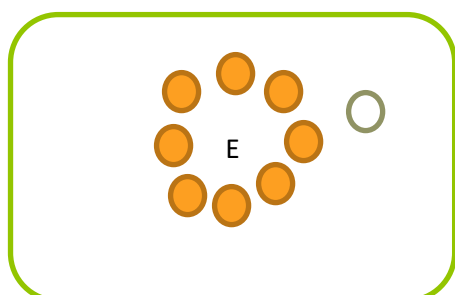
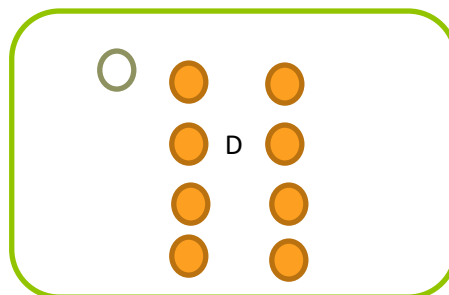
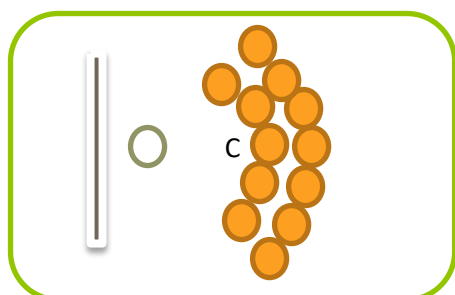
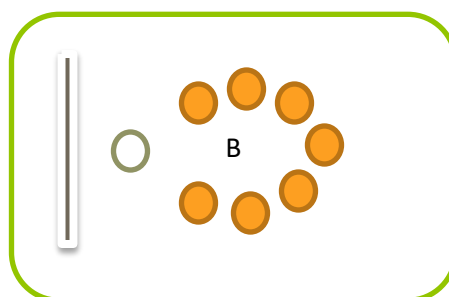
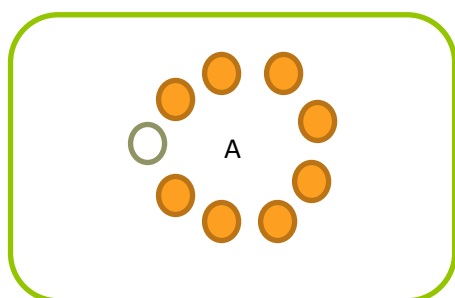
Often if you get the students into the habit of changing the room around from the start (and putting the room back again at the end), not only will it take up time in your session, but the students might get into the habit of changing it for you!

Below are some ideas for you to consider when you are thinking about re-arranging the furniture.

Mentor 

Board 

 Table



THINK/PAIR/SHARE

Explanation: Participants initially work individually on a task to allow time to clarify their own ideas and thoughts. They then share their results with a partner, evaluate their ideas, and negotiate their views in order to take the task forward. The pairs then link up with another pair to form a small group of four in order to go through the same process as a pair with the other pair. The goal is to give people time to think **before** they discuss, allow increased participation from quieter individuals and produce richer discussion.

What will you do if students are busy talking to each other when they should be at the 'think' stage of this technique?

What might you do if participants don't want to 'share'?

What could you do if the four are unable to come to an agreement (where the task requires this)?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Explanation: *Group discussion* is probably the most common activity associated with collaborative learning. As such, we tend to take it for granted and rarely give much thought to the dynamics of facilitating a successful group discussion.

However, even slight changes to the way we approach a group discussion can make a huge difference to the manner in which group members get involved. For instance, you might ask the participants not only to read and then discuss during a task but also to underline the things they are unsure about and write down their thoughts before discussing them. In this case, underlining the material and making notes encourages active reading rather than passive skimming of the material.

Sometimes the least effective way to start a group discussion is to throw out a question and wait for a response. Why do you think that is the case?

CLUSTERS

Explanation: A *Cluster* is really just a group that is broken down into smaller groups. To be effective a cluster should be no larger than three or four people. Using *clusters* can be a powerful way to change the interaction in a group. Breaking people into smaller groups accomplishes several things:

- It makes them accountable
- It promotes active processing of material
- It encourages participation by everyone

Sounds great doesn't it? But it is not as simple as it sounds. Most PAL mentors quickly learn that they can sometimes face resistance when they ask students in their sessions to break into small groups. It turns out that students sometimes have their own ideas about what an ideal session should be. Some students might initially prefer to walk into the sessions, sit at the back and not have to say or do anything while the PAL mentor tells them everything they need to know. As you know, this is the opposite of how PAL actually works.

The key to making a cluster group work is to be firm and make sure students are on task, not just chatting to their friends. How could you make sure this is happening?

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

Explanation: This is when an individual is asked to give an uninterrupted presentation to the larger group. This method should be used sparingly in PAL.

In what circumstances would individual presentation be a useful technique in a PAL session?

JIGSAW

Explanation: When used properly, jigsaws make the whole group dependent upon all the subgroups. Each group provides a piece of the puzzle by working on some aspect of the same problem, question or issue.

How could you use the jigsaw technique in your sessions?

How would you make sure students get the benefit of all discussions?

ASSIGNED DISCUSSION MENTOR

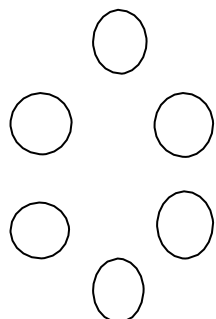
Explanation: One person is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead discussion.

This works best when everyone gets a chance to lead on one topic.

What problems might there be with having an Assigned Discussion Mentor? How might you overcome these?

SUMMARY OF COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

Group Discussion



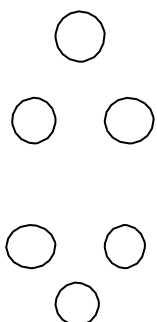
A group discussion is, more or less, just like it sounds: a general discussion of an issue or topic by the group. Individual members are free to contribute or not contribute.

Hints

This is the most common form of collaborative learning. It is also the form that requires the most skill to use successfully. Ideally, everyone is actively involved in the discussion and the discussion topic is of equal interest to all group members.

When group discussion is successful, it may be difficult to determine who is actually leading the session.

Clusters



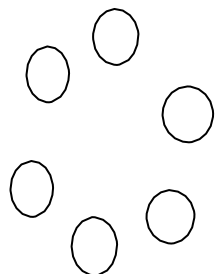
In *clusters*, group participants are divided into smaller groups for discussion. They may also be allowed to self-select the small group they want to be in. After the discussing the assigned topic the cluster may report their findings to the large group.

Hints

If possible, see that each group is provided a flip chart or a space on the whiteboard to record the important points of their discussion.

Allow time for each group to report back to the large group. You may have to assign someone from each group to report back.

Turn to a Partner

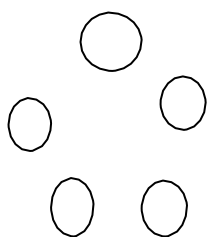


Group members work with a partner on an assignment or discussion topic.

Hints

This technique works best with group participants who have already been provided with enough background on a subject that they can immediately move to a discussion with their partner without previewing or reviewing concepts.

Assigned Discussion Mentor



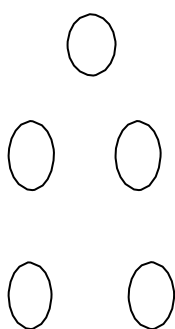
One person in the group is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead the discussion for the group. This person should not be the regular group mentor.

Hints

When assigning a discussion topic to individual members of the group, you may need to be prepared to allow a little time for the person leading the discussion to prepare the discussion.

This technique works best when everyone or nearly everyone in the group gets a turn at leading the discussion.

Think / Pair / Share



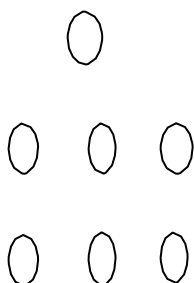
Group members work on an assignment or project individually and then share their results with a partner.

Hints

The goal of a Think / Pair / Share is to allow participants time to think BEFORE they discuss. Research shows that when people are given time to contemplate an answer to a question, their answers differ from those they would give if they responded immediately.

When doing a Think / Pair / Share, give the participants a specific amount of time (e.g. five minutes) for the 'think' portion.

Individual Presentation

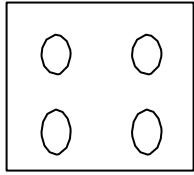


An individual presentation is an uninterrupted presentation by one person to the group. Group members present on a topic, question or issue to the group. Unlike an 'Assigned Discussion Mentor' this is a formal presentation delivered to a captive audience.

Hints

Use *individual presentations* sparingly and only when independent research is required.

Jigsaw

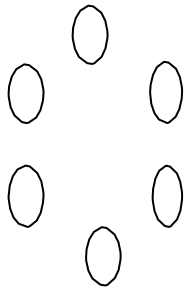


Jigsaws, when used properly, make the group as a whole dependent upon all of the subgroups. Each group provides a *piece of the puzzle*. Group members are broken into smaller groups. Each small group works on some aspect of the same problem, question or issue. They then share their part of the puzzle with the large group.

