



# Power, tokenism or non participation with PAL - the choice is yours!

## Neil Ford - Academic Liaison Development Manager Bournemouth University



**Introduction**



**Partnership important? Why?**  
"Building students and staff a partnership and of mutual respect is from workplace education" (Harris et al, 2014, p. 1)

**What is Partnership?**  
"Partnership involves a relationship between two or more individuals or organisations working together to achieve a common purpose" (Stern, 2006, p. 1)

**Learning to teach in the workplace**  
"Building the partnership between staff and students is a key to success in the workplace" (Stern, 2006, p. 1)

**There is something interesting about working with students as employees!**  
"Working in partnership is both learning and learning outcomes" (Ford, 2014, p. 1)

**Thanks!**  
"Bournemouth University is a leading provider of education and training" (Bournemouth University, 2014, p. 1)

# Introduction

## Is partnership important? Why?



"Engaging students and staff as partners...one of the most important issues facing higher education" (Healey et al. 2014, p.1)

## What is Partnership?

"Equal relationship between two or more bodies working towards a common purpose" (p.14)

"Listening to students does not in and of itself constitute partnership" (p. 15)

"Looking for partnership where all are actively engaged and stand to gain from working with each other" (p.12)

Difference between "listening to the student voice" (which has connotation of "the customer is always right" there may be a power shift in this relationship but it is still a power dynamic) and "students as change agents" which is a more significant shift.

## There is something interesting about working with students as employees!

"Given that partnership is both a working and learning relationship, these new communities should acknowledge the dual role of staff and students as both scholars and colleagues engaged in a process of learning and inquiry" (Healey et al. 2014, p.1)

## Tensions?

"differentials in power, reward and recognition of participation, identity, and responsibility for partnership work" (Healey et al. 2014, p.9)



# Models of partnership and participation



Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education – an overview model (Healey et al. 2014, p.25)

## 'LADDER' OF PARTICIPATION

Type of participation	Type of involvement	Level of engagement
Manipulation	Learners are directed by staff and tend not to be informed of the issues. Learners may be asked to 'rubberstamp' decisions already taken by staff	Non participation
Decoration	Learners may be indirectly involved in decisions or 'campaigns' but they are not fully aware of their rights, their possible involvement or how decisions might affect them	Non participation
Informing	Learners are merely informed of action and changes but their views are not actively sought	Non participation
Consultation	Learners are kept fully informed and encouraged to express their opinions but have little or no impact on outcomes	Tokenism
Placation	Learners are consulted and informed. Learners views are listened to in order to inform the decision making process but this does not guarantee any changes learners may have wanted	Tokenism
Partnership	Learners are consulted and informed in decision making processes. Outcomes are the result of negotiations between staff and learners	Tokenism
Delegated Power	Staff still inform agenda for action but learners are given responsibility for managing aspects or all of any initiatives or programmes that result. Decisions are shared with staff	Learner empowerment
Learner Control	Learners initiate agendas and are given responsibility and power for management of issues and to bring about change. Power is delegated to learners and they are active in designing their education	Learner empowerment

Levels of learner participation (Rudd et al. 2006)

What level of participation do we achieve with Peer Assisted Learning?



## *Learning teaching and assessment*

This example gives an overview of how PAL supports learning 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.

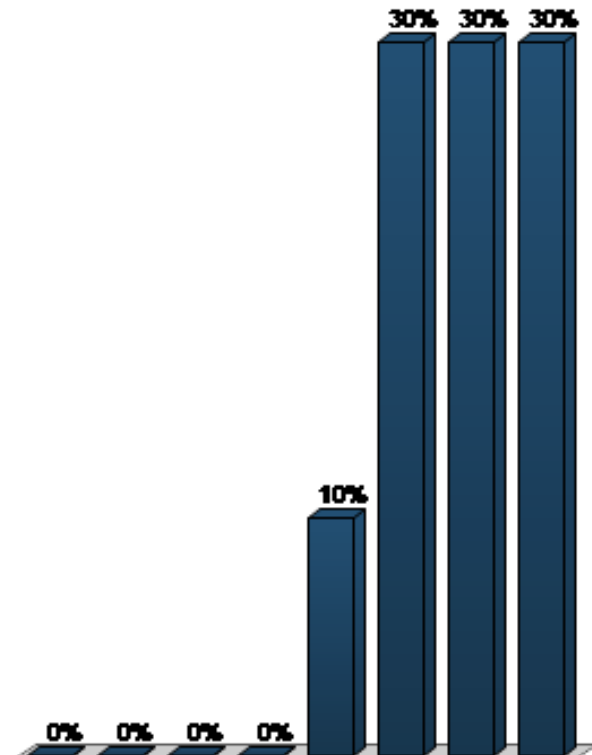
- Timetabled weekly or fortnightly sessions during first year (and sometimes beyond!)
- PAL Leaders receive compulsory 2 day facilitation training
- Content is mix of student-led (i.e. what are you working on at the moment) and academically-led (meetings with academics and course materials)
- PAL Leaders are paid for their time preparing and delivering sessions
- Ideally, PAL Leaders provide general feedback to academics
- PAL is not credit bearing or assessed, but may be used towards BU's Student Development Award



