



Supporting retention, engagement
and learner transitions in higher education



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Original Works

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This interactive SLL guidebook may be customised by altering the name of PASS/PAL to a local institute retention programme name following consultation with the SLL project leaders carina.ginty@gmit.ie or nharding@ait.ie. Please contact Proactive Design & Marketing (email info@proactive.ie) for a quote for this service.



Supporting retention, engagement
and learner transitions in higher education

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Your PASS Leader training manual is divided into the sections shown below.

Section A - How to use this manual (this section)

Section B - Getting Started

Background and introduction to PASS

Read “About PASS” early on to give you an overview of what PASS is and what it is not. The other documents will provide you with a grounding in the principles of PASS and the student leadership module.

Section C - How to run PASS Sessions

Methods for enabling structured and purposeful PASS sessions;

Read this early on to get a picture of the sorts of ways you can run your PASS sessions. The self assessment questions are intended to improve your understanding of these guidance notes and to get you to consider ways in which you could apply these ideas in your PASS sessions.

Section D - Your first PASS Session

A session plan for your first PASS session

Read this before your first PASS session to help you work out how you will approach this challenging situation. Either follow the suggested plan or devise your own first PASS session based on the ideas given.

Section E - What to do in your PASS Sessions

Ideas to help structure group discussion; icebreakers; with a quick reference listing of ten core activities to use in PASS sessions

Refer to this regularly to help with planning PASS sessions and for ideas for activities and techniques to use in them.

Section F - Working with your PASS group

Further ideas for enabling participation and discussion.

Outlines the likely stages through which your PASS Group will develop.

Read this to gain further ideas for effective group management.

Section G - Promoting PASS

Ideas to help generate and sustain interest in PASS; information about attendance

Refer to this when promoting PASS and read this to be aware of potential attendance issues.

Section H - Working with your School Teaching Team and PASS Academic Contacts

Some suggestions to help you make the most of your meetings with members of staff who have knowledge or responsibility for PASS.

Read this and make use of the suggestions given to get the most out of your regular meetings with staff.

Section I - Forms for Planning, Review and Evaluation

Templates to enable you to plan and review PASS Sessions

Use these forms to prepare for PASS sessions, take weekly attendance and reflect on your PASS session afterwards. These forms play an important role in developing your student leadership module reflective journal.



Section B

Getting Started

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ABOUT THE PASS PROGRAMME (PASS - Peer Assisted Study Sessions)

1. What is the PASS Programme?

The PASS Programme is a scheme that fosters cross-year support between students on the same course. For example PASS encourages students to support each other and to learn co-operatively under the guidance of trained students, called 'PASS Leaders', from the year or years above.

2. What PASS is NOT intended to do...

PASS is NOT:

- teaching by students
- targeted at weak or problem students - all participants should benefit
- a means of reducing lecturer - student contact class time
- an environment for social chatting

3. What are the aims of PASS?

PASS offers benefits to students and staff at all levels - to the School, the programme, first year students, 'PASS Leaders' from the years above.

PASS helps first year students:

- adjust quickly to third level;
- acquire a clear view of course direction and expectations;
- develop their independent learning and study skills to meet the requirements of higher education;
- enhance their understanding of the subject matter of their programme through collaborative group discussion;
- prepare better for assessed work and examinations;
- increase cohesion of the student group;
- increased confidence.

'PASS Leaders' benefits include:

- development of their personal and professional skills such as leadership, team working, organising, time management, listening, interpersonal communication, facilitation and presentation skills;
- increased confidence;
- provides valuable experience to enhance their CVs;
- provides an opportunity to gain 5 ECTS for their role.

Benefits to Lecturers:

- A reduction in the number of minor requests and queries from first year students, as PASS Leaders can act as a first point of contact for 'specific information/queries' on settling into college life.
- Helps students to become better prepared for their lectures or/and tutorials.
- Helps students to better manage their workload and keep up with course work and assignments distributed by the lecturer during the term.
- Help students learn more effectively in a peer based group.
- Leaders give regular feedback to the PASS Academic Contacts the school teaching team and management which enhances the student learning experience.

Benefits to the School Programmes:

- Creates links between year groups which can help develop a more cohesive course culture;
- Increases the level of student involvement in and ownership of learning;
- Support can be targeted at specific areas of a course or programme which students find particularly challenging with an aim to improve student understanding;
- PASS Leaders provide additional and considered feedback for the Programme Team;
- Evidence of valuable additional student support which can be used for Institutional Audit, Subject Review or for Programme/School marketing;
- In their student 'PASS Leaders', the programme gains committed students who can help promote the course and even meet with internal or external reviewers.

Where can I find more information about the PASS Programme?

At the PASS Programme website www.lin.ie/sll

This programme is a Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) initiative and it is supported by the Higher Education Authority in Ireland.

Example of a PASS Leadership Module

Full Title: PASS Leadership

Short Title

(max. no. of characters 30) PASS Leadership

Host Department:

Official Code: Do not fill in. **NFQ Level:** Seven **ECTS Credits:** Five

Module Leader:

Description: (100 words max.)

PAL Leadership is a module that fosters cross-year support between students on the same programme. Peer Assisted Learning encourages first year students to support each other and to learn co-operatively under the guidance of trained students (PASS Leaders).

The aim of this module is to develop students leadership, communication and professional development skills through the facilitation of weekly 'sessions' with first year programme groups.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module the student will be able to...

1. Identify the principles and practices of peer assisted learning and the role of a PASS Leader.
 2. Demonstrate the knowledge and apply the facilitation techniques necessary of a PASS leader.
 3. Facilitate peer to peer learning sessions and establish and sustain supportive relationships with the peer tutee.
 4. Guide and support the tutees in a range of peer learning activities covered in PAL leadership training.
 5. Engage with academic staff and school management as required by the PASS leader role.
 6. Critically reflect on and evaluate the impact of the PASS leader and the process in developing their leadership, communication and professional development skills.
-

MODULE DEPENDENCIES:

Module Pre-requisites:

Must have successfully completed 60 ECTS at level 6/7/8 in a Higher Education Institution.

Module Co-requisites: None

Indicative Syllabus

1. PASS Leader Training Programme Workshops: (30%)

Introduction to the principles and practices of peer assisted learning

Definitions of peer assisted learning
The importance of peer assisted learning
Traits of a good PASS leader

The roles and responsibilities of both PASS leader and 1st year Students

Functions of the PASS leader
Functions of the peer tutee (1st year students)
Boundary setting
Working with Moodle

Techniques for PASS Leaders running Sessions with 1st year Students

Facilitation techniques in supplemental instruction i.e. listening, redirecting questions, gathering group feedback, encouraging participation.
Peer Assisted Learning Activities/ Strategies
Encouraging reflective learning (i.e. evaluating the impact of the PASS leader role on their professional development).

2. PASS Leader Practice: (40%)

Plan, facilitate and review weekly one hour Sessions with 1st year students involving guided group discussions using a range of interactive small group learning activities and PASS learning strategies. Session topics can include:

Getting to know college and student services, using the library, researching, finding information, assignment reviews, reviewing lectures, strategies and techniques for exam revision, essay writing group activities, discussing work placements, citing references, plagiarism, note taking, working out problems together, practicals – IT lab activities, social class building activities and other activities as appropriate.

3. Evaluation of the PASS leader role and 1st year experience contributions (30%)

- Participating in on-line discussion forums on peer tutoring (Moodle)
- Completing weekly session review and planning forms which feed into a PASS Leader reflective journal
- PASS leader network event presentations (e.g. conference or seminars)
- Critical reflection and peer assisted learning literature review.

Course Breakdown	%
PASS Leader Workshops Participation	30
PASS Leader Practice	40
PASS Leader Evaluations:	30

- Observation
- Reflective journal
- Institute yearly/term evaluation contributions

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT BREAKDOWN				
Type of Assessment Summative/Formative	Description	Outcome addressed	% of total	Assessment Week
	PASS Leader Training Programme Workshops	1,2,6	Pass / Fail	4 (4hour) workshops Week One, Semester One. 1 (4hour) experience workshop – Mid Term Semester One.
	Session Observation and Feedback	3,4,5	60%	PASS leader is observed facilitating a PASS session using agreed criteria
	PASS Leader in Practice Reflective Journal – facilitation of weekly PASS sessions with the First Year group	3, 4, 5, 6	40%	PASS Leader reflects on 6 sessions delivered in semester one. Reflective Journal/Blog includes session plans, session reviews and overall reflection on PASS Leader learning experience.
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES REQUIREMENTS				
Learning and Teaching Methods	Preferred Location	FULL-TIME MODE		Average Weekly Learner Workload
		Hours	Frequency	
PASS Leader Training Workshops	Flat desks and moveable chairs	18	5 workshops in semester one	1.5
PASS Leader Practice: Planning and facilitating sessions	Flat desks and moveable chairs	39	One semester	3
Independent Learning: PASS Leader Reflection, Observation and Evaluations	Choose an item	68	One semester	5
Total Workload: (125 hrs. per 5 credit module over one semester)				

RESOURCES

Recommended Book Resources

The SLL Peer Assisted Learning Guidebook www.lin.ie/SLL

- i. information about PASS
- ii. advice on how to run PASS sessions
- iii. suggestions on what to do in PASS sessions
- iv. advice on working with and facilitating a group
- v. guidelines for working with Teaching Teams and Course Contacts
- vi. materials for use with their PASS group

The SLL Student Leadership Training video at www.lin.ie/SLL

Books:

Topping, K. J. and S. W. Ehly (1998). Peer-assisted learning, L. Erlbaum Associates.

Higgs, B and Potter, J (Eds) (2008), In at the Deep End – Starting to Teach in Higher Education, Cork, NAIRTL.

Fisher, A. (2011), Critical Thinking: An Introduction. Cambridge University Press; 2 edition.