Hints

When using a *Jigsaw* make sure that you carefully define the limits of what each group will contribute to the topic that is being explored.

Group Survey



Each group member is surveyed to discover their position on an issue, problem or topic. This process insures that each member of the group is allowed to offer or state their point of view.

Hints

A survey works best when opinions or views are briefly stated. Be sure to keep track of the results of the survey.

GENERATING AND GATHERING IDEAS

Discuss the pros and cons of different methods

Activity	Description	Pros and Cons
Brainstorm	Brainstorming is a group or individual creative technique in which efforts are made to find a conclusion for a specific problem by gathering a list of ideas spontaneously contributed by its member(s). All ideas are welcomed in the initial brainstorm and then evaluated and tested at the next stage.	
Snowball	One sheet of flipchart paper for each topic. People move around as individuals or groups adding their ideas to the sheet.	
Snowball fight	Each person is given an A4 sheet of paper. They write an idea on the paper then scrunch it into a snowball and throw it to another person. This person unfurls the paper and adds another idea. Continue until all ideas are collected then each person opens the paper they are holding and shares the ideas.	
Post-its	Invite participants to write an idea on a post-it note which is then stuck up on a board, wall or sheet of paper. Post-its can be sorted under headings or into clusters.	
Mind map	Mind maps use colours, pictures and words to make notes, remember things and come up with new ideas. Your brain thinks in colours and pictures rather than lines of text so mind maps reflect the way your brain already works.	
Glossary	Participants keep a record of words and phrases from lectures and/or reading that they don't understand or wish to discuss further. These can then be addressed in a session. This exercise can be extended over several weeks.	

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR SUBJECT AREA

For this activity you should work either with other PAL mentors for your subject area or in a pair with another mentor.

- Think about learning activities you might use and ways of organising the group.
- How would you meet the needs of different learning styles?
- Remember to keep the focus on facilitation and collaborative learning rather than on trying to teach material.

Notes on your ideas...

GROUP WORK SCENARIOS

However skillful you are and whatever techniques you use, it is always possible to run into difficult situations in small group work. Challenges can feel threatening and sometimes it is difficult to spot these coming and deal with them quickly and successfully. This exercise is about strategies to cope with these difficult incidents. Make notes on how you might deal with the following incidents. Add and respond to your own ideas about incidents in the spaces provided.

Instructions: Take it in turns to lead the discussion on a situation. The mentor is responsible for making sure everyone has a chance to share their views and is clear on the solutions that are decided.

Number	Situation	How you could deal with it
1	The whole group is silent and unresponsive.	
2	One individual is silent and unresponsive.	
3	Subgroups start forming and private conversations start.	
4	The group becomes dependent on the mentor.	
5	Discussion goes off the point.	
6	Two people arrive late and distract others	
7	Two group members are very dominant.	
8	One member complains about the way you are facilitating the group	
9	One student stays at the end of the session and asks you to look at their essay draft and give them some feedback.	

10	Group members reject the facilitation process and demand to be told the answers.	
11	Group members do not answer when you ask a question.	
12	One member is aggressive and racist.	
13	Members are not listening to each other.	
14	One person has their phone out during the session and is constantly checking Facebook and replying to texts.	
15	Members start arguing with each other.	
16	An activity you have planned goes wrong	
17	Members of the group have misunderstood something from a lecture but don't realise it is wrong.	
18	Group is going round in circles.	
	Others?	

OUTLINE OF A PAL GROUP WORK SESSION

The timescale may run something like this:

Timing	Activity	What will the students be <i>doing</i> ?
0-3 minutes	Welcome students to session. Allow group to settle; join in any general conversation	Signing the attendance sheet, choosing where to sit, getting ready for the session
3-10 minutes	Set the agenda for the session. Start by reminding them what was agreed the previous week. Use questions and think about different information gathering techniques. Try not to do the same thing every week. Agree numbered points of items to work through during the session	Answering questions, discussing in pairs/small groups or writing on post-its/flipchart paper etc., depending on the collaborative learning techniques used. Be specific – what will you be able to see them doing?
10-40 minutes	Systematically work through the agenda items, prompting discussion. Try to use a variety of collaborative learning techniques. Some of this may be planned in advance or you may need to think on your feet to respond to the agenda brought by the students. Make sure you have the information about learning activities with you to help with this.	Discussing in pairs/small groups or writing on post-its/flipchart paper etc., depending on the collaborative learning techniques used. Be specific – what will you be able to see them doing?
40-45 minutes	Summarise the main points from the session with students' help.	Be specific – what will you be able to see them doing?
45-50 minutes	Ask students for topics for next session (agenda setting) Ask for feedback on the session and end the session with a closure activity.	Be specific – what will you be able to see them doing?
Make sure you finish your session in time for participants (and you) to get to their next class and for you to return the room to its original layout etc.		

AGENDA SETTING

After you have welcomed students to the PAL session, the next thing you will want to do is set an agenda. Ideally this will come from the group, identifying things they want to work on. However, students are not always confident about this in the first few sessions.

Agenda setting is useful to:

- provide structure to the session - to enable you to have a clear picture of what to work through during the session
- make sure from the start that students have a significant say in what is covered
- make sure students are encouraged from the start to raise any issues of concern or interest to them. Ask students what they want to work through. Spend as long as it takes to write up points for discussion. When students' ideas have been exhausted, agree the order in which you will work through this agenda and how long approximately it will take for each item. Structure the PAL session by working through the agreed agenda items.

Warning: Getting used to setting an agenda, i.e. deciding upon issues to discuss, may be a very new idea to some students. Don't be surprised if there is initially some reluctance and reticence to come up with ideas to review in the session. You can start to focus in on current course issues by asking about what lectures students have had in the last week, and then go on to ask about the material and key issues covered in the lecture. This should help start off an agenda.

If agenda setting is difficult at the start of the session then it might be helpful to do this at the end, so that you already have an agenda planned for the following week. If you take this approach you must start each week by reminding the group of the agenda that was set last time and asking if there is anything else they want to cover.

How to set the agenda

- You could begin writing up agenda items on the basis of comments or requests made by students in the previous PAL session.
- Ask open-ended questions to discover information about what they have covered during the week.
- What lectures have students had during the last week?
- What were the most difficult topics that were covered?
- What new ideas have they had presented to them?
- What new theory has been presented?
- What new factual information has been presented?
- Which lectures would they like to look at again?
- Get students to look through their notes to remind themselves of what has been covered, and what they might like to discuss further.

Remember to use different ideas for generating and gathering ideas.

PLANNING PAL GROUP SESSIONS

As a PAL mentor, you need to find the balance between offering enough structure to keep the session on track whilst allowing individuals the freedom to express their ideas. Using session plans when meeting with staff can help this process, as can some of the following ideas. Some ways of providing structure to sessions:

Work systematically through the agenda

- Remember to set an agenda.
- Once this agenda has been agreed, stick to it. Spend some time on each point. Ask open-ended questions to begin discussion. Use different collaborative learning techniques.
- Later, summarise the main ideas related to it before moving on to the next item.
- Remember to close the session by getting students to summarise.
- Set the agenda for next time.

Use a variety of techniques to keep the session interesting

- Use group discussion and pair work, and ask students to do board work
- Keep the session informal but also make sure you focus on course concepts.
- Spend some of your time sitting with students and some time at the board.
- Get students to spend time referring to text and notes for specific answers.
- Lead general open-ended discussion.
- Provide information visually and verbally (see below).

Emphasise definitions and rules

- Courses will vary in how definitions and rules are used, but all courses comprise an element of this. Focusing in on definitions of new terms, or summary explanations of theory, can help provide structure to the session.

Provide information visually and verbally

- Some students learn better visually, others verbally. Try to make use of both, e.g. by encouraging students to produce pictorial representations (e.g. diagrams) and verbal illustrations (e.g. lists and mnemonics) or activities that can suit both types (e.g. mind maps).

Provide analogies and example

- These can help make ideas more concrete and memorable. Ask students to come up with their own examples of a theory or idea.

Help classify content

Emphasise process (how you arrive at answers)

- Ask students how they arrived at an answer; why they think something to be the case.

Emphasise 'if-then' reasoning where appropriate

- Make a list of problem steps where appropriate.

OPENING PAL GROUP SESSIONS

Discuss the following issues:

How will you introduce yourself to the group?

How will you introduce PAL to the group?

How will you introduce the group members to each other?

What will you do if students come to the first PAL session and seem upset that you will not 'teach' them?

How will you explain why participants need to sign in each time they attend?

What will you do if a student arrives half-way through a PAL session?

What will you do if you only have one student turn up for a PAL session?

What will you do if no-one turns up for a session?

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN A GROUP

As a PAL Mentor, you are not a teacher. Your main job is to encourage active learning, to encourage students to participate in discussion. These pages outline some ways of encouraging participation:

Ask appropriate questions

- The PAL mentor should ask questions that require students to think about important concepts and give substantial answers that reveal a lot about their thinking.

Ask open-ended questions

- The best questions are usually open-ended (that require more than a yes, no or short answer).
- Open-ended questions are better because they require students to provide lengthy and therefore more substantial responses. The more students talk, the better the student mentor and other students are able to understand their ideas and thinking.