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<b>Responses</b>		
	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Answer 1	0%	0
Answer 2	0%	0
Answer 3	0%	0
Answer 4	0%	0
Answer 5	10%	1
Answer 6	30%	3
Answer 7	30%	3
Answer 8	30%	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>



# Subject-based research and inquiry

Sharing PAL was a student co-creation project that employed media school students to create films researching different aspects of PAL. As well as promoting understanding of PAL, the students producing the films have used them to secure work placements.

**BU Sharing PAL**  
Bournemouth University Peer Assisted Learning Leaders sharing experiences to create collaboration, engagement and learning.

Centre for Excellence in Learning

**What is PAL?**  
The challenge is to help students who are struggling with their studies to get the support they need to succeed. PAL is a peer support system where students help each other to learn and succeed.

**Employability**  
PAL leaders are responsible for securing work placements for their peers. They work with employers and PAL leaders to help them to secure the best possible experience.

**Dissemination**  
e.g. Induction, National Leader Conference

**Secured Fusion**  
"co-creation" funding for project.

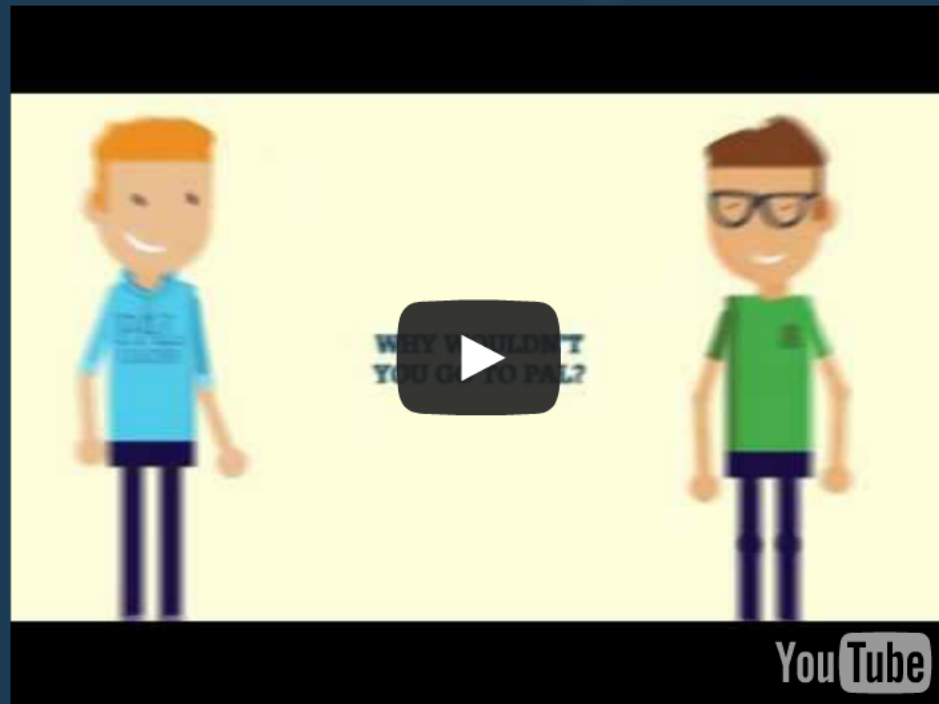
Sharing PAL created opportunities for BU PAL Leaders to use their media production skills to create short films exploring different aspects of PAL.