Sample Journal Articles:

Capstick, S. and H. Fleming (2001). "Peer Assisted Learning in an Undergraduate Hospitality Course: Second Year Students Supporting First Year Students in Group Learning." Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education 1(1): 69-75.

Sheard, J., A. Carbone, et al. (2010). "Student engagement in first year of an ICT degree: staff and student perceptions." Computer Science Education 20(1): 1-16.

Electronic Resources

www.lin.ie/sll

TRAINING RESOURCE

WHAT PASS IS ALL ABOUT

PASS is based upon the following 20 principles and practices:

1. It supports student learning.
2. It fosters cross-year support for students.
3. It is facilitated by more experienced students, usually from the year above, who provide a point of contact for new or less experienced students.
4. It enhances students' experience of college life.
5. It focuses on small group discussions and learning activities.
6. It is timetabled.
7. It is participative.
8. It encourages collaborative learning rather than competitive learning.
9. It works on both what you learn and how you learn.
10. It creates a safe environment where students can ask questions and receive guidance from other students about the course and its content.
11. It uses the language of the subject discipline.
12. It provides a clearer view of course and lecturers' expectations.
13. It involves active rather passive learning.
14. It encourages independent learning.
15. It helps to retain students at third level college.
16. It gives opportunity to increase academic performance.
17. What is discussed is confidential and remains within the PASS Group.
18. It benefits all students regardless of current academic competency.
19. It gives privacy to practise the subject, make mistakes and build up confidence.
20. It enables PASS Leaders to practise and develop their personal and professional skills.

ACTIVITY

1. Which of the principles seem most important to you? Please mark each one on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "not really important" and 5 is "very important". Then identify which 5 are most important to you.
2. Share your ideas with a partner. Explain your choices and ask them to explain theirs.
3. Join another pair and share your ideas.
4. Between the four of you, identify the 3 which are most important to you as a group, and then prioritise them. Be prepared to explain your choices during feedback.

PASS (PEER ASSISTED STUDY SESSIONS): STUDY SESSIONS SUPPORTING FIRST YEAR STUDENT

For most new students, coming to Third Level College is both an exciting new venture and an anxious experience. There are new people to meet, new friends to make and the opportunity to study in depth a subject you enjoy. At the same time, you'll probably be wondering whether or not you'll be able to keep up with your studies, write assignments to an appropriate standard, organise your time effectively and have the confidence to present your ideas in front of other people.

Wouldn't it be good if there were students from the year above who had been trained to guide you through all this?

Now, with the help of PASS, there is.

What is Peer Assisted Study Sessions?

- PASS is a scheme that offers cross-year support between students on the same course. PASS is run by students for students. It encourages you to support each other and learn co-operatively under the guidance of a trained student from the second year of your course.
- PASS aims to help you adjust quickly to college life, improve your learning and study skills, enhance your understanding of the subject content of your course and prepare better for your assignments and exams.
- PASS sessions are intended to be supportive and friendly but also purposeful. In PASS, the emphasis is on everyone in the group working co-operatively to share subject-related news items, and develop their understanding of course topics or work to be assessed.
- PASS is therefore about exploratory discussion lead by the PASS Leaders. The more everyone joins in these discussions, the better the sessions will work.

How can PASS benefit you?

As current students who have just completed the first year of the course, PASS Leaders are uniquely placed to help first years. They are experts in surviving the first year.

PASS Leaders receive training in how to run PASS sessions effectively and how to manage group discussions. They are also provided with resources that will help you develop your study skills and better understand the more challenging topics on your course.

Research undertaken at Irish, British, North American and Australian third level colleges has indicated that PASS can be of considerable benefit to students. PASS also leads to greater involvement with student life.

How does PASS take place?

The PASS session for your programme will appear on your timetable. There will be a one-hour PASS session timetabled each week where you can work together as a group on course material or on another topic to be agreed by the group.

What can you discuss in PASS?

The most important point about PASS is that you can decide what is to be discussed in your weekly PASS sessions.

Ask your PASS Leader to help you:

- with accommodation issues, travel or to share information on the best places to go in Galway
- find your way around campus
- with making friends and team building
- locate resources in the Library
- review lectures you've found really difficult
- analyse assignment questions
- discuss how to get the most out of lectures
- analyse note taking techniques
- practise your referencing skills or how to avoid plagiarism
- explore guidelines for getting the best from group work
- practise presentations

Anything may be covered, but please remember that the PASS Leaders are not lecturers, so they're not allowed to teach you - please do not ask them to!

Remember that the School Management and Lecturers have timetabled weekly PASS sessions to support you in your programme of study therefore first year students are required to attend their weekly PASS study sessions so that you get the most from your programme and 3rd level education.



Section C How to run PASS Sessions

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How to Run PASS Sessions

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” Benjamin Franklin

This section has been written to guide you to use a range of techniques and activities to ensure that your PASS sessions run purposefully and your students benefit from attending. This section will take you through a typical sequence from preparing your PASS sessions, running the sessions themselves, and finally closing and reviewing your sessions afterwards. The important thing is for you to be sufficiently conversant with these topics so that you can make suitable choices as and when issues arise and themes evolve. The topics addressed are:

1. Preparation
2. Starting your PASS session
3. Agreeing a schedule
4. Providing structure
5. Encouraging participation
6. Asking and redirecting questions
7. Gathering feedback
8. Closing the session and reviewing it

You may find yourself handling a much more diverse group than you expected, in background, motivation and culture. You might find some people very talkative and others apparently tongue-tied. So in both cases you might want to spend more time getting them to be more open and building a friendly atmosphere. On the other hand there may be an immediate and compelling concern that they bring to the session which may need addressing before matters like “Agreeing a Schedule” are undertaken.

Choosing what to do may not feel easy at the start (most of your lecturers would describe their first sessions in a similar way) but gradually you will slip into a more natural and easy approach where you focus less and less on your own performance and increasingly on what and how the students need to learn. Part of your job is to keep some sort of balance between what you may have planned and what emerges as the students’ needs and priorities. You will feel a great sense of achievement when things go well.

Occasionally, when things go wrong (as in the real world they do!) you may feel less happy about yourself, but with the knowledge that you can learn from such experiences. The best way to do that is to review the session carefully afterwards and discuss issues with others such as your PASS Academic Contact or other PASS leaders.

TRAINING RESOURCE

How to Run PASS Sessions

Questions to guide your feedback to others

Note: Working individually, students review two sections from Section C of this guidebook and make notes on pages 21 and 22.

1. Note the key features you'll report on.
2. What are the 3 most important things you learnt from reading this section?
3. How might you use these suggestions in your PASS sessions?
4. What do you think you will find (a) easiest and (b) most difficult to use, and why?
5. What suggestions do you think students in your group will find most difficult and why?

TRAINING RESOURCE

How to Run PASS Sessions

Questions to guide your feedback to others

1. Note the key features you'll report on.
2. What are the 3 most important things you learnt from reading this section?
3. How might you use these suggestions in your PASS sessions?
4. What do you think you will find (a) easiest and (b) most difficult to use, and why?
5. What suggestions do you think students in your group will find most difficult and why?

1. Preparation

Planning and preparing your PASS sessions in advance will give you a sense of confidence and security when you come to run the sessions themselves. Proper preparation will also help you to run focused, and purposeful PASS sessions in which you feel confident and relaxed enough to be at ease and friendly with your students.

It is worth noting that inadequate preparation, or worse still no preparation at all, usually results in PASS sessions that are aimless and unfocused. During past evaluations, students have complained that such sessions are "... a complete waste of time" and, as a result, they are likely to stop attending. So, please take time to prepare your PASS sessions properly.

Previous PASS Leaders indicate that, initially, it can take between 30 minutes to an hour to plan the first few PASS sessions. However they also say that, once you have developed confidence and your own style, planning will only take about 10 minutes.

1. Contact your Group before the session

- It is probable that, at the end of your last PASS session, you agreed the main topic for discussion for your forthcoming PASS session with your group.
- E-mail your students 2-3 days beforehand to remind them of the topic(s) they agreed they wanted to discuss.
- Remind them to bring along relevant notes, handouts, text books, etc. so that they can refer to these during small group discussions.
- Ask if there are any new topics, perhaps arising out of this week's lectures, they would like to discuss in addition.

2. Use the "PASS Session Plan" to help you plan your PASS session

- Think back to how the last PASS session went. If you filled in a "Session Review" form read through it again. What were the positive and negative points in relation to:
 - The session in general
 - Group learning
 - Your facilitation and management of the session
 - The activities used
- Remind yourself of the topic(s) your group want to discuss. Have a quick read through your notes from last year. However, as you are not going to try to re-teach them, all you need to do is familiarise yourself with the topic(s) rather than try to relearn it all perfectly. As a rough guide you should try not to take more than 10 minutes over this.
- Obtain any necessary information from the appropriate lecturer as this can be invaluable especially if you plan to discuss a piece of assessed work in your PASS session.
- Consider planning your PASS sessions with another Leader. This can be useful as a means of sharing information as well as getting new ideas. Planning together is particularly recommended at the start of the academic year when you and the other Leaders are new to PASS.

3. Plan group work and activities

- Consider what small group learning techniques you're going to use such as pair-work, pyramid, or jigsaw (see Section E "What you can do in your PASS sessions").
- Think about the composition of the small groups or pairs you want people to work in. Are you happy for people to pick their own groups or whether you want to put together students who don't know each other well. This latter can be a useful way of ensuring that students operate outside their own personal comfort zone and will often result in students gaining new perspectives on a topic which they may not get if they always work with their friends.
- Consider the sorts of learning activities you're going to run. You might want to run a quiz, review the contents of a recent lecture, give students a chance to practise presentations, or analyse an assignment.
- More information on structuring group discussion and possible activities will be found in Section E "What you can do in your PASS Sessions".

