

Introducing Peer Assisted Learning

What is Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)?

It is a peer led academic support scheme. Trained higher year students (PAL Leaders) work in pairs or groups to facilitate regular study sessions. These generally take place in weekly, one hour timetabled slots at a time available to all students. Sessions are not compulsory.

Sessions aim to:

- further develop your understanding and knowledge of delivered course content
- build your study skills, revision skills & exam technique
- provide a safe space for tackling challenging aspects of your course
- be interactive, relaxed and informal
- improve your confidence and self-esteem
- provide opportunities for you to get to know students from your course and other year groups

The PAL scheme on offer will either be unit specific or cover the whole programme.

What can I expect from PAL sessions?

Sessions often start with an icebreaker/warm-up activity to get people talking, more relaxed and ready to engage with the main tasks.

The main tasks focus on student participation, dialogue and interaction with one another to develop skills and knowledge.

Sessions usually finish with a student-led reflection of the tasks and then an opportunity to shape future sessions by suggesting certain topics or skills to be included.

What is the role of the PAL leaders during the sessions?

PAL leaders are there to encourage and facilitate your engagement with the collaborative learning. They will do this in a variety of ways including

individual, pair and group work, assigning roles in tasks, initiating discussions and using effective questioning techniques.

PAL leaders **will not** re-teach content or introduce new material. They cannot give specific help with assessed work. PAL leaders cannot support individuals wanting one-to-one remedial help.

How can I make the most of PAL sessions?

Arrive on time and get fully involved. Get to know your PAL leaders and the other students attending.

Help shape the sessions by letting the leaders know what topics & skills you would like to focus on.

Most of all, please be supportive of the PAL leaders. They are not highly trained academics, they are volunteers who willingly giving their time to help you.

Most students find the PAL sessions a positive and valuable experience however issues can arise and we want you to feel confident about how to deal with them. Here are some potential issue and advice on handling them.

What can I do if....

...none of the PAL leaders turn up for the session?

Check your timetable that you have the correct day, time and room. If you think you have, email the Department staff contact or Peer Support Team (peersupport@bath.ac.uk) to make us aware of the situation. We will find out if there is a problem and get it sorted.

...I need more help than the PAL sessions are providing.

Get in contact with your personal tutor or the member of staff responsible for the unit/programme of study. They should be able to advise you about getting additional support.

...the PAL sessions are not covering the content or skills I want included.

PAL leaders should be encouraging you to lead on choosing the focus of sessions but if there are lots of different requests it may be a few weeks before they can fit everything in.

PAL leaders should also be letting you know in advance the main focus of the next session so you can decide whether to attend that week.

...I feel I have a better understanding of some of the course content than the PAL leaders.

That's absolutely fine. PAL leaders are facilitating collaborative learning not teaching. You can contribute significantly in sessions where you are confident in your knowledge and skills. Other students will benefit from your experience and understanding.

We hope you enjoy the PAL scheme and find it helpful. If you have any additional questions or would like to let us know what you think of your PAL experience so far then please get in touch at PeerSupport@bath.ac.uk.

You could become a PAL Leader next year – we will be opening applications for PAL Leaders in Semester 2.