**PAL Leaders produce and edit**

**Consulted with academic to recruit team.**

**Student Engagement**  
Why go to BU? High quality education. A first year induction and film making PAL. It has been used during induction to encourage first year students to attend sessions.

For more information visit [www.bu.ac.uk/sharingpal](http://www.bu.ac.uk/sharingpal)

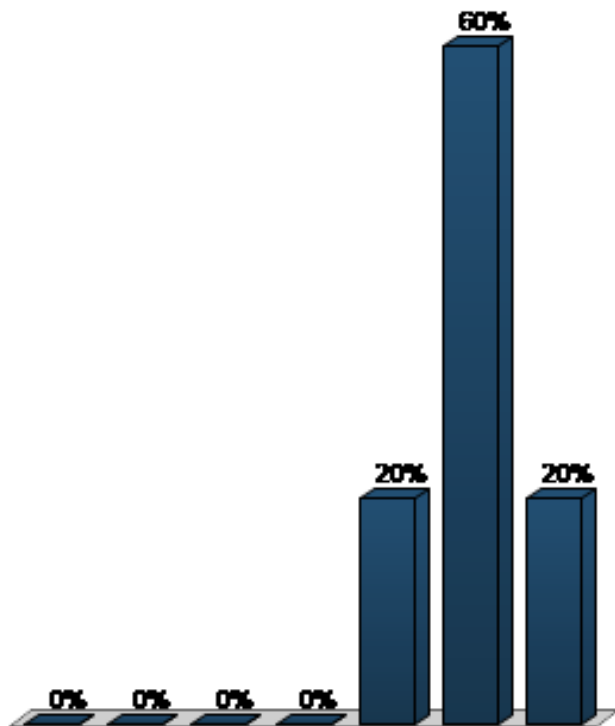


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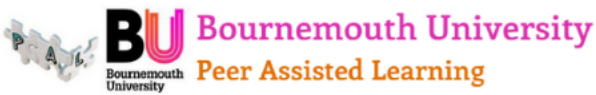
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Answer 1	0%	0
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Answer 3	0%	0
Answer 4	0%	0
Answer 5	20%	2
Answer 6	60%	6
Answer 7	20%	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>



# Scholarship of teaching and learning

During 2014/5 two of our PAL Leaders attended the National Leader conference. Prior to the conference they created a poster and later reflected on their experience in a portfolio.

<https://maharabu.bournemouth.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=WJ5DPeEupN7Ljir8x0m3>



**What is PAL at BU?**

PAL or *Peer Assisted Learning* is a program that runs across **all courses** at Bournemouth University. It fosters cross year support; **PAL Leaders** are trained to facilitate the learning of **their peers**. PAL sessions are kept **fun** and **relevant** to students' **development** in both **ACADEMIC** and **non-academic** topics.


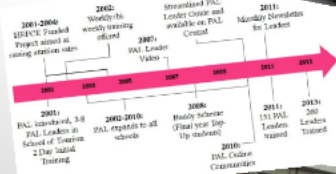
**Benefits of PAL**

PAL sessions are **different** from the normal **lectures and seminars**; they create a **relaxed environment** for students to pick **content relevant to them**. PAL Leaders have already been **through first year** so they **know what it's like**, they can give **practical advice** as Leaders have all been through the **rollercoaster journey** of first year.

**History**

**PAL started** at Bournemouth University in **2001** and has **grown successfully** every year since. Over the years we have had a few **milestones**, and this year PAL now runs in **every undergraduate course** the University offers. We trained **270 leaders** this year!

Created By:  
Grant Sired-Hutson  
Nicole Ray  
Charlotte Thackeray

**2001-2004** 1514/15 Freshers Project aimed at raising student self-esteem

**2005** 2004-05: PAL Leaders VAMU

**2006** 2005-06: PAL expands to all schools

**2007** 2006-07: Ready scheme (final year top-up students)

**2008** 2007-08: PAL Course Commences

**2009** 2008-09: PAL Course and available on PAL Contact

**2010** 2009-10: Monday Openation to Leaders


**2011** 2010-11: PAL Leaders trained

**2012** 2011-12: PAL Leaders trained

**2013** 2012-13: PAL Leaders trained

**2014** 2013-14: PAL Leaders trained

**What Did Our Students Say?**



**preparation development relaxed environment meeting students understanding**

**social contact students preparing direction**

**improving resources available contact to students preparing direction**

**exams work questions preparing direction**

**environment understanding**

**meeting students understanding**

**expectations awareness of subject**

**working activities meeting topics**

**PAL Operates in all programmes offered at Bournemouth University. Mainly in the first year but also in top up final year programmes.**

