

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL): Introduction

What is Peer Assisted Learning and what are its benefits?

Peer Assisted Learning involves students (typically from the year above) facilitating discussion sessions for students from the year(s) below. It has the potential to benefit new students' transition into Higher Education and enrich their learning, by involving students who have relatively recently gone through the transition process themselves. It can aid both subject understanding and act as a platform for developing students' academic literacies and skills.

For the PAL leaders, the experience provides not only the opportunity to refresh their subject knowledge, but also to develop employability skills such as leadership, facilitation, project-management, communication and inter-personal skills. PAL leadership activities are eligible for accreditation via the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) and can be used as a basis for completing the Leicester Award for Employability.

It is important to note that Peer Assisted Learning is not teaching by students - the sessions present an opportunity for participants to discuss subject content covered in lectures and seminars, or to improve information or academic literacies through shared discussion.

I am considering setting up a PAL scheme in my department - what should be my next steps?

There is no one-fits-all model of Peer Assisted Learning, and departments will want to take into account a number of factors including their students' needs, the course structure and available resources when deciding on the design of their scheme. Both our experience and published research indicate that Peer Assisted Learning works best when it is an integral part of the department's learning environment. Our team will work with you to design a scheme which works within your department and context. We will also guide you through the requirements of obtaining HEAR and Leicester Award accreditation for your PAL leaders.

If you are interested in setting up a PAL scheme within your department or would like to find out more, please take a look at our more detailed document *Peer Assisted Learning (PAL): Departmental Guide*, or contact Marta Ulanicka (marta.ulaniccka@le.ac.uk) or Dr Alexandra Patel (alexandra.patel@le.ac.uk).