4. Plan the structure for the session in outline

- Finally think through a possible structure for the session and how much time you're going to set aside for each activity.
- Remember to allow enough time for each pair or small group to feedback the outcomes of their discussions to everyone else. This period of group feedback is usually the part of the PASS session from which students get most benefit, so try to set aside around 15 minutes for this activity.
- There is more on planning in "Topic 4. Providing structure" later in this section.

5. On the day

- Try to get to the room before the session starts so you can move the tables into groups for discussion.
- If this isn't possible, move chairs so that people will be sitting face-to-face across a table rather than being seated in rows or around the outside of a horseshoe arrangement.

2. Starting your PASS Sessions

1. Getting started

- Welcome your students to PASS and thank them for any responses they have made to the email you sent them 2-3 days before this session.
- Start with a quick 'Round' (see pp.3 in Section E) asking people for useful/interesting news items of relevance to their studies. This is a good 'warm up' activity so try to include as many people in this as possible.
- Check that you are all agreed on topic for discussion.
- Check also that people have brought along the appropriate lecture notes, handouts, textbooks, etc. to refer to during their discussions.

Note: it may be that some people have forgotten to bring along their notes, etc. If resources can be shared out among everyone, this is fine. However, if you have too few resources or people persist in coming along unprepared, it may be necessary to discuss the issue with the group. Point out to them that, if they are to get the greatest benefit from their PASS discussions, they have a responsibility to come along prepared and with the right resources to engage in the discussions. Many PASS Leaders in the past have found it useful to address this issue during the very first PASS session as part of agreeing some form of group compact, or ground rules.

2. Check what they are doing

- Next, take a few moments to check with your group how their studies are going. In particular you should ask students:
 - What they have looked at in their studies, lectures, seminars, workshops, reading, etc. since the last PASS session.
 - When particular pieces of assessed coursework are due to be handed in.
- Make sure you have a copy of their teaching scheme to refer to so, if necessary, you can prompt them for information.

3. Identifying possible issues to address

- Start by focussing on current course issues.
- Ask what lectures students have had in the last week, with the intention of getting them to identify and explain the key issues covered in each of their lectures.
- This can either be a quick overview which takes about 10 minutes or something much more detailed which takes most of the session.
 - Tell the students that you're doing this quick review process so that any misunderstandings are addressed at an early stage – before they become a real problem.
 - It often works best if you get your students into pairs or threes to go through their notes filling in gaps and explaining things to each other.
 - You could ask each pair to focus on a different unit or module, dividing up the units in such a way that the group reviews all units on the programme.
 - After a few minutes ask the students to tell you and the others, briefly, what they thought were the key issues covered by their lecturers.

- Ask focussed and specific questions such as “Tell me, what do you think were the 3 main points the lecturer covered in the physics lecture this week?”.
- Encourage other members of the group to chip in with additional points they thought were important too.
- Avoid vague questions such as “Has anyone got any problems?”. Such questions will rarely get any useful responses.
- Other questions you could ask might include:
 - What lectures have you had during the last week?
 - What new ideas have you had presented to you?
 - What new theory has been presented? Can you outline the details?
 - What new factual information has been presented?
 - What were the most difficult issues that were covered?
 - Which lectures would you like to look at again?
- During this process it is important that the onus is on your students finding and suggesting answers to your questions or those questions asked by other members of the group.
- To help them do this encourage them to look through their notes to remind themselves of what has been covered, review the material or solve issues of dispute.
- Listen carefully to student’s responses and watch their body language. It may be that there are some members of the group who are confused about some of the topics covered or concerned that they are finding some aspects difficult. If this is the case you could say something like “I think that some of you might be finding this lecture rather difficult”, then ask them whether or not they want to set some time aside in the PASS session to go over the contents of the lecture again.
- When you have done this for each section of the course you are now in a position to agree a schedule for the rest of the session with the group.

Warning: Some students may be unfamiliar with the process of deciding on issues to discuss. Don’t be surprised if there is initially some reluctance and reticence to come up with concerns in the session. Things will improve as students recognise that it is okay to admit to have difficulty understanding something and to ask other students for guidance.

3. Agreeing a Schedule

Once you have welcomed students to the PASS session, checked the previously agreed topic with them and identified any other topics of concern or misunderstanding, you should agree a schedule to work through with them.

1. Why set a schedule?

Schedule setting is useful for:

- Providing structure to the session - to enable everyone to have a clear idea of the topics they will discuss during the session.
- Making sure from the start that your students have a significant say in what is covered in their PASS sessions.
- Encouraged students to raise any issues of concern or interest to them.
- Bringing the students together as a group.

2. What should go into your schedule?

Normally you would want to include the following:

- The previously agreed topic the group asked to discuss during this session.
- Requests for additional topics students have emailed back to you.
- Any issues identified earlier in the session when you asked the students to review the content of recent lectures.

3. Other things that could also be included in the schedule

At certain times during the year, you may also find it necessary to take account of some of the issues in this section.

3.1. Settling in (most relevant early on)

- How have they found their first week(s) at College?
- What kinds of thing seemed confusing?
- What would they like more information about?
- What nightlife/social activities have they discovered?

3.2. Finding their way around

Do they need guidance on finding their way around campus, for example:

- Location of lecture theatres
- Lecturers and administrative staff offices
- Assignment hand-in locations
- Notice boards
- Location of support services
- Students Union
- How to find out about clubs and societies

3.3 Academic issues and study skills

- Using the library
- Plagiarism, what it is and how to avoid it
- Referencing conventions
- How to get the most out of lectures
- Note taking
- Presentations
- Working effectively in a group

3.4. Assignments

You will probably need to devote some whole PASS sessions to help students with the following:

- Analysing assignment questions effectively.
- Identifying and researching the main issues to be addressed.
- Organising and planning their work.
- Writing and editing essay drafts.

More information on how to run such sessions will be found in, for example, Section E: “Suggested activities for PASS sessions”.

3.5. Directed activities

Some staff may also suggest some activities you could undertake with the students using either materials already in the students’ workbooks or resources that staff themselves provide for you to use.

4. Agreeing the schedule

- Write all down all the issues to be discussed on the whiteboard
- Ask the students in what order they would like to work through the list.
- Make a mental calculation on how long it will probably take to cover each item on the list.

Your schedule could look like:

1. Share news items
2. Review recent lecture on Economics (identified as an issue to address)
3. Analyse Biology assignment (agreed topic)
4. Groups feedback on different aspects of the Biology assignment

Now, with your students’ agreement, you’re ready to start the main part of the PASS session.

4. Providing Structure

As a Leader, you will need to find the balance between providing enough structure to keep the PASS session on track whilst allowing individuals the freedom to express their ideas. Planning your PASS sessions beforehand using a “Session Plan”, and using information acquired when meeting with PASS Academic Contact or other leaders can assist this process, as can some of the following ideas.

Balancing
structure
and freedom

Some ways of providing structure to sessions

1. Work systematically through the agenda

- Remember to set a schedule (see Topic “3. Agreeing a schedule”).
- Once this schedule has been agreed, stick to it.
- Spend some time on each point. Ask open-ended questions to begin discussion. Summarise the main ideas that emerge before moving on to the next item.
- Remember to close the session (see Topic “8. Closing the sessions and reviewing it”).

2. Use a variety of techniques to keep the session interesting, for example

- Use group discussions and pair work.
- Reorganise the furniture in order to aid small group discussion.
- Ask students to do the board work rather than you.
- Keep the session supportive and friendly, but also make sure you focus on course concepts.
- Spend some of your time sitting with students and some time at the front.
- Encourage students to refer to their textbooks and notes for specific answers.
- Lead general open-ended discussions, aiming to involve everyone.
- Provide information visually and verbally (see below).

3. Emphasise definitions, principles and rules

- Courses will vary in how definitions, principles and rules are used, but all courses comprise an element of this. Focusing on definitions of new terms, or summarising important principles, can provide structure to the session.
- Reinforce this by encouraging your students to compile their own glossary of important terms.

4. Provide information visually as well as verbally

- Some students learn better visually, others verbally.
- Some learn better alone and some through interaction with others.
- Try to make use of all these approaches, e.g. by using pictorial representations (diagrams) and verbal illustrations (lists and mnemonics) and by mixing individual with group work, for example, by using ‘Pyramid’ (see Section E “What you can do in your PASS sessions”).

5. Provide analogies and examples

- These can help make ideas more concrete and memorable. Ask students to come up with their own examples of a theory or idea.

6. Help classify content - organise it in ways that make better sense to the students

7. Emphasise process (how you arrive at answers)

- Ask students how they arrived at an answer; why they think something to be the case.

8. Emphasise 'if-then' reasoning where appropriate

- If they get stuck, ask them "If that were true, then what would happen if ... ?"
- Make a list of problem steps where appropriate.

9. Summarise important points

- At the end of each schedule item ensure the main points are summarised, preferably by encouraging students to provide the summary for you rather than doing it yourself.

Learn from
feedback

Example of a timetable for a PASS session

Minus 5 minutes Organise furniture where possible

0-5 minutes Welcome students to session. Allow group to settle.
Share items of information. Quick round of topical course or subject-related items in the news.

5-15 minutes Review content of recent lectures. Agree topics to be discussed and the schedule for the session. Agree order in which to work through schedule.

15-35 minutes Pair or small group discussions. Monitor how each group is progressing. Encourage students to refer to notes for clarification.

35-50 minutes Gather feedback. Each pair or group summarises the main points from their discussions. Leader questions and seeks clarification where necessary. Ensure ideas are written down on the board.

50-55 minutes Ending the session. Check if anything still puzzles them and deal with it. Request and agree topic for next session. Thank students for their contributions.

Sample
Schedule

5. Encouraging Participation

As a PASS Leader, **you are not a teacher**. No new material is covered in a PASS session. Your main job is to encourage active learning, to encourage students to participate in discussion. This section relates to the training DVD and Section E “What you can do in your PASS sessions”, adding further suggestions for you to consider.

See also advice in Topic “6. Asking and Redirecting Questions” later in this section for more suggestions on how to encourage participation through questioning.