Encourage student verbalisation

- As discussed above, when students put their ideas into words it helps them to process information. Also, when a student verbalises an idea it helps their learning processes and encourages other students to share their ideas.

Wait for student responses

- It is important to train yourself to wait for student answers. Students may need time to think and gain confidence when asked a question. After a while they will usually respond with an answer or another question. Waiting for answers is a difficult but important skill – it can be very tempting to answer questions for students or jump in with another question or answer – learn to be patient and this will usually lead to better discussion and more group involvement.
- Encourage them to find the answers in their lecture notes.
- You should also wait for other students to comment after a member of the class has said something. Don't immediately label an answer right or wrong – wait to see if other students have anything to add, and encourage them to do so.

Use Socratic questioning

- Socratic questioning can be used to lead students to correct answers. This is where the PAL mentor breaks down difficult concepts into small chunks of information that students can answer more easily. Instead of asking "How do we address this whole problem?" ask first "What is the first thing we need to do to understand this?" From this starting point, students can then begin to build ideas to grasp a better understanding of the whole concept.

Encourage student questions

- Student questions form the raw material for PAL sessions. Always ask if students have questions and offer plenty of time to work with the group to find the answer.

Redirect questions

- When asked a direct question, try to turn this back to the group. This is a useful skill to master as it means students have to think for themselves and don't depend on the mentor for answers. It allows more students to participate and students become more confident when able to provide answers for the group.

Examples of redirection questions:

- "Does someone want to answer that?"
- "Who can answer that?"
- "Who can explain that?"

Place the emphasis on student ideas

- Always encourage students to share their thoughts, because students build new concepts upon their own ideas and new course material.

Use student ideas

- Students often have the correct ideas, it just takes time to put them together (and it is easier simply to be 'told').

Delayed positive reinforcement

- Remind students of correct ideas they have offered earlier.

Be a role model by using "I" statements yourself

- Reflecting on your first year experience and being open and direct with the group. If you don't understand something or can't remember, then say so. This will help students feel that you are involved as a participant.

Give permission to acknowledge fears and anxieties

- Reassure the group that some parts of the course are difficult and will probably take some time and effort to understand.

Encourage them to search in their notes for clarification

- If there are discrepancies between students, ask them to compare notes and come to a consensus.

Avoid interrupting student answers

- PAL should be a safe and comfortable environment for students to try things out, attempt answers and make mistakes. Remember it is often from making mistakes that our best learning comes about.

Refer to the syllabus/Moodle regularly

- Encourage students to bring their course handbook or unit information to PAL sessions.
- Check that students understand the requirements of the reading lists, assignments and any tests/projects. Get them to look regularly at the learning outcomes for each unit so they are well aware of what they need to do.

Use small group/ pair work

- If your group is more than 6-8 students it is useful to divide into subgroups and encourage them to find an issue they wish to explore. If you are on your own you can then move between groups to challenge and offer support and encouragement.
- Ask students to form small groups to write out possible exam questions covering the topics covered. Then ask them to write them on the board for discussion. This may take time, but allows students to see additional questions which focus on the material just studied.
- Use individual and pair work to get students involved. The student mentor can create a problem or two based on the course for students to do. This can help students become immersed in the material and provide a springboard for discussion. Where students are engaged in individual or pair work this can also provide an opportunity for the mentor to offer more individual assistance.

Get students to use the whiteboard

- Physical activity helps prevent students being too PALive or bored, it also encourages students to talk to one another.

Use positive reinforcement

- This can have a positive effect on learning and confidence.
- Examples of positive reinforcement include offering praise for an answer (even if not correct), using a posture of interest and concern, maintaining eye contact, smiling and nodding and making positive comments

Use students' names

- Using students' names can help you and your students to feel more comfortable and increase student participation. You can make use of the attendance sheet if you cannot remember names easily. Alternatively, you can issue each student with a name label until everyone knows each other.

Repeat student responses

- This can act as positive reinforcement, to summarise or clarify comments and enable others to hear comments.

CLOSING PAL GROUP SESSIONS

To ensure that students do not lose sight of the big picture, reserve the last few minutes of any session for a review and summary of the session. Notes or books should not be used. You should start closing the session around ten to fifteen minutes before the end. Some ways of closing the session:

1. Put students in pairs or small groups and ask the different pairs to each complete one of the following tasks:
 - Issue each student with a post-it note and ask them to write down what they have learned in the session. You can use a flip chart poster to display this.
 - Write a paragraph explaining what was covered in the session.
 - Write three possible exam questions you might expect to arise from the material covered. When this has been completed, you can then go around the room asking for feedback and write the key points on the board.
2. Get students to say what they thought was the single most important concept, idea or understanding that they learned during the session. Write up some key points.
3. Get students to organise the selected topics into more generalised concepts. You will probably remember how overwhelmed you felt by the volume of information you had to deal with in the first year. The practice of organising this volume of information is essential. This approach is particularly useful once a number of concepts relating to a course module or topic have been explored in PAL sessions. This can be done at the end of the semester.
4. Get students to suggest how the session has related to the course syllabus and learning outcomes.
5. Ask students to complete the brief evaluation form and ensure the sign-in sheet has been completed by all.
6. Ask students to say whether there is anything they would like to cover in the next week's session. Write a list of points on the board and make a note of them yourself.
7. Thank everyone present for their time and contributions.

SUMMARY

1. Running a session requires planning. Never go into a session intending to 'play it by ear' or 'answer questions'.
2. Maintain relaxed eye contact - but don't stare.
3. Build flexibility into the sessions.
4. It is more effective to 'model' how students learn than it is to 'tell' them what they need to know.
5. Waiting for students to volunteer a well-developed answer takes time. Practise counting 20 seconds while waiting for an answer.
6. Encourage students to summarise the major concepts of lectures. Let other students fine-tune the responses. If information is incorrect ask students to find specific references in the text that will clarify the correct answers.
7. PAL should provide a comfortable environment for students to ask questions or attempt answers. Protect students from interruptions, laughter and being talked over.
8. If there are more than 6-8 students, divide into subgroups. Provide discussion topics that groups can explore. Move from group to group, participating from time to time, reassuring the group that you are there for them.
9. At the end of each agenda item, summarise the main points. This will work even better if you can encourage students to provide the summary for you.

INTRODUCING PAL TO STUDENTS

As a PAL mentor you need to be able to stand up in front of a group of students, explain who you are, why you are there and what you are asking them to do. This can be nerve-wracking when you first start. The most important thing is that you are prepared, so take a couple of minutes to prepare a short speech to introduce PAL to a group for the first time and write it down in the space below.

Think about questions that students might have about the programme and try to include the answers....

DROP-IN PAL SESSIONS

While many small group-work techniques used in group PAL sessions can be applied to 1:1 drop-in sessions, there are some clear differences between the two. When working 1:1, you may feel under more pressure to give an answer, but it is important to resist this by drawing on the techniques explored in the group-work sections, such as redirecting the problem back to the student, using wait time and checking for understanding. Encouraging students to articulate the problem and using questions to explore solutions is central in all peer learning situations to helping them problem solve and find their own answers.

Drop-ins can present opportunities for group discussion and activity too. If a group of students come to the drop-in with the same concern, it makes sense to bring everyone together to share ideas about how the problem can be solved. In both cases let the students guide the discussion, and aim to remain professional, relaxed, open and purposeful (or PROP for short).

Students may be more inclined to discuss problems of a more personal nature in a 1:1 situation, so ensure that you are clear about your role as a PAL mentor and understand your boundaries. Remember that information disclosed by students is confidential, unless you are concerned they may pose a threat to themselves or to others. You can signpost students to the relevant services, and you can discuss any concerns you have confidentially with your PAL supervisor without necessarily revealing the name of the individual.

<i>Advantages of 1:1 peer learning activity</i>	<i>Advantages of group peer learning activity</i>
<i>Disadvantages of 1:1 peer learning activity</i>	<i>Disadvantages of group learning activity</i>

PAL DEBRIEFS AND SUPERVISION

Each PAL session will be followed by a weekly or fortnightly debrief attended by the mentors, the academic lead and the allocated supervisor. These debriefs are crucial to support you as mentors, allowing you to reflect on the activity you have undertaken, plan for your next session or activity and gain subject specific direction and support from the academic lead. The supervisor's role within the debriefs is to encourage you to consider the learning strategies you have been using, review their effectiveness, consider suitable approaches for future activities, ensure that your own wellbeing is maintained and that your workload is not suffering as a result of your PAL activity. It is the responsibility of the PAL Supervisor to help you fulfil your role as a PAL mentor. This starts with the training and continues throughout your work as a PAL mentor. You can arrange to see the supervisor on a one-to-one basis if there is anything you wish to discuss in private outside of the debrief.

Think about how your PAL team might support you and you them and jot down some ideas in the spaces provided, then pair up with a partner to share your ideas.

<i>My academic lead can help me with....</i>	<i>I can help my academic lead by...</i>
<i>My supervisor can help me with...</i>	<i>I can help my supervisor by...</i>
<i>My PAL mentor team can help me with...</i>	<i>I can help my PAL mentor team by...</i>

PROMOTING PAL

How will you keep in contact with your PAL students?

