A Celebration of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) for BSc (Hons) Nutrition

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Session aims

- Overview of Bournemouth University’s Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme
- Report on extended (2\textsuperscript{nd} year) PAL on BSc. Nutrition
- Experience some typical PAL learning activities
Icebreaker

Find your group – who else has a picture similar to yours?
What is PAL at BU?

“Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is a scheme that fosters cross-year support between students on the same course. PAL encourages students to support each other and to learn collaboratively under the guidance of trained students, called PAL Leaders, from the year above.” (Bournemouth University 2015)
History of PAL at BU

- **2001:** PAL introduced, 3-8 PAL Leaders in School of Tourism, 2 Day Initial Training
- **2001-2004:** HEFCE Funded Project aimed at raising attrition rates
- **2002:** Weekly/bi-weekly training offered
- **2007:** PAL Leader Video
- **2010:** Streamlined PAL Leader Guide and available on PAL Central
- **2008:** Buddy Scheme (Final year Top-Up students)
- **2010:** PAL Online Communities
- **2011:** Monthly Newsletter for Leaders
- **2011:** 151 PAL Leaders trained
- **2013:** 260 Leaders Trained
What are the benefits of PAL?

- Retention and attainment: BU's completion rate improved from 79% to 83% since PAL's introduction in 2001.
- Primary goal is to support learning.
- Additional benefits: employability, cohort identity, widening participation.

4. An unexpected benefit I gained through my role as a PAL Leader was . . .
Activity

- Individually, write down on a post-it note one way that you think peer assisted learning could contribute to the theme for your group (Interprofessional working; Employability; Students as Partners; Internationalisation or Imagining learning development) (2 mins)
- As a group, discuss the themes from your post it notes (5 mins)
- Share your learning with the group (5 mins)
Nutrition degree at Bournemouth
Student Characteristics:

- Age
- Culture/Ethnicity
- Educational background
- Pre-entry skills & abilities
- First in family to go to university
- Away from home (accom./distance/Country)
- Nutrition Interests/focus & goal commitments
Incorporates

- Seminars
- Lectures
- Independent Study
- Nutrition Programme
- Laboratory Practicals
- Research Projects
- Placement Experience

www.bournemouth.ac.uk
Introduced to Nutrition:

- YEAR 1 – 2009/10
- YEAR 2 – 2012/13
Focus group interviews (April 2014)

- **First Year Students**
  - Attended PAL in first year (n=4)
  - Age 19-28

- **Second Year Students**
  - Attended PAL in year 1 and in Year 2 (n=5)
  - Age 19-25
## Key Themes

### YEAR 1 - Student Quotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Role model - if they can do it so can I!</strong></td>
<td>“They'd already done it and they knew what was expected - so that helped a hell of a lot”</td>
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<td>“told us issues they had had when they first started and how to get around them – their experiences – so I'm not the only one”</td>
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<td>“it makes it better - they were once where you were and they got through the year fine”</td>
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<td><strong>Increased sense of wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>“Obviously you are going into the unknown and its your first assignment, exam, and chemistry – it was more to put my mind at rest”</td>
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<td>“took away anxieties, erm, that unsure feeling whether I’m doing the right thing”</td>
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<td>“good at assuring you, I wasn’t panicking as much – sort of helped me stay calm”</td>
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<td>“good to know you can do it - the scary year you have to get through - Kinda good for easing tension”</td>
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<td>In the first year, you know, everything is brand new, so it's more like kind of putting your mind at rest”</td>
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<td><strong>Rest Assured</strong></td>
<td>“Saving up questions you don’t want to ask the lecturer – easier tasks, silly questions you feel embarrassed about but are not. You can ask them as it's more informal”</td>
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<td>“I don’t think there are any negatives” there's normally something to take away – good reassurance – reinforced”</td>
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<td><strong>'YES' for Year 2</strong></td>
<td>“I definitely would say to have it next year as well”</td>
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<td>“the 2nd year, I think personally I would use them more like to help me with my work, rather than where things are and what's expected like in our first year”</td>
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Student quotes from PAL experiences in Year 2
Theme 1: Everything Counts!

“Every thing counts this year toward your final grade”

“I think much more than 1st year, it’s helped us a lot more this year and a lot more people have turned up”

“I think PAL is important for both years but 2nd year is probably more important”

“last year it was more like just getting settled into uni”

“This year its been straight in and focussing on assignments - very helpful”

“attendance is bit more this year than last because everything counts”
Theme 2: Driven by Nutrition!

“The PAL sessions with two 3rd years was very helpful and allowed me to make up my mind about my options for year 3.

“Speaking to 3rd year PAL leaders helped me to relate subjects we've had so far to nutrition and built my confidence - helps a lot”

“Helped me see the importance of the assessment methods in 2nd year... helped my understanding of key skills I would need as a nutritionist”
Theme 3: Two heads are better than one!

“being able to discuss the assignments with a bunch of different people rather than just like doing it on your own”

“Having another perspective on assignments because you might be looking at it one way and someone else/PAL leaders mention something you hadn’t thought off - two heads are better than one so to speak”

“getting advice from someone who isn't like a lecturer, like someone who's actually done it”

“Builds up my critical thinking when hearing others views - gives me food for thought ha ha”
YEAR 2 – Recommendations for Improvement

Continue the PAL scheme in YEAR 3

Run PAL sessions in the same room as the course lecture preceding it

Staff to inform PAL leaders if they make any changes to timetable, unit structure, and unit activities/tasks.

Ensure PAL is timetabled for days when students are on campus
Where to next?

- Starting 2015 – first Integrated Masters in Nutrition (MNutr) in UK
  (4th year PAL leaders for year 3?)

- Encouragement for all programmes in Faculty of Health & Social Care and wider university:
  - To implement the PAL Scheme
  - To continue the scheme in Year 2
Activity

- You have 2 minutes to write a “lightening paper” on this session.
- Include KWL:
  - 1 thing you **K**now.
  - 1 thing you **W**ant to know.
  - 1 thing you have **L**earnt.
THANK YOU