Some ways of encouraging participation

1. Divide your group into pairs or small groups

- Students can feel intimidated asking or answering questions individually when in large groups. In your PASS sessions you can address this by dividing your group into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4 people.
- Small group work encourages greater participation, discussion, cooperative working, and the sharing of ideas between students.
- You might need to divide existing groupings by asking them to 'number off' 1,2,3,4,5; 1,2,3,4,5; 1,2,3,4,5 and ask all the 1s to go together, all the 2s and so on.

Small group work is fundamental to PASS and assists collaborative discussion

2. Manage group discussions

- Give each group a clear, unambiguous task and let them know how much time they have got.
- Wait for a few minutes before you start to join groups otherwise your students are likely to start to ask you the questions they should be answering among themselves.
- Move around each group when your students have settled to their discussions to listen, possibly challenge, and offer support and encouragement.
- Monitor how each group is progressing, keep the students focussed, and their discussions on track.
- Try not to spend too much time with each group – no more than a couple of minutes – before you move on to the next.
- Encourage the students to refer to their course materials, lecture notes, or textbooks.
- Let them know when there are 5 minutes left so they can get their ideas together for presentation to the other groups.
- You will find more advice on “Structuring group discussion” in the first part of “Section E: What you can do in your PASS sessions”.

3. Use students’ names

- Using students’ names can help you and your students to feel more at ease with each other and increase student participation.
- Make use of the attendance sheet if you cannot remember names easily and take the risk of either getting them wrong or asking them to remind you: “I’m sorry, I can’t remember your name”, and when they remind you, immediately using it.

4. Encourage independent learning

- Emphasise the importance of the student's own resources such as lecture notes, work books, and textbooks.
- Encourage students to annotate and add to their notes whenever they come across further relevant and useful information.
- If there are discrepancies between students, ask them to compare notes and come to a consensus.
- Remember that notes students take on the same lecture or seminar can be very different.

5. Refer to the module descriptors regularly

- Encourage students to bring their course handbooks or programmes to PASS sessions. Check that students understand the requirements of the reading lists, assignments and any tests/projects.
- Encourage them to look regularly at the learning outcomes for each unit or module so they are well aware of what they should be able to do and can use these learning outcomes as a guide to what and how they learn.

6. Place the emphasis on student ideas

- Always encourage students to share their thoughts, because students build new concepts upon their own ideas and new course materials.

7. Be a role model by using "I" statements yourself

- Reflect on your first year experience and be open and direct with the group.
- If you didn't understand something or can't remember, then say so. Your students will likely feel that you are involved as a participant.
- If you can honestly say "Yes, I found that difficult too", it can create a very positive rapport.

8. Give permission to acknowledge fears and anxieties

- Reassure the group that some parts of the course are difficult and will probably take some time and effort to understand.
- Much of PASS is about passing on your experience so you should be open about what you or your friends found difficult last year and how you addressed these issues.

9. Encourage student questions

- Student questions form the raw material for PASS sessions. Always ask if students have questions and offer plenty of time to answer.
- It will develop their confidence if you ask them just to check quickly with their neighbour first, before answering a question.

10. Encourage students to verbalise

- When students put their ideas into words it enables them to process information – putting ideas together into the right sequence or to form a coherent whole.
- When a student expresses an idea it encourages other students to share or contribute their ideas as well.
- Sometimes a group can put original ideas together through talking - ideas they didn't realise they had!

11. Wait for student responses to questions

- Consciously train yourself to wait for student answers. Students often need time to think through what they're going to say before responding to a question. After a while they will usually give an answer - or ask another question.
- Waiting for answers is a difficult but important skill. It can be very tempting to answer questions for students or jump in with another question.
- If you can learn to be patient this will usually lead to better discussions and more group involvement.
- An easy way to pace yourself in this is to count up to 10 (silently!) after asking the question. If nobody answers your question you should encourage them to find the answers in their notes.
- You should also wait for other students to comment after a member of the class has said something. Don't immediately label an answer right or wrong – wait to see if other students have anything to add. Often just looking calmly round the group will encourage others to add more information.
- If you are working as a pair with another Leader remember not to answer each others questions or ask the group another question immediately after your partner has asked one.

Waiting
Time

12. Use positive reinforcement

- This involves nods, smiles and general encouragement and has a very positive effect on learning and confidence.
- Examples of positive reinforcement include offering praise for an answer (even if only partially correct), using a posture of interest or concern, maintaining eye contact, and making positive comments.
- If you know an answer to be 'wide of the mark' it is important not to criticise or put the student down. It is better to say "OK, that's interesting; what do others think?" Note the use of the neutral word "OK" rather "Yes" or "No".

13. Repeat student responses

- If you summarise or clarify comments and enable others to hear them, this can act as positive reinforcement to their participation and learning.

14. Get students to use the whiteboard

- Physical activity helps prevent students becoming too passive or bored. It also encourages students to talk to and support one another.

15. Avoid interrupting student answers

- PASS should be a safe and comfortable environment for students to try things out, attempt answers and make mistakes. Remember it is often from making mistakes that our best learning comes about.
- If a student does seem to be talking too much or too long, you can use a non-verbal signal like raising you hand.
- If this doesn't work, you'll have to be more direct, saying something along the lines of "Chris, could you hold it there - I'd like to hear what some of the others think now".

6. Asking and Redirecting Questions

The key to encouraging discussion in the group is asking questions of your students that make them do the thinking and talking - and then actively listening to them. Questions serve at least three purposes in PASS discussions: to test the students' knowledge, to clarify information, and to stimulate students into expressing ideas and constructing arguments. This section offers some general advice on the types of questions you might find useful to ask of students, to encourage communication within the group.

1. Redirecting questions

Or ... how to effectively turn questions back to the group and not give the answers yourself

- People learn through practising, testing out their ideas, getting feedback from others, and reflecting on their experiences. In other words when they make the effort, take responsibility for their own learning, and relate and apply new information to their own context.
- People do not learn very much if they are told the answers.
- During your early sessions students will probably expect you to provide answers to their questions and there are times when it is appropriate for you to do this, especially in matters which relate to settling into the College and the locality.
- However, PASS sessions should be about encouraging your students to learn interdependently and develop their understanding through collaborative discussions and exploration of their ideas. So it is important that you discourage your students from taking the easy option of you telling them what they need to know.
- When asked a direct question, try to turn this back to the group. This will allow more students to participate, and your students will become more confident when able to provide answers for the group.
- Examples of redirection questions:
 - "Well, what do you think?"
 - "Can anybody help X answer that question?"
 - "Does anyone know the answer to that question?"
 - "What information would you need to answer that?"
 - "What was said in the lecture about this?"
 - "Does anyone have any hints about this in their notes?"
 - "Let's try and work that out together ... what is the first thing you need to do ... what do you need to do next?"
- If students persist in wanting to hear the answers from you, you will need to address this issue, in the first instance perhaps by saying something along the lines of:
 - "Well it wasn't my strongest subject so I wouldn't like to mislead you".
 - "The syllabus has changed since last year and we didn't cover this in much depth".

You may well know the answer, but your role is to get them to think, not to provide the answer for them.

- If you think that the level of direct questioning is becoming a problem, show the group the handout/slide called “Main features of Peer Assisted Study Sessions” that you displayed and discussed during your first PASS session.
- From the main features handout, remind the group that:
 - PASS is about exploratory discussion, not being told the answers.
 - PASS is about active learning – learning by discussing and thinking.
 - The PASS Leader is here to help you (the students) find the answers for yourselves through discussion and reference to your notes, etc.
 - The PASS Leader is not here to teach or tell students the answers.

2. Open-ended questions

- The best questions are usually open-ended (ones that require more than a yes, no or short answer).
- Open-ended questions will encourage your students to think back and draw on their experience, what they've read, what they recall.
- Open-ended questions require students to provide more considered responses.
- The more students talk, the better the student leader and other students are able to understand their ideas and thinking.

3. Socratic questions

- Socratic questioning can be used to lead students to correct answers.
- This is where the PASS Leader breaks down difficult concepts or large problems into smaller chunks of information that are more manageable so that students can answer more easily.
- Ask first “What is the first thing we need to do to solve this?”, followed by “Then what do you need to do next?”, “And then what ...”, and so on.

4. Probing questions

- The task of the PASS Leader is to help students to begin to process information beyond the superficial level of delivering the 'right' answer.
- This will happen when students begin to genuinely interact with the material by clarifying it, thinking critically about it, putting it in their own words and relating it to their existing knowledge.
- Examples of probing questions:
 - “Where did that idea come from?”
 - “What led you to think that?”
 - “How did you arrive at that answer?”
 - “How does that fit in with ...?”
 - “How can you be sure about that?”
 - “Are there any other possibilities?”

5. Clarification questions

- You should request further clarification or explanation when a student's answer is vague or unclear.
- When you do this try to make your voice sound curious rather than critical.
- Examples of clarification questions:
 - "Could you explain that in a little more detail?"
 - "Can you be more specific?"
 - "Anything else you would like to add?"
 - "Could you put that another way?"
 - "How would you explain that in an essay or exam?"
 - "What do you mean by X?"

6. Questions to improve critical awareness

- Used when the leader suspects the student does not fully understand what they're saying or to get the student to reflect on their answer.
- Examples:
 - "What are you assuming here?"
 - "Could you give an example of that?"
 - "Do you have any evidence to support that?"
 - "How might someone argue against that point?"
 - "How have you come to that conclusion?"

7. Questions which encourage students to refocus

- These questions will encourage students to see a concept from another perspective by focusing on relationships.
- Examples:
 - "How is that related to...?"
 - "How does that tie into...?"
 - "How does that compare with...?"
 - "If that is true, then what would happen if...?"

8. Taking stock

- Used towards the end of the PASS session when you want students to reflect on progress made, to summarise information or suggest some ways forward.
- Examples:
 - "So, where are we in relation to...?"
 - "Whose turn is it to sum up this week?"
 - "So, between now and next week..."