How will you help to make sure they keep coming back to your sessions?

How will you communicate with them?

Before the first session:

- You will have access to a Moodle page that will be available to relevant students – use this to advertise day, time and place of session, give participants an idea of what sorts of activities you might be doing and to send emails.
- Set up a Facebook group for your PAL group. Try to give it a distinctive name (e.g. not just *BusinessPAL* as there will be multiple groups with that name). Use the year, your names, whatever else you want to make it distinctive. Alternatively, you might want to agree as a whole course to have a single group that all mentors can post into.
- Identify when first year lectures take place and arrange to speak for a few minutes at the start of the lecture to introduce PAL.

In the first session:

- Ask students if they are happy to give you their email addresses so you can stay in contact. Pass round a contact list for them to do this. Remember to add any additional people who come after the first week.

During the year:

- Post up details of what you will be doing in session in your Facebook group each week.
- Post photos of activity occurring in sessions (make sure everyone gives consent) so students can see the output of sessions.
- Send occasional emails (not every week) to your email list. Think about how frequently will be effective without overloading.
- Posters can be printed by the PAL supervisors for display. Think about the most effective place to put these.
- Can you make links with subject societies to help promote the benefits of PAL?

What else can you think of?

FACEBOOK AND EMAILS

Netiquette (net-etiquette) is about communicating online politely and professionally. When communicating with students, the common options are Facebook, email and texting. In order to do this it is important to consider:

- **Who will receive your communication?**

How old are the recipients? Have you met them before? Don't post anything that could get you in trouble with your friends, family, or employer.

- **Is the style of writing you are using appropriate?**

Consider who you are communicating with. Do you know the recipients well enough to write informally or does it require a more formal, professional style?

- **What is the impression you wish to give?**

Would you like to be polite and formal or more informal? It would be better to communicate with students via Facebook if you want to contact them instantly but do also ensure that you use University emails and/or the Moodle email option as not everyone uses Facebook. Definitely use email to liaise with the PAL team (supervisor, academic lead and other mentors) regarding debriefs and any other PAL business. Basically, when it comes to communicating, treat others as you wish to be treated.

Facebook

Facebook tends to be the easiest way of communicating with students, providing they all have access to it. Students often have their Facebook account linked to their mobile phones to have convenient access whenever, wherever. We recommend that you consider creating a Facebook group to communicate with students, but do ensure you have an alternative mode of communication for those who are not on Social Media. You will be required to set up a Teams page for your PAL sessions anyway so we encourage you to use this as a way of ensuring that all potential participants can be kept informed about your PAL sessions.

Here are some important things to consider:

- Use the 'Privacy settings' options (top right corner of Facebook) to customise how others view your personal profile. If you set your profile to the 'only friends' setting, only your friends will be able to see your Facebook activity.
- Avoid swearing, even if it is an abbreviated form.
- Ensure that the group you set up is a 'Closed' group.
- When you post a photo, document or status relating to PAL, it should be only shared within your PAL Facebook group to give you control over who joins (i.e. it should not be open to public view). Make sure people give consent to share photos.
- Don't list personal contact information like your address or phone number on your profile.
- Make sure you check the group regularly, then if a conversation between the students occurs you can keep up with what is being posted.

Since Facebook has become such an integrated part of our daily lives, often simple netiquette rules may not always apply to your personal profile. So it may not have occurred to you that it is important to consider how you present yourself online. For standard Facebook groups you do have to be friends with someone before adding them to that group. However, other people can request to join closed groups if they are given a link or if they search for it, but they must be confirmed by an administrator before they can be allowed to join the group.

TIP: Creating a Facebook group either before or during your first PAL session would be a good opportunity to add your members to your group as a class. Plus, you will be added to the main PAL Mentor Facebook group so you could base your own page on that if you wanted.

Using Facebook effectively and encouraging participation online

For some of you, this next section will not be relevant because students will always be very responsive on Facebook. However, a number of mentors have feedback that students can be very quiet and not respond when they post something. So below are some tips to help you get your student to participate online:

- Encourage students to post on the page, otherwise it will not just be you posting on the page all the time.
- Try not to ask general questions such as ‘so what do you want to do this week...?’
- Give the students some options of things you could cover and ask questions like ‘what have you covered this week?’, ‘what were the most difficult issues that were covered in your lectures?’ and ‘are there any lectures you would you like to look at again?’
- Make sure the Facebook page is constantly active and doesn’t just get left with the occasional post on it.
- Use the events function to organise socials, it will encourage the students to look at the group a lot more.
- Use the ‘ask question’ function on the group so that students can vote for what they would prefer and then if students don’t want to post they can do it anonymously.
- Whilst your Facebook group has to remain vaguely professional and as long as it’s not too ridiculous you can talk about things on the page that are not always PAL related and this would also help students to bond as a group (perhaps adding photos of you all out on a social).
- You can add files to Facebook groups so if you wanted to upload anything after the sessions and then the students who didn’t attend could see what they missed (it might encourage the students to attend if they see what kinds of things you are covering).

Email

Email is another easy way to get hold of students. With emails you can send out lots of information in a concise format as well as keeping in contact with your academic lead and wider PAL team. However, students may not be able to or have chosen not to look at their emails, hence why Facebook is often better for getting information to students quickly. Understandably, sometimes in the case of emergencies another email address could be used, but it is more professional to use your student email.

Some netiquette to consider when you are emailing students or staff:

- Create an email signature that relates to you and your PAL group.
- Avoid overusing emoticons in emails to members of staff or students.
- Choose your language carefully when writing an email, consider who it is being sent to.
- Regardless of who you are communicating with, use the correct grammar and punctuation.
- Reply to others as soon as possible.
- Avoid falling behind with your emails.
- Try not to over-use exclamation marks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Always have a subject line.

Texting and Facebook Group Chat

Some PAL Mentors have been known to use 'instant messenger' tools to contact their students in group form. If you choose to do this, make sure that you have the students' permission before you take note of their names or number and ensure numbers are kept confidential. We recommend that you discuss with the students how they would like you to communicate with them and if texting, you could try Facebook messenger. Keep messages short, concise and apply the netiquette rules mentioned in this section.

Adapted from Bournemouth University PAL Learning Guide 2016-17

DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING

Working within a diverse learning environment can be highly rewarding and provide mentors with valuable experience for future employment. There are many aspects to diversity including gender, sexuality, culture, disability and religion and it is quite likely that there will be international, disabled, neurodiverse and mature students in your PAL sessions too, with quite diverse previous educational experiences. By ensuring your PAL sessions are inclusive and relaxed, and that any discriminatory language is politely but firmly halted, most participants should feel comfortable to contribute.

International Students

International students who study in the UK may have to cope with unfamiliar processes and structures which can be a confusing process. The 'rules' of the British HE system such as how the marking system operates, how to address the lecturer, and what sort of academic skills are valued may be quite baffling. International students may ask you things they might not wish to ask the lecturer and you can offer useful feedback and lots of examples of good practice in a non-threatening environment.

Mature Students

Individuals in your PAL groups may be mature students ranging from those who have had a few years gap between school/college and university to those who have experienced a more substantial gap due to work or family commitments. It is important to consider that mature students may (like international students) have different priorities, e.g. children, a career etc. and may not be involved in the typical 'student experience' so they may occasionally feel quite excluded from many University activities. It is also worth remembering that mature (as well as younger) students often think everyone else knows a lot more than they do, so don't assume that mature students are any more confident than younger students, even though they might appear so. However, mature students can often be a great asset to your group, bringing a rounded perspective on issues and helping with the group dynamic if you involve them from the start in your sessions.

It is worth noting that the situation can also work in reverse whereby the mentors might be mature students and the participants mostly straight out of school. Again, the key issue here is mutual respect and not assuming too much on the basis of age.

Students with learning differences, disabilities and neurodiversities.

Neurodiverse and disabled students may sometimes require reasonable adjustments to be put in place such as access to assistive technology or use of a hearing loop. If such a request emerges in your sessions and you are not sure how to respond, do refer back to your supervisor. In general, try and use a variety of learning approaches including time working alone (or to give this as an option), not to get worried if someone leaves your sessions (they may just need time out, or they have physical problem and need to walk around etc.), ensure your meeting space has disabled access, speak clearly and make sure any handouts you might use are in a large, non-serif font no smaller than 12 points.

If you are interested in finding out more about inclusive learning and teaching strategies, check out the following link.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/inclusivelearningandteaching_finalreport.pdf

GROUP DYNAMICS

Tensions may arise in groups that include a very diverse range of individuals. Be aware and supportive during any such challenges. It is, however, worth noting that evidence suggests that more diverse groups generally produce better problem-solving outcomes because the greater variety of perspectives make participants think more deeply and question their own assumptions and beliefs (Nazari and Willis 2014).

