

## Benefits of peer assisted learning

There are numerous benefits of PAL schemes for all of those involved. The students who are involved in the scheme benefit the most.

The PAL leaders themselves benefit:

PAL leaders	
Development of skills	An opportunity to develop skills, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teamwork</li> <li>• leadership</li> <li>• communication</li> </ul>
Encourages independence / autonomy	As explored by Rodger & Tremblay (2003), PAL leaders become more independent.
Gain experience	Evidence for employers of skills required for jobs. Students are able to demonstrate that they have had a wider involvement in university life.
Increased confidence	It's an opportunity for students to reflect on their own progress. PAL leaders will get to reflect on how far they have come since they did the same/similar work in their first year.
Increased academic performance	The students have the opportunity to consolidate their own knowledge and skills.

There are also numerous benefits for the first year students:

First year students	
Easier transition into university	It makes the adjustment into university easier. It allows informal questioning. Students are able to ask questions to a student in a higher year group that they may not have had the courage to ask a lecturer. It increases their awareness of course expectations.
Encourages independent learning	Scaffolding technique to encourage students to rely less on lecturers.
Encourages peer support	The scheme encourages students to realise what a useful resource their peers are.
Provides role models	First year students are able to observe good study habits that the PAL leader has. Improves study skills.

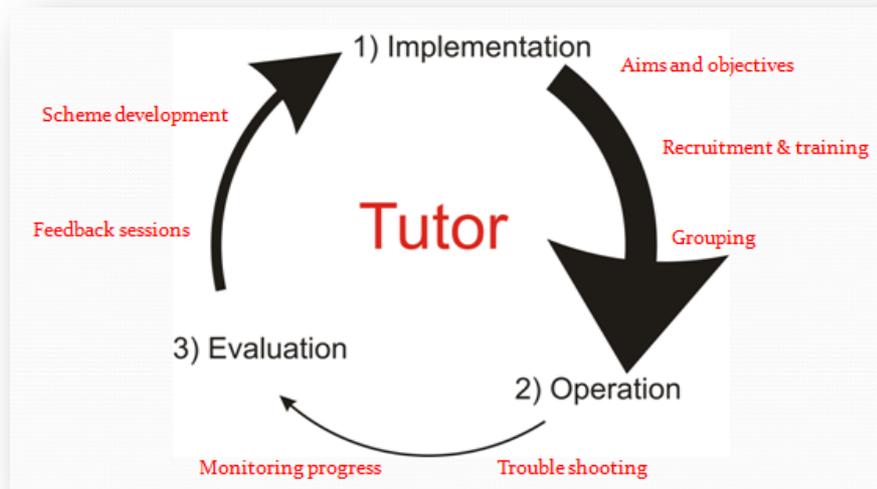
Helps make sense	Students are supported by the PAL leaders.
Builds confidence	Students are able to ask questions in an environment in which they feel comfortable.
Higher grades achieved	Students can achieve higher marks having increased their confidence and improved their study skills.

It may appear that saving time and resources would be benefits of a PAL scheme to the department, but a successful PAL scheme requires a large amount of input and support from the lecturers whilst the scheme is being set up, being run and evaluated each year. However, there are still numerous benefits to the department:

The department	
More feedback	Students may be more willing to provide honest feedback to their PAL leader than their lecturers.
Students more engaged	The activity encourages student engagement. Having an activity with an assigned PAL leader provides more motivation to participate and actively take part.
Improves retention	As a result of easing transition into university, retention rates are higher.
Creates a greater sense of community between year groups and lecturers	Breaks down the barriers between year groups and encourages conversation. Also bridges any gaps between the students and the lecturers. As discussed by Wallace (2002), it develops a successful learning community.

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when setting up such a scheme. These include:

- Administration
- Finances
- Timetabling
- Staff time – an indication of the work involved is given in the following cycle.



## References

Rodger, S. & Tremblay, P.F. (2003), The effects of a peer mentoring program on academic success among first year university students, *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 33 (3), 1-18

Wallace, J. (2002), *Retention, an intended outcome*, London Metropolitan University. LTSN Generic Centre