As long as there is lively discussion...

The suggestions so far are ideas to help sessions run smoothly don't worry too much about whether you are asking the perfect questions. Theory is all very well, but what is more important is that you and your students engage in lively and helpful discussion, that you all enjoy.

7. Gathering Feedback

1. Benefits

- The plenary session, in which each pair or small group explains the outcomes of their discussions to the group as a whole, is the time when your students will obtain the greatest benefit from their PASS session.
- It is important not to rush this process but to set aside enough time for the presentation of ideas and for any further discussion arising out of the points each group makes – as a rough guide you should plan to set aside around 15 minutes, perhaps as long as 20 minutes, for this part of your PASS session.
- The process of summarising outcomes encourages students to verbalise – to organise their ideas into a coherent and logical order, and to gain practise in explaining their ideas using the language of the subject.
- It will also enhance both students' understanding and their presentation skills.

2. What you should do

- Go around each pair or small group in turn asking one person to explain the outcomes of their discussion. These points can be further expanded by other members of the group.
- Ensure key points are written down on the whiteboard or on a slide or a handout as this reinforces what is being said and provides tangible evidence of each group's work.
 - Either you can write down each key point yourself on the board.
 - Or, preferably, you will find it involves the students more if one member from each group writes down the key points while other members of their group provide the information. You may find this approach is easier for you to manage too.
- As Leader you should concentrate on managing the feedback process, prompting for examples, and asking questions for further clarification.
 - You will find facilitating easier if you have asked group members to record key points on the board rather than you.
 - Make a conscious effort to give each group plenty of encouragement and positive reinforcement.
 - When you ask questions for probing or clarification, try not to sound critical. Make sure your body language, and particularly your face, looks as if you are curious rather than trying to catch them out.
- It will help students develop their active listening skills if you encourage them to ask questions or supply further information where possible.

These are some of the best ways to help students to recognise and integrate what they have learned in their PASS session

3. Write down recommended work/actions/reading

- It will avoid confusion if details of recommended reading, actions, or useful web sites are written down on the board as part of this process.

8. Closing the Session and Reviewing it

1. Closing the session

Having gathered feedback from each small group, you should set aside the last few minutes for closing the session:

- If you did not have enough time to work through all the topics on the schedule, ask the group if they'd like to discuss them in their next PASS session.
- Ask students if anything still puzzles them and try to deal with it then and there either by clarifying it yourself or by asking if any member of the group can provide the information.
- If neither you nor any member of the group can resolve this issue satisfactorily, ask for someone to volunteer to find out this information and to report back in the next session. Try to avoid doing this yourself because this will encourage dependency.
- Ask the students what they would like to cover in their next PASS session and make a note of this in your diary.
- Check that the attendance register is completed.
- End the session by thanking everyone for their time and contributions.
- Return chairs and tables to their correct positions and wipe the board before you leave the room.

2. Reviewing/reflecting on how session went

- When your PASS session has ended take a few minutes to reflect on the session by completing a 'Session review' sheet from your PASS manual. You will find that this period of reflection will improve the quality of your work as a PASS Leader.
- First, jot down a couple of sentences which describe how you think the session went. Identify what you think went well as well as those aspects you may need to improve in future.
- Next consider the positive and negative points in relation to:
 - The session in general
 - Group learning
 - Your facilitation and management of the session
 - The activities used
 - Your self development and understanding of the subjects discussed
- Make a brief note of the topics covered so you have a record.
- Make a note of any issues you need to discuss with your Course PASS Contact, other members of staff, or the PASS Leaders on your course.
- Finally, make a note in your diary to email/text/facebook/tweet your group 2-3 days before your next session to remind them of the agreed topic and to bring along relevant lecture notes, textbooks and other resources to refer to during discussions.



Section D Your First PASS Session

A session plan to help your first PASS session run smoothly: includes guidelines on structuring the session, agreeing group norms, and notes on the main features of PASS to discuss with your PASS Group. 42

Your First PASS session

The first PASS session is likely to be your most daunting (but be reassured that is perfectly normal!). This session plan is therefore offered to provide a rather structured method to help it run smoothly. You may use it as provided, adapt parts of it to suit, or if you wish devise your own. It is worth bearing in mind that the first impressions you make are important and will do much to set the tone of your PASS sessions for the rest of the year. It will help you to create the right impression if you have a plan prepared for this session even if you don't actually follow this rigidly.

Although this first session is the most structured you are likely to run, it can still be welcoming, supportive and friendly.

1. Aims of first PASS session:

- To get to know your students.
- To set expectations about PASS for the year.
- To give students an opportunity to ask for advice or information about the College, the local area, the library, accommodation, second-hand books etc.
- To agree some ground rules for future sessions
- To operate like a PASS session even though subject content will be minimal.

The session plan suggests using an icebreaker -you can if you wish use one of the suggested activities in "Icebreakers" in Section E or the 'Line-up' from "Structuring Group Discussions", also in Section E.

2. Welcome

- Welcome your students to their first PASS session
- Introduce yourself
- Briefly explain your role as PASS leader giving a clear sense that you are glad to be working with them; you look forward to what unfolds and emphasising that the sessions are designed to be collaborative with people helping each other.

3. Introductions

- It will be useful to spend some time just getting to know your students.
- You may want to use an icebreaker from the list suggested (see 'Icebreakers' in Section E) to ease people into the session.
- You could also invent your own icebreaker or simply put the group into pairs to get people to find out about, and introduce, each other.

4. What is Peer Assisted Study Sessions?

Explain that as PASS is probably not something they will have come across before, it will be useful to explain the aims and features of PASS.

- Ask the class if anyone has come across PASS before or anything similar, e.g. mentoring at school. If so, what did they think of it – what were its good points, what did they get from it, what could have been improved, etc?
- Explain that PASS is intended to help students settle in to College, learn more effectively and do better in their coursework.
- PASS works by using group discussion to enhance understanding of course material and by making it less risky to admit to problems and confusions.
- Now display the slide or handout (see. a separate handout in Section C) on the screen and talk through the main features of PASS.
- Ask the group for their comments, reactions, thoughts, etc.

5. Identifying the benefits of PASS

- Based upon what they now know about PASS, ask students individually to write down:
 - 3 things they see as the benefits of PASS
 - 3 things that appeal to them about PASS
 - any questions they might have
- After they have written these down individually, ask them to share their ideas with a partner.
- Go around the class, asking each pair to tell you one benefit and one appeal of PASS. Write these on the board.
- Attempt to answer any questions students might have about PASS. If you can't answer them, make a note of them and check them out for the next session.

6. General issues

- Ask if there are any issues with settling-in they might be trying to solve.
- Ask if there are any issues with the course.
- Check to see if they need help with finding their way round, using library computers, form-filling etc.

You don't have to deal with all these issues yourself - indeed it is probably better if you don't. Ask whether anyone else in the group knows the answer or can offer advice.

7. Group norms/ground rules (or 'How do we want PASS to run?')

Generally speaking, there are hidden and assumed rules about what students do and respect in lectures, seminars etc. However, PASS sessions run by a fellow student will probably require a bit more openness about what is and what is not acceptable.

Experience of running PASS has shown that the time you set aside at the very start to discuss and get general agreement on how your group should work together, and how its members should behave towards each other, is of great benefit in setting a standard of mutual purpose and associated behaviours in the group. Also, if you jot down the group's ideas, this list can act as a reference point if the process becomes unproductive.

The aim of the discussion should be for you and the group to reach a series of decisions which are binding, but in a way that is empowering rather than limiting. Plan to involve the group in suggesting ideas and agreeing upon issues such as:

- What PASS is about
- What we're trying to achieve
- How we behave towards each other
- Who does what
- Who is responsible for what to ensure PASS sessions are beneficial.

Here are some ideas that you could introduce from the very start. However, remember that these ideas are more likely to be accepted if they emerge from the group rather than you:

- We agree and stick to starting and finishing times.
- Anyone has the right to suggest what the group should do next.
- We are working collaboratively, not competitively.
- Everyone turns up with appropriate notes and resources to refer to during discussion.
- Everyone is encouraged to contribute.
- When anyone speaks they are addressing the whole group and not just the Leader, or a friend.
- We listen to each other and respect each others views.
- Dominant and aggressive behaviour is not acceptable.
- Racist and sexist comments are not acceptable.
- Everyone has some responsibility for this process and anyone can point out if any of these rules are being ignored or broken

You might ask them to talk briefly in pairs to check whether these ground rules are acceptable and if they want to clarify or add any more.

Finally, jot the ideas down onto an overhead transparency so, if necessary, you can show it to the group if this ever becomes necessary.

8. Wrap up

- Tell them you are available to help if they see you around the campus, etc.
- Invite them to say hello if they see you around the campus, and indeed any other members of the group.
- Tell them you look forward to working with them over the year.
- If you wish to, write your own email address up on the board
- Remind them of the date, time and place for their next PASS session (and suggest they write it in their diary).
- And finally... thank everyone for their contribution to their first PASS session, and say that you look forward to seeing them next time.

Slide/Handout for First PASS Session

Main features of Peer Assisted Study Sessions:

Notes to share with student groups at the first PASS Session

1. PASS is about exploratory discussion to help students improve their understanding of their course materials and prepare better for assessed and other course work.

Students will not improve their understanding if they are 'told' the answers by their PASS Leader and, for assessed work, the Leader has to be careful because excessive help may be viewed as plagiarism.