PAL sessions provide an ideal forum in which to analyse the process of working together in diverse groups. Some examples:

Assessment – Clarify the criteria lecturers use when marking (and what a ‘good’ mark means)

Planning – You may need to decode an essay title or an assignment brief. What do the various ‘procedure’ words mean? How is ‘evaluate’ different from ‘justify’, or ‘discuss’ different from ‘describe’. Don’t forget international students may take much longer to produce work if English is not their first language.

About interpersonal relationships – Tell them how you wish to be addressed. Make your role and its limitations (or boundaries) absolutely clear early on. Be explicit about when and how you can help them. Make sure there are clear ground rules.

Ultimately, we all communicate in different ways so things to take into consideration are:

Be explicit

We are often very polite and afraid of stating the obvious but when helping students to learn new approaches, be explicit.

Keep it simple

Students need time to think and digest what you say before they reach an understanding

Speaking in class

Being expected to discuss, articulate and share opinions can be difficult for many students for a wide range of reasons such as working in a second language, having social anxiety, or being Deaf. Working in pairs or threes can help to reduce feelings of anxiety and intimidation and is a useful way of giving students time to practise a response before sharing their ideas with the whole group.

Increase your sensitivity to diversity

You do not need to be an expert on all forms of diversity; just listen to what students might share with you regarding their culture, learning difference or disability and simply ask them what will help them – they are the experts. Don’t be afraid to ask questions! Exploring what others do and how they think will help you to become aware of your own rules, assumptions and conventions. *Adapted from Bournemouth PAL Learning Guide 2016-17*

UWTSD EQUALITY PLAN

UWTSD has a four year Strategic Equality Plan which can be found on these links:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/about/strategies-and-policies/>.

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/strategies-policies/race-equality-plan-1-nov-2021-1.pdf>

The policy states that: 'It is important to us to create an inclusive learning and working community which is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and where all our staff and our learners are supported, feel respected and can show their potential... This Strategic Equality Plan helps us deliver these commitments by: [e]nsuring that we understand the needs of our learners and staff; [en]suring that our staff and learners feel respected and valued, and that none of them are disadvantaged by the way our organisations function.'

Although the institution is responsible for complying with the Equality Act, everyone within the institution has responsibilities for implementing the Strategic Equality Plan, including students who should be made aware of equality and diversity principles. Mentors, therefore, along with all other students and members of staff, have a responsibility to treat their peers, and all members of the learning and wider community with respect; they should feel confident to report any incidents of bullying, victimisation, harassment or discrimination; and they should be aware of the principles of equality and diversity and respect people's rights, preferences and beliefs in accordance with these values. Furthermore, all those involved with learning activities are required to consider inclusive teaching and learning approaches and ensure that learners are not subject to discrimination.

A longer extracts from this policy has been inserted as an appendix towards the end of this handbook including a brief overview of the Equality Act and an explanation of the nine protected characteristics.

UWTSD Safeguarding Policy

UWTSD also has a safeguarding policy which can be accessed on the university website via this link: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/strategies-policies/safeguarding-policy-sec-february-2021-1.pdf>

Safeguarding involves protecting the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults within the University community and any students who are at risk of harm. All relevant individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender identity have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

This responsibility extends to all current students, potential students involved in University activities, children resident in University accommodation and requires institutions such as universities to work collaboratively with other relevant organisations.

There are five main forms of abuse: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and bullying. Other safeguarding concerns may include but are not limited to: on-line abuse, financial abuse of a vulnerable individual, forced marriage, and radicalisation/vulnerable individuals being drawn into terrorism.

All members of staff, students and volunteers have a responsibility to report any concerns or suspicions of harm: They can do this by referring the matter to their line manager, Safeguarding Officer or, if this is not possible, directly to the Director of Student Services who will liaise with the relevant statutory agencies.

In accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988, the University will support and protect those staff and students who, in good faith and without malicious intent, report suspicions of abuse or concerns about colleagues and their actions.

In regard to your role as PAL mentors, if you have any concerns that someone is at risk of harm, report your concern immediately to your PAL supervisor, a member of academic staff or student services. If the concern occurs out of hours, contact the porters (07767 842738). If someone discloses to you that they are being harmed or are at risk of harm, you can do the following:

- React in a calm but concerned way and listen.
- Tell the individual that they are right to share what has happened and reassure them that something can be done about the problem.
- Explain that it is likely that you will need to tell someone about the problem – do not promise to keep secrets. Tell them who you will share the information with.
- Make a record of what is said and done, and immediately report the problem.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a set of evidence-based actions which promote people's well-being. They are: *Connect*, *Be Active*, *Take Notice*, *Keep Learning* and *Give*. These activities are simple things individuals can do in their everyday lives.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing were developed by New Economics Foundation from evidence gathered in the UK government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. The Project, published in 2008, drew on state-of-the-art research about mental capital and mental well-being through life. It asked New Economics Foundation to develop the Five Ways to Wellbeing to communicate its key findings.

The Five Ways have been used by across the UK and around the world to help people take action to flourish and thrive.

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Our emotional health and well-being is important for all of us. Being happy and well means that we are able to study, work and enjoy life.

There may be times we need help and support to manage our mental health and well-being. This might be to help respond to a difficult period in our lives, a traumatic event, to manage a mental or physical health condition, or something else.

It is vitally important that you maintain your own wellbeing as a PAL mentor. Make sure that you do not get overly drawn into students' concerns and manage your time well to ensure a good balance of work and relaxation.

You are not expected to spend more than two hours per week on PAL activities - one hour on PAL sessions and up to one hour on debriefs, session planning, self-reflection and development, etc. While this may vary slightly from week to week, if you find yourself regularly spending more than two hours or getting overwhelmed by your own academic work, don't hesitate to contact your PAL supervisor for a chat. If you feel that you would like to withdraw from PAL or reduce your commitment to it, do not hesitate to bring this up with your supervisor too.

University life is an amazing opportunity to learn new things and discover yourself, but it can come with some challenges. You may be coming to university with a diagnosed mental health condition or develop difficulties with your mental health or wellbeing whilst you are studying. Whether you are experiencing a short term issue with stress, a longer lasting complex issue, or if you are struggling but are not sure what to do then UWTSD's Wellbeing Service is here to support you. You can access our free service at any time during your studies.

We have a range of free, professional, student-focused and confidential services which can work with you to better understand what you are experiencing and help you decide how you want to manage the impact on your studies.

Click on the icons below to find out more, or click on this link

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/student-services/wellbeing-support/>





SUPPORT Support



Keep Safe

List three things you can do to look after your wellbeing as a PAL mentor:

1.

2.

3.

How might you help a friend you are worried about?

BREATHING EXERCISES

When we get nervous our breath becomes short and we breathe only in the top of our chest/lungs. This makes our voices quieter, higher pitched and means we can get out of breath before we finish a sentence.

Here are a few breathing exercises you can try to help calm your nerves, speak more clearly and get your brain functioning better.

Belly Breath

Place your hands on your belly and breathe out gently so that you completely empty your lungs of air. It can help to make a gentle 'sshhhhh' sound as you breathe out. When your lungs are completely empty you can't make any more sound! Then gently breathe in, feeling your belly expand as the air comes all the way to the bottom of your lung. Try to make your breath slow and calm. The techniques below can help you to control the length of your breaths.

Counted Breath

Let's start with the most basic of techniques – simply figuring out how to breathe better. Now, because hyperventilation is a lack of carbon dioxide, you may think that holding your breath is the best strategy, but you generally don't want to cause rapid shifts in your oxygen levels. Instead, you need to slow down your breathing so that your carbon dioxide levels have a chance to rebuild naturally.

A great way to slow down your breathing is to do the following:

- Breathe in slowly through your nose. Try counting as you do so.
- Hold for a couple of seconds.
- Breathe out slowly. Try to make the count longer on the out breath.

Tracing a Rectangle

Another thing you can try is to trace a rectangle with each breath. You can either imagine a rectangle against a dark background or find one in the environment around you (e.g. a window or a picture frame). Then follow that shape. Breathe in along the short side, pause when you reach a corner, and breathe out when you're going along the long side.

POWER POSES

When Amy Cuddy was a fresher in college she sustained a serious head injury in a car accident. Her doctors told her she would struggle to fully regain her mental capacity and finish her undergraduate degree. Today, Cuddy is a social psychologist and professor at Harvard Business School, where she studies how we can change other people's perceptions — and even our own body chemistry — simply by changing body positions.

A COLLABORATION
TED + **SUPER INTERESSANTE**

FAKE IT 'TIL YOU BECOME IT

We all know that our body language affects how people see us. But does it also shape how we see ourselves? In her TED Talk, "Your body language shapes who you are," social psychologist Amy Cuddy discusses how our posture can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain and change our feelings about ourselves. That means that standing tall and proud — even when we don't feel confident — can have a positive impact on how we're perceived. So take a look in the mirror; your next success could depend on how you pose. — Karin Hueck and Rafael Quick

HOW PEOPLE SEE YOU

WEAK ← **STRONG**

HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF

“...Change your posture for two minutes... It could significantly change the way your life unfolds.”
– Amy Cuddy



PROTECTIVE
Placing your hand on your face or neck is a low-power pose that communicates a need for protection from other people.



