

WHAT IS IT?

Peer assisted learning (PAL), also known as Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) or Supplemental Instruction (SI), is about creating an environment where students can gain the best possible learning experience regardless of academic ability. It is a student-centred learning model which focuses on providing formative self- and peer-assessment practice with immediate feedback (Miller, Oldfield, & Murtagh, 2006).

The PASS@UQ program has been implemented across a number of schools such as Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Geography, Mathematics, and IT. PASS usually consists of weekly, hour-long interactive study sessions for small groups of first year students whose learning is facilitated by peer group leaders. The leaders are enthusiastic second and third year students who have achieved high grades and can demonstrate effective interpersonal skills. PASS@UQ is increasingly being delivered online, using Adobe Connect. Face-to-face sessions can also be supplemented by the use of pre-recorded videos in which peers explain problems that relate to the course material.

WHY USE IT?

Wallace (2002) identified a number of benefits of peer assisted learning.

- PASS helps students build up their confidence and self-esteem. This develops the ability to master course concepts, while improving study and cognitive skills.
- Student leaders have an opportunity to develop a range of skills including group and team leadership, and communication skills useful for other studies and professional situations.
- Academic staff involved in PASS can receive regular feedback on how course content is being received by learners, and benefit from a reduced need for student consultation.
- For the institution, it is possible to target difficult courses and provide practical support for staff and students. The scheme helps to improve student performance and success across the ability range and can do more than simply reduce 'failure' rates. It has the potential to break down barriers between year groups, and to develop an effective and successful learning community.

(Cited in Miller et al, 2006)

HOW TO DO IT?

The role of the PASS student leader is to provide structure to the study session, not to re-lecture or introduce new material. The leader is a "model student" who shows how successful students think about and process the course content. Collaborative learning is an important strategy since it helps students to empower themselves rather than remain dependent as they might in traditional tutoring. For further information see [PASS@UQ](#)[□]. Also see the [Peer Assisted Study Sessions Leader Development Handbook](#)[□] that covers topics such as:

- roles, responsibilities and leadership skills
- learning principles
- planning and conducting sessions
- mentoring.



FURTHER REFERENCES

- [Peer Assisted Study Sessions](#) [video 3:04] [UQ School of Economics](#)
- [What is Peer assisted Learning?](#) [video 4:46] [Peer Support Bath University Student Union](#)
- [Mapping student-led peer learning in the UK](#), [Higher Education Academy](#)
- [PASS@UQ](#) Peer Assisted Study Sessions at UQ
Note: This site is no longer maintained, however it provides some useful resources for those interested in setting up a PASS system.
- UWA
<http://www.science.uwa.edu.au/pal>
- ANU
<http://science.anu.edu.au/current-students/peer-assisted-learning-pal-mentors>



REFERENCES

Miller, V., Oldfield, E., & Murtagh, Y. (2006). Peer Assisted Study Sessions Leader Development Handbook. Retrieved from <http://www.science.uq.edu.au/peer-assisted-study/filething/get/310/PASS-Leader-Development-Handbook.pdf>