2. PASS is about active learning - learning through structured discussions, sharing ideas with each other, and thinking. Many of the discussions in PASS will be in pairs or small groups.
3. The more everyone joins in these discussions and feeds back the outcomes to others, the more everyone will benefit from their PASS sessions.
4. The PASS Leader is there to facilitate discussions and help the group find the answers through these discussions, as well as by referring to lecture notes or text books, etc.
5. PASS sessions are intended to be supportive and friendly while at the same time being planned, structured and purposeful. They are not intended to provide a forum for social chatting.
6. PASS offers a safe place to admit not understanding something and to ask other people for help and advice.
7. The PASS leader will not teach or tell you the answers. Leaders may not know the answers and, as they don't have the responsibility of teachers for assessing student work, it is possible that they may accidentally provide incorrect or misleading information.
8. The onus is on you (the students) to decide what is to be discussed in PASS sessions because you are in the best position to identify the things you don't understand or are currently finding difficult.
9. PASS sessions are not replacements for lectures, seminars etc., they are to back them up and to help you to review course material.
10. The sessions will be confidential in the sense that lecturers will not be told anything that might identify any particular student. However, a Register will be taken and an overall report on the PASS sessions will be given to PASS academic contacts and PASS programme management.

Main features of Peer Assisted Study Sessions

1. PASS is about exploratory discussion, not being told the answers
2. PASS is about active learning & small group discussions
3. The more everyone joins in these discussions, the more everyone will benefit
4. The PASS Leader is here to help you find the answers through discussion and use of lecture notes, etc.
5. PASS sessions are supportive and friendly
6. In PASS it is OK to admit not understanding something
7. Your PASS Leader isn't here to teach or tell you the answers
8. You should decide what is discussed in PASS sessions
9. PASS sessions are not replacements for lectures, seminars, etc., they are there to back them up
10. PASS sessions will be confidential in that lecturers will not be told about individual students



Section E

What to do in your PASS Sessions

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What you can do in your PASS sessions

This section of 'The SLL Peer Assisted Learning Guidebook' is intended to provide you with a range of small group and other activities to use in a variety of situations in your PASS sessions. There is no infallible recipe as to what you should use and when, but as long as you are reasonably familiar with the options you'll be able to make appropriate choices to fit the needs of your students and the task in hand.

1. Structuring group discussion

- Rearranging furniture
- Managing group discussions
 - Pairs
 - Rounds
 - Pyramids
 - Brainstorming
 - Syndicate groups
 - Group survey
 - Jigsaw
 - Line-ups

2. Suggestions for icebreakers

1. Getting to know you (pairs)
2. Getting to know you (group)
3. Grandmother's suitcase (group)
4. The Worst Mistake I Ever Made (individual-group)
5. Everyone is unique (everyone)
6. Affinities (everyone milling)
7. Maps (everyone)

3. 36 suggested activities for PASS sessions

- Lecture review
- Lecture preparation
- Four activities making use of students' notes
- Quiz 1
- Quiz 2
- Four assignment preparation activities
- What's difficult?
- Presentation practice
- Exam question devising
- 21 brief suggestions for further activities

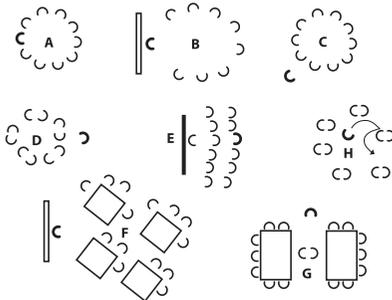
1. Structuring Group Discussion

The most effective learners are autonomous: they will make their own decisions about how, when and what to learn rather than passively following advice from their tutor or from you, their PASS Leader. Students in your group will not easily abandon their existing learning methods because these are most likely based upon long-lasting habits which may have been successful in the past, although this is no guarantee that these habits will continue to be successful in higher education.

You can help members of your group to develop more effective learning methods by providing them first with opportunities to reflect upon past and current learning experiences and then to reinforce their ideas, or gain new perspectives, through discussion with one or more of their colleagues. Additionally, by breaking your group down into smaller clusters you will encourage them to become more accountable to themselves and each other, promote active processing of course materials, and encourage everyone to participate in the PASS session.

Re-arranging furniture

There is no reason to accept the furniture in a classroom as immovable (unless, that is, it is screwed to the floor!), but in order to get discussion going you may find it useful to reorganise it to suit your needs. For instance, if you find the room arranged with chairs and tables in straight lines you will find it difficult to get group discussions going simply because people sitting in straight lines do not have eye contact with each other. So, you might like to consider some of the following configurations which, of course have implications for where you put yourself.



8 possible arrangements of student groups
The PASS leader's position is shown as a bold semi-circle.

You may need to be 'democratically assertive' to get the students to move from where they are sitting and to form groups. Phrases like "What I'd like you to do is....." possibly followed by "OK, off you go" are likely to work

The arrangement of furniture is usually easier if you know in advance how you will start the session and can get into the room beforehand and organise the furniture yourself. However if you have to organise groups during the session you may need to be 'democratically assertive' to get the students to move from where they are sitting and to form groups. Phrases like "What I'd like you to do is....." possibly followed by "OK, off you go" are likely to work.

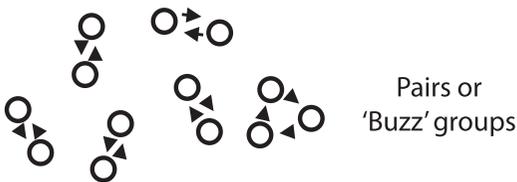
Managing group discussions

Group discussions, in which every person is free to contribute, may sound straightforward. Ideally everyone is actively involved and the topic under discussion is of equal interest to all. When the discussion is successful it may be difficult to determine who is actually leading the discussion. The reality is often somewhat different and group discussions require a lot of skill to manage successfully. Fortunately, there are several different techniques which can be used to make this process easier to manage and which ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. Watch how your tutors employ these techniques. Which seem to work the best? Why and when did they work well?

Some of the most frequently used techniques are:

1. Pairs

Working in pairs is a quick and effective way of getting everyone involved in the discussion. Explaining something to somebody else enables arguments and ideas to be rehearsed in safety. Listening to and questioning another person can help to get new ideas, interpretations and perspectives.

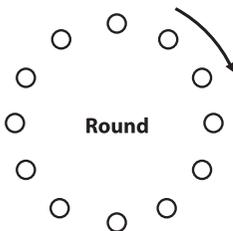


It can sometimes help to ask individuals to talk in turn, 5 minutes each way

2. Rounds

This is a simple way of ensuring that everyone speaks. In a 'round' everyone, including the PASS Leader, speaks briefly about a given topic. The ground rules for a 'round' are:

- One person takes notes
- Everyone speaks in turn
- Everyone listens when it is not their turn
- It is okay to repeat what someone else has said
- Any person may 'pass' first time round, but must respond after the others have finished.



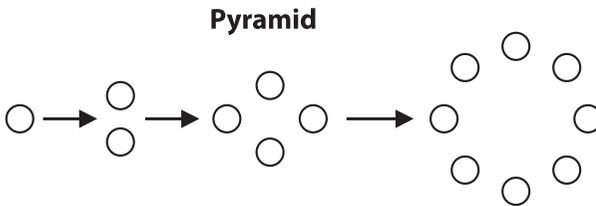
It helps if the chairs are arranged in a circle so that everyone can see and hear everyone else.

3. Pyramid

This method has four stages:

- First, students work alone, jotting down and clarifying their thoughts on the issue to be discussed
- Second, in pairs they share their thoughts, notes or ideas which gives everyone a chance to try out their ideas with someone else
- Third, each pair joins another pair to discuss problems, issues applications or solutions
- Finally, a feedback session takes place in which ideas, solutions, conclusions are drawn together and written on the whiteboard.

Pyramid discussion means that everyone has participated in one way or another



The amount of time given to each stage is in the ratio of 1:2:4 and 8 i.e. 2 minutes individually, 4 minutes in pairs, 8 minutes in a group of 4, 16 minutes feedback.

4. Brainstorming

Ideal group size is between 3 -6 people. Brainstorming is a three stage process:

- The first stage gives group members the freedom to express their ideas and is intended to encourage creativity:
 - One person acts as note taker
 - Suggestions are called out in any order
 - Wild and even ridiculous ideas are welcome
 - No attempt is made to explain or justify these ideas
 - Nobody comments on other people's suggestions
- In the second stage items are discussed
 - Each idea is explained or further information about it is elicited
 - Ideas are then prioritised
- Finally, in the third stage, the PASS Leader gets each group to explain their most important ideas to everyone else

You may find a useful warm-up for Brainstorming is to find an object that can be passed round the group such as a book or a length of cable and ask each person as they hold it to think of a new use for it.

There is more on Brainstorming in Solving Problems in Section I

5. Syndicate groups

- Usually sized between 4 and 6 persons per syndicate group.
- Each group works on the same problem, or different aspects of the same problem, at the same time.
- On completion of the task, or at the end of the allotted time, each group reports back their ideas to everyone so that they can compare other groups' ideas with their own.
- Alternatively, you can number off members in each group: 1,2,3,4,5 and ask all the 1s, the 2s, the 3s etc. to form new groups and report on what happened in their previous group.

6. Group survey

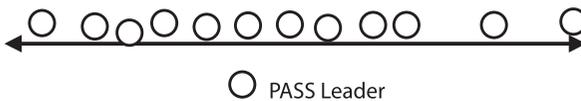
- Each group member is surveyed to find out their position on an issue.
- This process ensures that each person is allowed to offer their point of view.
- Group survey works best when views are briefly and concisely stated and people feel safe when putting forward their ideas.
- As Leader you should make sure that every person's ideas are briefly noted on the whiteboard.

7. Jigsaw

- The group is broken into smaller subgroups and each subgroup works on a different aspect of the same problem.
- You will need to make sure that each subgroup works on an aspect that is clearly defined and does not significantly overlap the aspect of another subgroup.
- Each subgroup then shares their part of the puzzle with the whole group.
- When used properly, jigsaw makes the group as a whole dependent upon all of the subgroups.

8. Line-up

- Ask the students to stand in a line according to height, age, alphabetical order of name or some other criterion that allows and encourages them to talk and negotiate.