HAND-HIDING
Hiding your hands in your pockets is another example of a low-power pose; it hints that you may lack self-confidence.



WONDER WOMAN
Shift your pose to make yourself appear bigger. That can take you from looking meek to seeming assertive.



TALL AND PROUD
Take a private moment to hold your arms up in a V-shape and lift your chin. That can make you feel (and seem) powerful.

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TED Talks

www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve

APPENDICES

DEEP, SURFACE & STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO STUDYING

(Adapted from Entwistle 2001)

Please answer every item quickly by giving your immediate response. Circle the appropriate code number to show your general approach to studying. 4 means definitely agree, 3 means agree with reservations, 2 if the item doesn't apply to you or if it is impossible to give a definite answer, 1 means disagree with reservations and 0 means definitely disagree

1	I find it easy to organise my study time effectively	4	3	2	1	0	A
2	I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other set work	4	3	2	1	0	B
3	It's important for me to do really well in the courses I take	4	3	2	1	0	A
4	I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to study	4	3	2	1	0	C
5	When I'm studying I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later	4	3	2	1	0	B
6	When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular tutor/lecturer seems to want	4	3	2	1	0	A
7	My main reason for studying these subjects is that they really interest me and I want to find out more	4	3	2	1	0	C
8	I suppose I'm more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the subjects I'm taking	4	3	2	1	0	B
9	I'm usually prompt at starting assignments when they are set for me	4	3	2	1	0	A
10	I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult to grasp	4	3	2	1	0	C
11	Often I find I have read or heard things without having a chance to really understand them	4	3	2	1	0	B
12	If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them	4	3	2	1	0	A

13	I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures/ tutorials or read in books	4	3	2	1	0	C
14	I tend to read very little beyond what is required for completing assignments	4	3	2	1	0	B
15	It is important for me to do better than my friends, if I possibly can	4	3	2	1	0	A
16	I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in class	4	3	2	1	0	C
17	I find my subjects so interesting that I would like to continue with them after I finish the course	4	3	2	1	0	C
18	I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn in order to PAL the course	4	3	2	1	0	B

A	B	C
Totals		

'A' Scale score

This is a score out of 24 on **'Achieving'** orientation. This indicates a *strategic approach* to learning. This indicates competitiveness, well-organised study methods, and hope for success. Students who score highly on this scale are orientated towards doing well, whatever this involves. They tend to do well in their studies.

'B' scale score

This is a score out of 24 on **'Reproducing'** orientation. This indicates a *surface approach* to learning. A surface approach is when students focus their attention on the details and information in a lesson or text. They try to memorise individual details in the form they appear in a lesson or text or to list the features of the situation. Students who score highly on this scale may not be interested in the subject and only keep narrowly to the syllabus as laid down and do not follow up any interests of their own. Despite their concerns to pass, they may do badly in their studies (especially at university level).

'C' scale score

This is a score out of 24 on **'Meaning'** orientation. This indicates a *deep approach* to learning. A deep approach is when students focus their attention on the overall meaning or message in a lesson, text or situation. They attempt to relate ideas together and construct their own meaning, possibly, if appropriate, in relation to their own experiences. Students who score highly on this scale follow up their own interests even if these are outside those of the course which is assessed. They tend to do well in their studies.

HONEY AND MUMFORD LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement put a tick. If you disagree more than you agree put a cross by it. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or cross. When you have completed the questionnaire, continue this task by responding to the points that follow.

- ☐ 1. I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.
- ☐ 2. I often act without considering the possible consequences.
- ☐ 3. I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.
- ☐ 4. I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.
- ☐ 5. I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.
- ☐ 6. I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.
- ☐ 7. I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.
- ☐ 8. I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.
- ☐ 9. What matters most is whether something works in practice.
- ☐ 10. I actively seek out new experiences.
- ☐ 11. When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.
- ☐ 12. I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine etc.
- ☐ 13. I take pride in doing a thorough job.
- ☐ 14. I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, "irrational" people.
- ☐ 15. I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.
- ☐ 16. I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.
- ☐ 17. I'm attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.
- ☐ 18. I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.
- ☐ 19. I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.
- ☐ 20. I like to relate my actions to a general principle.
- ☐ 21. In discussions I like to get straight to the point.
- ☐ 22. I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.
- ☐ 23. I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.
- ☐ 24. I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.
- ☐ 25. I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.

- ☐ 26. I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.
- ☐ 27. I believe in coming to the point immediately.
- ☐ 28. I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.
- ☐ 29. I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible -the more data to mull over the better.
- ☐ 30. Flippan people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.
- ☐ 31. I listen to other people's point of view before putting my own forward.
- ☐ 32. I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.
- ☐ 33. In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.
- ☐ 34. I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.
- ☐ 35. I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.
- ☐ 36. It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.
- ☐ 37. I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.
- ☐ 38. Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.
- ☐ 39. I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.
- ☐ 40. It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.
- ☐ 41. I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.
- ☐ 42. I tend to be a perfectionist.
- ☐ 43. In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.
- ☐ 44. In meetings I put forward practical realistic ideas.
- ☐ 45. More often than not, rules are there to be broken.
- ☐ 46. I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.
- ☐ 47. I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.
- ☐ 48. On balance I talk more than I listen.
- ☐ 49. I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.
- ☐ 50. I think written reports should be short and to the point.
- ☐ 51. I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.
- ☐ 52. I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.
- ☐ 53. I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.
- ☐ 54. In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.

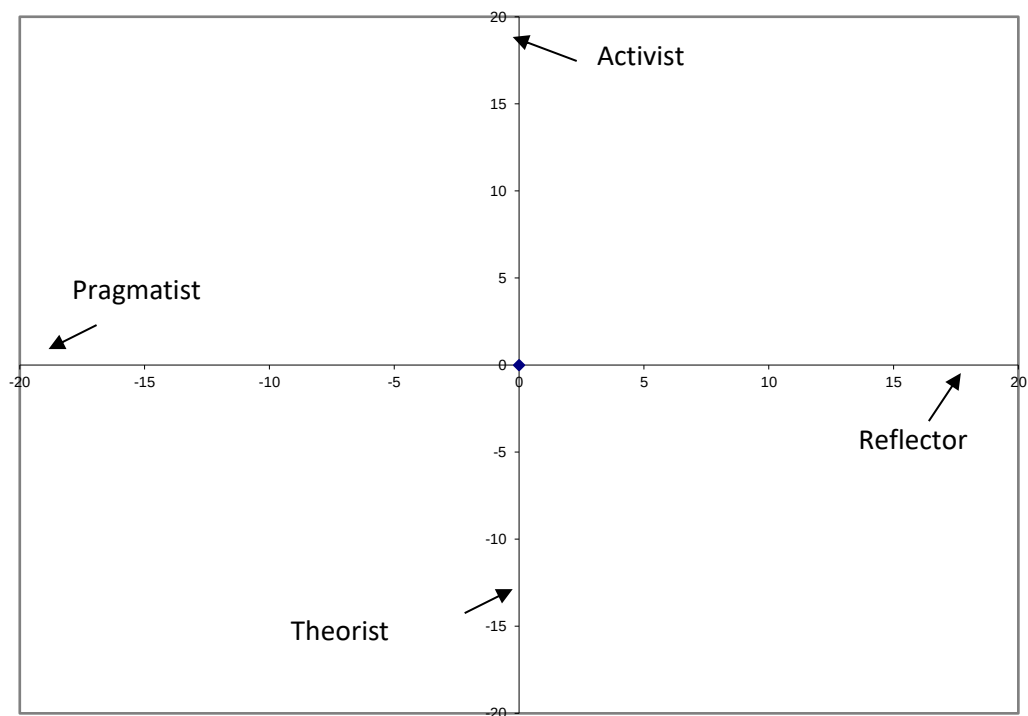
- ☐ 55. If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.
- ☐ 56. I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.
- ☐ 57. I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.
- ☐ 58. I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.
- ☐ 59. In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.
- ☐ 60. I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.
- ☐ 61. In discussions with people I often find I am the most disPALionate and objective.
- ☐ 62. In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a "low profile" than to take the lead and do most of the talking.
- ☐ 63. I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term bigger picture.
- ☐ 64. When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and "put it down to experience".
- ☐ 65. I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.
- ☐ 66. It's best to think carefully before taking action.
- ☐ 67. On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.
- ☐ 68. I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.
- ☐ 69. Most times I believe the end justifies the means.
- ☐ 70. I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.
- ☐ 71. I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.
- ☐ 72. I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.
- ☐ 73. I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.
- ☐ 74. I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.
- ☐ 75. I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
- ☐ 76. I'm always interested to find out what people think.
- ☐ 77. I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
- ☐ 78. I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.
- ☐ 79. I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.
- ☐ 80. People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

Scoring

You score one point for each item you ticked. There are no points for crossed items. Circle the questions you ticked on the list below:

	2	7	1	5
	4	13	3	9
	6	15	8	11
	10	16	12	19
	17	25	14	21
	23	28	18	27
	24	29	20	35
	32	31	22	37
	34	33	26	44
	38	36	30	49
	40	39	42	50
	43	41	47	53
	45	46	51	54
	48	52	57	56
	58	55	61	59
	64	60	63	65
	71	62	68	69
	72	66	75	70
	74	67	77	73
	79	76	78	80
Totals				
	Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist

Plot the scores on the arms of the cross below:



Your result may show that you have a particular learning style. It may be useful to bear this in mind as you approach tasks. Was the approach you adopted the best one in the circumstances? Would adopting another learning style have improved your performance?