**That's over 250 PAL Leaders!**

**Successes**

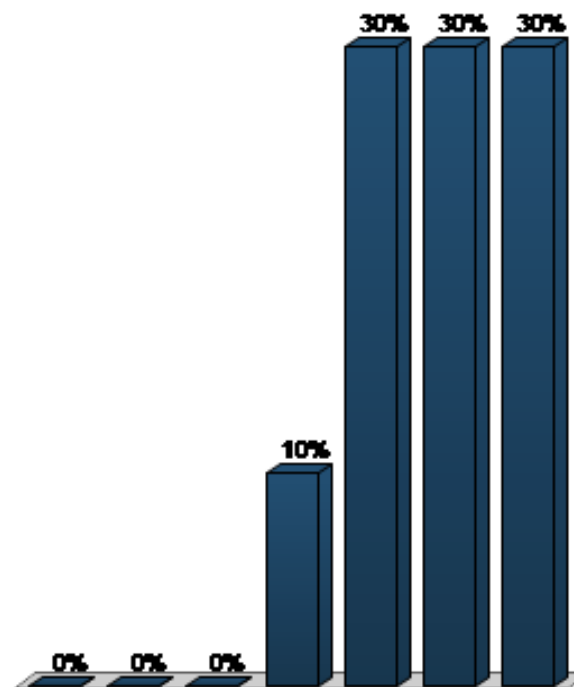
We think part of the **success** of our PAL scheme is down to the **fantastic staff** who give us the **best training** we could ask for! The **TWO DAY INTENSIVE COURSE** guides us through how to successfully **facilitate learning**. As well as the challenges we may face such as **DEFICIT QUESTIONS, poor attendance** and **communication issues**.

- Funding from Fusion bid (internal research funding)
- All PAL Leaders offered the opportunity to attend
- Applicants wrote short paragraph to illustrate why they should go
- Travel and accommodation from conference organizers
- Bookings by admin team
- Attendees expected to produce an output sharing their experience

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## Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy

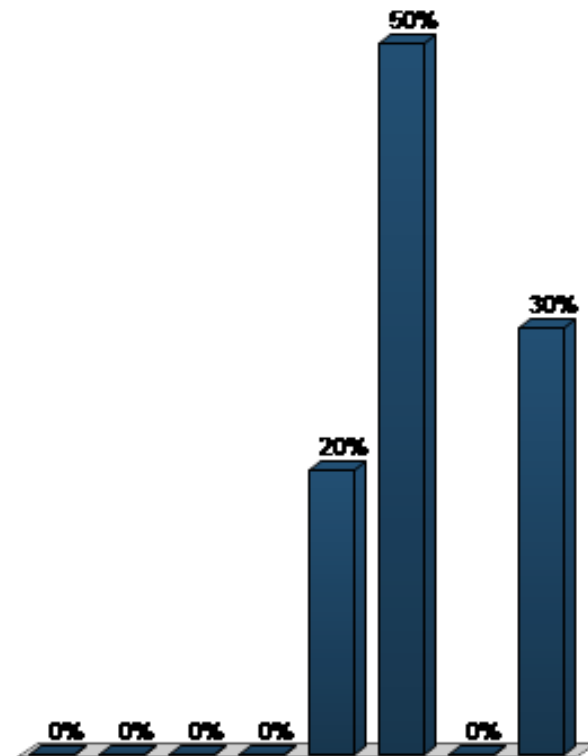
During 2013-14 student feedback affected the scheme's guidance and support for academics recruiting PAL Leaders to encourage creating an authentic recruitment process.



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## *Discussion & Questions*

Should we seek to increase student partnership and participation? Why?

Are there any aspects of Higher Education where student partnership and participation are not appropriate? What are they?

Do forms of peer learning have the potential to become partnership learning communities? How?

What examples of partnership learning communities exist in your organizations?

## *References*

Healey, M., Flint, A. and Harrington, K., 2014. Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. York: Higher Education Academy.

Rudd, T., Colligan, F. and Naik, R., 2006. Learner voice: a handbook from Futurelab [online]. Bristol: Futurelab.