Line-ups are a particularly good way to break up cliques or to mix students with different approaches and attitudes.

- This can serve as a starting point for allocating individuals to sub-groups. If you want groups of, say, five members each, simply count "1,2,3,4,5; 1,2,3,4,5" and so on from one end until you reach the other end. You can then allocate them to heterogeneous groups by saying "All the ones go together, all the 2s, all the 3s, all the 4s and all the 5s".
- This is a particularly good way of breaking up cliques or of mixing students with different approaches and attitudes.

Based upon: Habeshaw, T. et al (1995) 53 interesting ways of helping your students to study. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services Ltd., pp 11 - 13

2. Icebreakers - warming up the group

People (even students!) are often cautious about talking to or working with someone they don't know. If the PASS group is to work effectively you will need to help everyone feel comfortable in working, and sometimes being open, with other students. Icebreakers are designed to help in this. They can be so useful to get a group talking, especially where those in the group do not know each other, or there are a number of new people.

Some people really enjoy icebreakers, other people think they are tiresome or even painful. You may need to "manage" the few reluctant ones or find an icebreaker that you consider to be less alien or threatening to them.

Some suggestions are listed here which you may wish to use. They will probably be of most use in your first or early PASS sessions. Feel free to make up your own icebreakers or use one that you have used successfully before.

Getting to know you (pairs)

Aim: to acquaint people with one another

Use: first and/or second session

Ask students to get into pairs and tell each other ten things about themselves among which they must include something unusual and something they would like to be remembered for. This could be where they live, their favourite book or drink, a strange experience-anything. When it seems conversation is drifting away, get the attention of the group as a whole, and get each person to say as much as they can remember about the person they have been talking to.

Getting to know you (group)

Aim: to acquaint people with one another

Use: first and/or second session

Write a list on the board of as many items as there are people in the group that are likely characteristics of someone in the room (join in yourself). These might be things such as: has recently been to Europe, likes cider, has more than one brother, etc. When you have written these up, get everyone in the group to stand up and walk around, and tell them they need to find a different person for each of these characteristics and write down their name.

Give them time to mingle and find as many names as they can. Once activity dies down, get everyone to sit down and go around the group asking individuals who they had named for each characteristic. Next, ask the person named more about this (i.e. if the person asked says 'John has recently been to Europe', ask John more about his visit) until you have been through the list.

Grandmother's suitcase (group)

Aim: to acquaint people with one another

Use: first and/or second session

Seat people in a circle and explain you are going to play a memory game. Ask the first person to say their name, their favourite and least favourite thing. Then move to the second person, who must repeat the name and (least) favourite things of the first person, and then say their own (e.g. 'This is John, he loves chocolate and hates Big Brother, I'm Karen, I love frogs and hate the rain'). This goes on around the circle, getting more difficult as the number of people increases.

You can finish by asking the first person to say the names of everyone in the group, and attempting this yourself.

The Worst Mistake I Ever Made (individual-group)

Aim: to reduce tension in the group

Use: early sessions or to re-energise a group

At the start of the icebreaker, appoint one person as judge. They will decide who has the best story and the most courage in telling it.

Give participants a minute or two to write down the story of the worst mistake they ever made. Encourage them to be brave!

Begin by telling your own story, then go around the group encouraging others to tell their stories.

Ask the judge to nominate the most disastrous mistake, then reward the owner or confess with a round of applause.

Everyone is unique

Aim: fun, relaxation and a chance to get to know each other

Use: first and/or second session

Invite each group member to introduce themselves, but rather than encouraging a catalogue of generalities, ask them to tell the group something they think that makes them special or unusual in the group.

Alternatively, suggest they introduce themselves in the manner of a group theme, for example, creatively, scientifically or poetically; or to say three adjectives that describe themselves as they see themselves, and three more as they'd like to see themselves.

Affinities

Aim: to create a sense of sharing and mutual interest

Use: early sessions or to re-energise a group

In this exercise students alternately form clusters and mill around (the idea is to interweave the two operations).

Clusters: ask them to form groups according to one of the following:

- the month of the year in which they were born,
- colour of eyes,
- whether first born, middle or eldest,
- their favourite soap opera (plus those who can't stand them).

Milling : ask them to walk around the room and exchange information on one of the following:

- the first thing they thought of when they woke up this morning,
- what they imagine the first line of their obituary might be
- what their favourite book/film/play/group/team is and a one-line reason.

Maps

Aim: create a sense of the similarity of differences and to generate movement

Use: first session

Roughly outline, on the floor of the room with chairs or whatever, a map of the country, the world or any other geographical layout and ask people to stand on the map where they were born, then where they were educated, and finally where they now live or work.

At each stage ask them to:

- look around to see where others are
- talk to others near them about their locality or country,
- chat about what they might know or have in common.

If anyone looks like they are isolated invite them to walk around the other clusters introducing themselves and where they come from, where they live and so on.

Invite each group member to introduce themselves, but rather than encouraging a catalogue of generalities, ask them to tell the group something they think that makes them special or unusual in the group.

3. Suggested activities for PASS sessions

PASS Sessions early on in the year

After your first PASS session, for which special notes are provided, your next few PASS sessions should focus on a range of issues that will help your students settle in to life at College.

- Using the Library for your research
- Citing references
- Plagiarism: what it is and how to avoid it
- Developing good study habits

PASS sessions after the first few weeks

Once you have covered the above, the following activities can be used to form part or the whole of a PASS session. Each is intended to help you prepare for your PASS sessions by giving you some ideas for creating structured, purposeful activities to assist your students in their learning.

Before starting any of the activities you should:

- Tell the class the purpose of the activity
- Give them an overview of what the activity will involve.

1. Lecture review

Purpose: To review material delivered in a recent lecture

- Set up class in pairs
- Get each pair to agree on a recent lecture they either found difficult or would like to review again
- Ask each pair to write a list of the main points from the lecture
- Suggest they add whatever it was they found difficult, even if it was the lecturer's style
- Write on board the lectures suggested by pairs and the main points - take only one point from each pair at a time so that everyone can feel included
- Lead a group discussion around points from lecture - review each point in turn and ask that someone in the class explains the point

2. Lecture preparation using materials from lecturer

Purpose: to prepare for an upcoming lecture

- Distribute relevant materials in connection with lecture subject area as agreed, in advance, with lecturer
- Divide students into small groups
- Give each group separate sections of text/materials to review
- Ask each of the groups to identify 3-5 key points in connection with their section of the text/materials
- Invite each of the groups, in sequence, to present and explain their findings
- Lead a group discussion around the overall subject area
- Encourage the students to read the text/materials and any further notes they have taken during the PASS session in full before the lecture

3. Activities making use of students' notes

The following are some ideas for activities which make use of, and emphasise the importance of, students' notes. They can all be used to aid review of lectures and check for completeness of notes. And could be used in conjunction with the guidelines in "Making Notes", in Section J.

3a. Bullet point summary & mind mapping

Purpose: To review notes and develop note-taking skills; to review a lecture

Note: requires that individuals have notes from the same lecture with them - perhaps from a lecture immediately preceding the PASS session

- Ask each person in the group to work individually to produce a summary of their lecture notes clearly identifying the most important points made by the lecturer.
- Ask that they provide either (a) a bullet-point summary of the lecture or (b) a mind map of the lecture.
- Put the students in pairs and get them to compare their lecture summary.
- Ask the students about differences they found between their own and their partner's summary.
- Using the class's summary develop an overview of the lecture on the board.
- Discuss effective note-taking techniques.

To ensure everyone gets involved in the following 3 activities, you could divide the group into at least three sub-groups: at least one group constructs an overview; another group writes a summary paragraph, and the final group generates some test or exam questions. Use the last 20 minutes of the PASS session to get the whole group to join in discussion answering the test or exam questions.

3b. Constructing an overview of a lecture

Aim: to get students to understand the key ideas of a lecture or subject area; to prepare for short answer exams; to develop note-taking skills.

Use: Regularly.

- Divide students into pairs and tell them you want them to use their notes to summarise a lecture (or subject area).
- Ask each pair to summarise their lecture as an overview. Tell them (and write on board) that they should summarise the lecture by using:
 - Headings
 - Sub-headings
 - Main points
 - Examples
 - New terms
 - Queries or things that confuse them
- Ask students to generate an overview in pairs. After about ten minutes or when completed, ask each pair to share their overview with another pair who have also created an overview.
- To review content ask a student to come to the board and summarise the main points from the lecture, encouraging other students in the class to provide the ideas to be written on the board.

3c. Writing a summary paragraph

Aim: to get students to understand the key ideas of a lecture or subject area; to prepare for short answer exams; to develop note-taking skills.

Use: Regularly.

This activity is similar to the above, except you are asking students to summarise the contents of a lecture in a paragraph rather than as a structured overview.

You may wish to ask some pairs to do the first activity, and ask other pairs to do this activity.

- Divide students into pairs, or groups of 3 or 4, and tell them you want them to use their notes to summarise a lecture.
- Ask each pair to write a one paragraph summary of their most recent lecture.
- After about ten minutes or when completed, ask each pair to then share their summary paragraph with another pair.
- If you wish, pairs can then share their ideas with the class.
- To review content, you may wish to ask a student to come to the board and summarise the main points from the lecture, encouraging other students in the class to provide the ideas to be written on the board.

3d. Generating test or exam questions

Aim: to get students to understand the key ideas of a lecture/unit; to prepare for exams.

Use: Regularly

- Divide students into pairs, or groups of 3 or 4.
- Show the students one or two typical exam questions in their subject area. Ask them to think carefully about what they think is required.
- Now ask them to write three possible exam questions based on a lecture/unit. Encourage them to check their notes whilst doing so.
- When they have written their questions, write three column headings on the board:
 - Definition or summary questions (knowing facts)
 - Analytical questions (understanding theory)
 - Evaluation questions (appraising/ criticising theory)(See page 8 in "Making Notes", Section J for further explanation)
- Invite a student up to the board to be scribe and ask the class to read out their questions, saying under which column each question should be.
- Ask the class if they agree in which column it is placed and why.
- Once all (or a lot of) the questions have been placed on the board, ask the class as a whole to join in discussion answering the questions.