At this point you may also find it helpful to read through *Characteristics of the Four Learning Styles*, which follow. This provides more detail and should help you clarify your sense of your own preferred style(s).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR LEARNING STYLES

(Sources: Learning Styles. FEDA, 1995; Honey & Mumford, The Manual of Learning Styles. 1992)

	STRENGTHS
ACTIVIST	Doing things, putting ideas into action; deals well with change and variety; flexible and quick to act
REFLECTOR	Collection of data from variety of sources; looking at situations from various perspectives; grasping the big picture
PRAGMATIST	Practical application of ideas; integrating theory and practice; decision making in organisations; getting things done
THEORIST	Creating theoretical models and working with systems; Thoroughness and industriousness; verbal skills
	PREFERRED WAY OF LEARNING
ACTIVIST	Self-discovery, trial and error. Learning by doing. Flexible approaches to learning. Not worried about getting it wrong and can work well with others. Likes attention, chairing, meetings, discussions. More concerned with doing than thinking or feeling. Likes to get stuck in without wasting time.
REFLECTOR	Learning by listening and sharing with others. Group work and discussions. Looking for meaning; researching and reviewing. Thinking before doing. Bringing unity to diversity. Standing back from events and observing what happens.
PRAGMATIST	Strong need to work on practical, relevant problems. Likes to tinker with things. Tests theories and applies common sense. Looks at information in a logical way and acts on it immediately. Prefers workshop and laboratory teaching. Likes to solve problems using deductive thinking. Makes instinctive judgements based on practicality. Likes clear goals and adequate reward.
THEORIST	Enjoys didactic approaches. Prefers to work individually rather than in groups. Likes to have access to lots of information and resources. Enjoys reading, researching. Prefers to specialise. Thinks things through and examines information carefully and reworks their notes to produce high quality work. Makes links between ideas. Deductive, critical, sequential thinker
	CONCERNED ABOUT
ACTIVIST	Personal relevance and doing what interests them.
REFLECTOR	Personal meaning, the feelings of others, maintaining a wide range of interests and harmony.
PRAGMATIST	Testing things out to get correct solution and practical application of what they learn.
THEORIST	Details, quality of information, accuracy of facts, personal effectiveness and intellectual ability.
	DISADVANTAGES

ACTIVIST	Poor time management, leaving things to last minute Doing too many much; lack of attention to detail and lack of planning. Not checking/testing things out. Jumping in too quickly and not thinking things through. Being too pushy at times and giving insufficient consideration to alternative ways of doing things. Inability to stand back and allows others to take action
REFLECTOR	Easily distracted and wastes too much time before getting started. Frustrated by action plans. Can be too easy going and sometimes indecisive. Can forget important details Tends to work in bursts. Inability to act spontaneously
PRAGMATIST	Lack of patience with people's suggestions. Lack of imagination Inability to consider alternatives; details can get in the way Intolerance to woolly ideas. Only doing what is perceived as directly relevant to a given task. Needs to be in control and to do it alone; want to do everything their way. Not interested in concepts or theories
THEORIST	Needs a lot of information before starting work. Reluctant to try anything new. Likes to do things in a set way. Gets bogged down in theory. Doesn't trust feelings but relies on logic; difficulty understanding feelings of others. Overcautious; doesn't take risks. Heavily reliant on expert opinion without considering other views. Uncomfortable in group work

PAL MENTOR SELF-EFFICACY TOOL

Name.....

Date completed:

1= hardly ever, 2 = sometimes, 3 = moderately so, 4 = often, 5 = mostly

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I always listen to others					
2. I can use different ways of communicating so that people understand what I am thinking and feeling					
3. When I have targets and goals I plan how I will achieve them					
4. I can always find ways of solving difficult problems					
5. I work well in a team					
6. I find it easy to build relationships with others					
7. I find it easy to think about different ways of doing things					
8. I like trying out new ideas and new ways of doing things					
9. I find it easy to recognise and understand my emotions and feelings					
10. I can manage and control my feelings and think before I act					
11. I understand the consequences of my actions and the impact they can have on others					
12. I believe in myself and my own ability					
13. I feel confident about myself and like who I am					
14. I am positive about the future and what I want to achieve					
15. I can deal with unexpected events					
16. I see things through to the end					

PAL MENTOR SELF-EFFICACY SUMMARY

Self-efficacy and the 7 Clusters of Capabilities

In simple terms, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her own ability to succeed in a particular situation. Research has shown that self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached, and how successful someone is in achieving them.

The Self Efficacy Questionnaire has been designed using the seven clusters of capabilities, taken from 'A framework of outcomes for young people' (2012) Bethia McNeil, Neil Reeder and Julia Rich published by The Young Foundation.

Following a review of a wide range of models and frameworks the report identified a core set of social and emotional capabilities that, if developed and enhanced in young people, can help them to reach their full potential in social, educational and work-place settings.

<u>Questions 1 & 2: Communication</u> explaining expressive listening questioning different ways of communicating	<u>Questions 3 & 4: Planning & Problem Solving</u> setting & achieving goals decision making questioning and challenging evaluating risks reliability
<u>Questions 5 & 6: Relationships & Mentorship</u> team work motivating others managing conflict empathy establishing positive relationships	<u>Questions 7 & 8: Creativity</u> imagining alternative ways of doing things enterprising remaining open to new ideas original thought
<u>Questions 9, 10 & 11: Managing Feelings</u> Self-awareness self-regulating self-accepting reflecting reviewing	<u>Questions 12, 13 & 14: Confidence</u> self-belief self-esteem aspirations ability to shape your own life and the world around you
<u>Questions 15 & 16: Resilience & Determination</u> self-disciplined self-motivated persistent concentrating having a sense of purpose resilience	

Place your scores in the table below to reveal your self-efficacy strengths and weaknesses

Cluster	Score			Total
Communication				
Confidence				
Planning & Problem Solving				
Relationships & Mentorship				
Creativity				
Resilience & Determination				
Managing Feelings				
Total Well-being Score				

THE EQUALITY ACT

Taken from University of Wales Trinity Saint David Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, available from: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/about/strategies-and-policies/>.

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act 2010 makes it law that every private, public and voluntary organisation must not discriminate against employees and people that use their services because of particular characteristics.

Who is protected?

The Equality Act 2010 makes sure that people covered by the any of the nine listed protected characteristics are protected from discrimination. These protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment (transgender), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

What is 'prohibited conduct' under the Act?

Private, public or voluntary organisations are not allowed to discriminate directly or indirectly against people with protected characteristics. However, there are some areas of detail that are worth noting:

- With respect to pregnancy and maternity, women are protected for the duration of the pregnancy and up to 26 weeks after the birth.
- All those with protected characteristics are protected from harassment, with the exceptions of pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership.
- Discrimination by association is extended to all protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity. So, for example, carers are protected because of their association with someone with a protected characteristic, such as a disabled person.
- Organisations must continue to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people, and may if appropriate treat a disabled person more favourably than others.
- Organisations may not discriminate against someone they perceive to have a protected characteristic – even if that person does not actually have that characteristic.

STUDENT-LED PEER LEARNING IN THE UK

Below is an extract from a report called *Mapping Student-led Peer Learning in the UK*, produced by Chris Keenan for AdvanceHE (2014). Please read this summary (Keenan 2014: 5):

1.The practice of more experienced students being trained to guide and facilitate the learning of less experienced students in an organised and supported way is gaining momentum as a global phenomenon; peer-learning schemes now exist on all continents and hold relevance for students of all cultures. Since some UK schemes have been in existence since the early 1990s, it is timely to reflect on progress and identify opportunities for future developments.

2.Primary data gathered through the Mapping peer-led academic learning UK survey (2014), conducted by the author for the Higher Education Academy, identify a range of social and academic benefits for students and institutions. Additional perspectives are also offered in case studies drawn from seven other countries.

3.Reported benefits for students who undertake the role of ‘peer leader’ include: the acquisition of higher-level personal and professional skills (including empathy, communication, organisation, leadership, decision-making and teamwork skills). Their own subject learning is deepened, grades improve, relationships and inter-cultural awareness are enhanced, and employability prospects are greater.

4.Similar benefits are reported for students who participate in peer-led learning sessions: they experience reduced anxiety associated with transition into higher education, have a greater sense of belonging and improved academic confidence. They have enhanced friendship development, greater confidence in social integration and participate more fully in the community. Academically, students take greater ownership of their learning experience, show fuller engagement, improved grades, and demonstrate better retention.

5.Reported benefits for institutions suggest improvements may be found in progression and retention, employability and satisfaction data. For a relatively low-cost investment peer-led learning schemes offer substantial reputational opportunities that demonstrate commitment to building student engagement in stronger, more integrated communities. They offer potential for multi-layered partnerships: between students, between tutors and peer leaders, and between the leaders and their wider learning community.

6.Peer-led learning schemes are diverse and versatile. There are a wide variety of peer education approaches including peer tutoring, mentoring and counselling, however, this report took peer-academic learning as its focus. Survey data found two main formally-organised approaches in use in the UK: peer-assisted learning (PAL) and peer-assisted study

sessions (PASS), which together offer the focus of this report. Both derive from the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model, share common characteristics and are used within a broad range of disciplines across the sciences, arts, and professional/vocational programmes. Schemes are predominantly set up with second year student leaders supporting first year students, although some adopt a broader scope by offering online options and supporting more experienced students and those on placement, specific groups such as international students and even to provide outreach to secondary schools.

7. While survey data indicated respondents were unanimously positive regarding the benefits of peer learning, challenges were reported. These include gaining high-level, strategic support, achieving commitment and buy-in from academics and students, negotiating timetable hurdles, financial and administrative issues, ensuring appropriate training and development for staff and students, and embedding peer learning into institutional culture.'

If you are interested you can access the full report here: [Keenan 2014, Mapping Student-Led Peer Learning in the UK](#). Alternatively, you can access the report from Tile 5 on the Moodle page.

For the most up-to-date overview of peer learning programmes, see the [Overview Report for SI-PASS Programmes in Europe](#). This is also available on Tile 5.

[illegible]

[illegible]



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

PAL TEAM PLAN

Mentor Name.....

Academic Lead.....

PAL Subject.....

Supervisor.....

Relevant modules (give name, code and block no.)	
Dates/day, time and venue of PAL sessions	
Dates/day, time and venue of debrief sessions	
When can you go into the module/s to advertise the sessions? Dates, place and time.	
Have you organised access to the relevant module Moodle page with your academic lead?	
How will you advertise your sessions?	
What roles have you allocated within your team? What is your role?	

PAL ATTENDANCE LIST

Date and time of session:	Subject/s:
PAL Mentors:	
ATTENDANCE	
NAME	SIGNATURE

Return this list to your PAL supervisor at the next debrief session.

PAL SESSION PLAN

Timing	Activities – who will lead?	What will the students be <i>doing</i> ?	Resources
Intro			
Activity 1			
Activity 2			
Activity 3			
Closing activities			

PAL PUBLICITY PLAN

When?	Activity?	Resources?	Who?	Complete?

PAL OBSERVATION RECORD

Mentors:..... Date:.....

Observation	Satisfactory	Room for improvement
Suitable room arrangement		
Session begins on time		
Attendance list completed		
PAL mentors prepared		
Mentors find out what students want to talk about		
Evidence of active listening		
First years doing most of the talking		
The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming		
Effective use of questions (open ended, higher level)		
Mentors demonstrate suitable wait-time		
Mentors redirect questions when appropriate		
Mentors check for understanding		
Appropriate activities used		
Mentors involve all students		
Mentors address students' needs and questions		
Mentors knowledgeable about content material		
Mentors set appropriate tone for the session		
Time managed efficiently during the session		
Mentors work together cooperatively		
Students seem to gain understanding		

Additional comments...

PAL MENTOR SELF EVALUATION

Answer the following questions as honestly as you can, and then add up your score.

Did you arrange the furniture to suit the group/activity? 0 2
No Yes

Did all the students sign in on the attendance sheet? 0 2
No Yes

Did you set the agenda? 0 1 2 3
No Sort of Yes Yes (with student input)

Did you wait at least three seconds after a question (wait time 1) and after a response (wait time 2)?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Did you use collaborative learning techniques?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Did you redirect most questions?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Did students interact primarily with each other (not you)?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Did you use open ended enquiries to check whether students understood?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Did you provide a closure activity?

1 2 3 4 5
almost never rarely sometimes mostly almost always

Overall, you felt the session went:

1 2 3 4 5
worst ever not great could be better pretty good almost always

Maximum: 40 Your score:

As an evaluation exercise with your PAL mentor partner, analyse your score and discuss areas where you can improve your delivery of PAL sessions.

EMBEDDED PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY

Embedded activity includes any lectures, seminars, workshops, field trips or other scheduled contact time during which trained mentors accompany the academic lead(s) in a timetabled slot. Embedded activity might include individual mentors working with small student groups inside the seminar or providing study skills support to foundation students within a study skills module alongside the lecturer. Embedded activity can take place in addition to stand-alone PAL activities. It may encourage students to attend any additional stand-alone sessions by helping them to get to know the mentors and by visibly demonstrating the lecturers' trust in the mentors and the value placed on peer learning activities by the staff and wider institution.

General Guidelines for Embedded Peer Learning Activity

1. Mentors are required to complete the mentor training and attend the weekly debrief sessions along with the academic lead and supervisor.
2. It is essential that the voluntary nature of the mentor role is considered and the primacy of the mentors' own welfare and academic work prioritised. Mentors may need to take time out from their role from time to time. Any difficulties this might cause for planned embedded activities will be overcome by ensuring that there is a large enough team of mentors for each discipline area.
3. Mentors need to be involved in the planning of embedded activity as much as possible. In order to achieve this, the attendance of mentors, academic leads and supervisors at debriefs (up to one hour) is essential. Whilst much of the content of the activity may come from the academic lead, the mentors will have valuable suggestions regarding group work and interactive activities.
4. A valuable aspect of the stand-alone PAL sessions is that the participants direct the content of the activity. This may not be possible to the same extent in the embedded model but space may still be given for mentor activities which encourage participant students to raise issues that **they** would like to discuss.
5. Mentor time in seminar sessions should be restricted to a maximum of one hour per week. Mentors can also work on a rotational basis, depending on the size of the team and the mentors' commitments.
6. The lecturer/academic lead is still responsible for any part of the session in which the student mentors participate and is not expected to leave the room for any extended period of time during the embedded activity.
7. Mentors should not be involved in delivering new material - they are trained in facilitation and group work skills and are not there to teach - but they can assist in consolidating material that has already been covered by the lecturer.
8. Confidentiality should be respected in the debrief situation and outside of the embedded seminar activity so that student participants are not inhibited from raising issues in group work activities with the mentors. To aid in this, use of participant students' names should be avoided in the debriefs and the debrief discussion centred on general points rather than individuals.
9. It should be explained to student participants when mentors will be present in their seminar and what their purpose is.

10. Mentors will require access to the relevant Moodle pages.
11. The selection of suitable modules for embedded activity may still be guided by the idea of 'difficult' modules.

Group Activities for Embedded Peer Learning

Many of the activities discussed in this training learning manual are suitable for embedded peer learning with minimal modification – the major difference is that rather than the mentors being responsible for the session, they will be working with the academic lead in the seminar. The planning of embedded sessions is just as important as for other forms of PAL activity, perhaps even more so as the academic lead will have specific goals for the session that you all need to understand.

Suitable small group work activities might include:

- practical session
- poster work
- group presentations
- study skills activities such as preparing for presentations, referencing, academic writing
- using feedback for feedforward.

It is important that there is a clear task and role for the mentors. One mentor (or two at most) per small group will ensure that student participants do not feel overwhelmed by the mentor presence. Mentors may wish to use the white boards, flip chart, sticky post-its, computers, images and other materials to encourage a multisensory approach.

While small group activities might lend themselves more readily to mentor involvement, large/whole group activities can also be undertaken with appropriate planning and clarification of roles. For example:

- Jigsaw-technique - breaking a task down into component parts and allocating one aspect of the task to each smaller group. The mentor role here can be to encourage and support the group they are working with, thus freeing the lecturer to maintain an overview. The small groups then come back together as one large group to give their feedback and the lecturer ensures that there is a synthesis of all parts of the task through whole-group discussion.
- Snowball–approach - whereby the whole group is asked to comment on a theme. To do this, the theme is broken down into a number of subthemes and appropriate headings put on whiteboards or flipchart paper placed around the room. Participants are given marker pens and invited to circulate around the room and write their comments and thoughts on these subthemes; they can do this purely as individuals or through informal discussion with others nearby. A mentor may be present at each of the boards to encourage participants to think more deeply about the issue at hand. The participants are also encouraged to read what others have written, and to comment (respectfully) on those contributions. The next stage of the task involves the whole group reforming to discuss the particular subthemes and wider issues. This could be facilitated by the mentors who each guide discussion on one of the

subthemes. Strengths of this exercise are that participants can talk to each other directly rather than through the lecturer; the task involves writing as well as discussion (helpful for students who find group discussion difficult) so that everyone will have contributed either verbally or through written comments; and it creates a useful written record of a discussion that participants can photograph for their own use or can be made available on the Moodle page.

- Time-lines - mentors invited the whole seminar group outside to work through the timeline using chalk on the floor.
- Involvement in revisions sessions.
- Leading quizzes with the class
- Warm-up and energising exercises with the class such as brainstorming exercises and 'snow-ball' fights.
- Taking the class to the library.
- Field trips

If there are a number of mentors present within the seminar it is advisable that only one or two of them lead a whole-group activity, otherwise it becomes confusing and overwhelming for participants.