4. Quiz 1

Purpose: To review recent course material in light-hearted manner

- Ask each individual in the class to spend a few minutes writing out on a piece of paper 3 questions based on current course material, which can be included in a quiz.
- Ensure that they also write down the answer to their questions, and encourage them to refer to their notes to check for accuracy.
- Ask each person to write their name on their question sheet.
- Collect the questions.
- Split the class into two teams and get each team to choose a team name write these on the board.
- Assume the role of quiz-master and read through the questions - each team has to write an answer to each question.
- Allow the teams a short time to confer.
- When you have read through a fair sample of questions go back to the first question and get each team to read out their answers.
- You decide which team has given the best answer and score them on the board.

Your decision is final on who has given the best answer!

5. Quiz 2

Purpose: To review recent course material in light-hearted manner

- Divide the group in two or more teams (maybe male vs. Female?)
- Get each team to choose a team name -write these on the board
- Ask each team to think of 12 - 15 questions: ten of these to be course-related, the rest to be trivia.
- Ensure that they also write down the answers to their questions, and encourage them to refer to their notes to check for accuracy.
- Ask each team to write their name on their question sheet.
- *Either* collect the questions and act as Quizmaster.
- *Or*, each team to take it in turns to ask the other a question.
- Score as follows: 3 points for a correct answer, 1 point if the question is far too difficult (e.g. Who won the Lithuanian hockey league cup in 1946), 0 if question can't be answered.

Your decision is final!

6. Four activities to help your students prepare better for assignments

6a. Assignment preparation 1

Purpose: To help students research upcoming assignment

- Ask students how they would usually plan their approach to an assignment.
- Note the different approaches on the whiteboard.
- Put group into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4.
- Ask each to scrutinise the assignment brief and to:
 - Highlight procedure word(s) which indicate the approach to take and describe in their own words how they would write about the topic (see "Essay Writing" in Section J for definitions of various procedure words).
 - Identify content-related key words that will indicate topics or issues to write about.

- Brainstorm what they already know about these topics.
- Identify what they need to find out i.e. what research) they need to undertake
- Write 3-4 research questions which they should aim to answer when carrying out their research.
- Develop an outline time plan for completing the assignment clearly indicating when, where and how each stage will be undertaken and allowing sufficient time for amending initial drafts.
- Ask each group to share their responses with whole group.

6b. Assignment preparation 2

Purpose: To analyse requirements for an upcoming assignment

- Lead an open discussion about what they think the tutor is looking for in the assignment.
- Put group into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4.
- Ask each to:
 - Re-write the assignment title in their own words or terms that make more sense to them.
 - List technical terms and define them.
- At this stage bring the group back together to review answers. Ask student(s) to write some of their suggestions on the board
- Put the group back into pairs or small groups. Ask each to:
 - Write out a structure for the assignment.
 - Write a checklist of what needs to be included to get a 'good mark' in terms of content, organisation, structure and style.

6c. Assignment preparation 3

Purpose: To prepare for an upcoming assignment (content)

- Lead open discussion around what the students think the lecturer is looking for in the assignment.
- Put group into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4.
- Ask half the sub-groups to write a list of important points to include in the assignment.
- Ask the other half of the sub-groups to draw a spider diagram (mind map) of important points to include in the assignment.
- Get each group to write their lists/diagrams on the board or an OHT.
- Lead group discussion about groups' ideas by inviting them to build on lists/diagrams

6d. Assignment preparation 4

Purpose: To prepare for an upcoming assignment (content)

- Lead open discussion around what the students think the lecturer is looking for in the assignment and identify key issues to be addressed.
- Put group into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4.
- Use Jigsaw technique (see page 6 in this section) and assign a *different* issue to each pair or small group.
- Ask each to list the essential points or issues to be addressed on their topic or issue
- Get each group to write their points on the board or an OHT and explain them.
- Lead group discussion about groups' ideas by inviting them to build on the ideas others have presented.

7. What's difficult?

Purpose: To focus on, and review, difficult parts of the course

- Write headings on the board for each unit or area of the course.
- Ask students either individually or in pairs to think of one or more aspects of each area of their course which they have found difficult or confusing.
- Get the class to read out what they have identified and go through a number of the suggestions, especially popular choices, for each idea.
- Ask the student who suggested it to explain what it was they found so difficult/confusing about their suggested idea or topic.
- Encourage other members of the class to try and help with their understanding.

Don't feel tempted to be the expert who explains all the answers - try to draw them out from the class.

8. Presentation practice

Purpose: To review a subject area and give group chance to practise presentations

- put group in pairs
- ask each pair to agree a subject area from the last few weeks that they found difficult
- ask each pair to tell you their choice -write it on the board
- give each pair 5-10 minutes to put together a short presentation on the subject area and how they they understood it
- each pair then gives their presentation
- The other students make positive and negative points for improvement on each presentation, thus: "What went well?" and "What could be improved, and how?"
- Class discussion on do's and don'ts for presentations

Alternative method 1: you might also decide in advance with other PASS Leaders and/or staff the presentation titles for the class to use.

Alternative method 2: you might also get pairs to choose any subject they like (e.g. a history of twiglets) for a light-hearted chance to get used to presenting -for use early in the year

Alternative method 3: you could give them a set of random cards with topics on them which have nothing to do with their course. Maybe give them a choice from only 3 and tell them they have only 5 minutes to prepare their ideas for a talk on their chosen topic. (The virtue of this is that they don't have to agonise about anything they feel they ought to know, and know that all the others are in the same boat -improvising at short notice!)

Alternative method 4: use the session as a chance to prepare for and practise a forthcoming presentation required by the course.

See "Oral Presentations" in Section J for further ideas for improving your students' presentation techniques.

9. Exam question devising

Purpose: To review and test understanding of a subject area

- With group, select a subject area.
- Divide the students into pairs or small groups of 3-4.
- Get each pair or small group to prepare three exam-type questions on the subject area (you may need to circulate round the pairs to check that the questions are suitable).
- Get each pair to give their questions to another pair.

- Each pair now works on the questions, outlining the main points they would cover and how they would structure their answers.
- Each pair now compares answers with the students that set them the questions.
- Class discussion focused on what came up, particularly whether answers corresponded with what the setters of the questions intended.

10. Brief suggestions for further activities

Here are some further brief suggestions for activities which you could get your PASS students to discuss in small groups and present in various different ways. Although they have the serious purpose of reinforcing their learning they are meant to be fun to try out.

Divide your PASS group into pairs or small groups of 3-4 and ask each group to choose a style of presentation from one of the lists below:

10a. Formal

1. Design a handout
2. Create a mind map to show what they have learned
3. Write a checklist
4. Create a poster
5. Prepare arguments from opposing sides of the issue and hold a debate
6. Write a case study
7. Think of 6 great ideas for putting this into practice
8. Write a letter or email to a friend which briefly explains what they have learned
9. Prepare a presentation evaluating what they have learned, how they might use it and any recommendations for improvement
10. Design a strategy for putting this into place, including how to overcome anticipated obstacles. Record the details on a flow chart
11. Find some real life examples of when this is done
12. Design a mini teaching session to teach others about this

10b. Creative

1. Present what they have learned in the style of a talk show
2. Think of a metaphor which describes what they have learned
3. Create a crossword that demonstrates what they have learned
4. Present what they have learned in the form of a story
5. Design a game or activity that will help embed the material
6. Present what they have learned in the style of a news bulletin
7. Demonstrate what they have learned using people and props
8. Act out what they have learned
9. Write a poem about what they have learned
10. Think of a tune then write a song about what they have learned to fit the tune



Section F Working with your PASS Group

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1. Facilitating the Group

As you know, you are not there to give answers to the group. You are there to help your students get to their own answers and guide them towards acquiring their own understanding. This will enable students to develop a deep approach to learning (see section B).

The notes below are intended to indicate ways in which you can facilitate sessions and guide your students towards acquiring their own understanding.

Initiating

- Define the problem to be worked on and, with the group, agree procedures and ideas for solving the problem.

Seeking information or opinions

- Request facts
- Seek relevant information
- Ask for ideas or examples
- Elicit further suggestions

(sometimes it may be useful to check: "Is that a fact or an opinion?")

Clarifying and elaborating

Ask members of the group to:

- Define terms
- Clear up different interpretations or confusion
- Indicate alternatives or applications
- Identify key issues

Summarising

You should try to:

- Pull together related ideas
- Restate suggestions after the group has discussed them
- Offer a decision for the group to accept or reject

Seeking decisions

- Test the group for their readiness to make decisions
- Seek decision making procedures like "let's put that to the vote" or "give me some ideas and I'll see what's possible by next week" for example

Taking decisions

- State the group's feelings in terms of a group decision
- Invoke the decision making procedure

2. An Effective PASS Group

Successful group productivity depends on the ability of the group members to exchange ideas freely and clearly, and to feel involved in the decisions and processes of the group.

No group can become fully productive until its members are willing to assume responsibility for the way the group acts. The most effective PASS Leaders realise, and help the group realise, that contributing to the total task of leadership is the responsibility of each member.

An effective PASS Group:

- Is not dominated by the PASS Leader.
- Has a clear understanding of its goals and purposes.
- Channels its energy into effective work.
- Is flexible in its procedures.
- Provides for everyone to feel included, even reluctant, late or occasional members.
- Feels safe in terms of relationships and boundaries
- Achieves the balance between group productivity and the satisfaction of individual needs.
- Makes intelligent use of the differing knowledge and abilities of members.
- Provides for sharing of leadership responsibilities by group members -that all members are concerned about contributing ideas, elaborating and clarifying the ideas of others, giving opinions and testing the feasibility of potential decisions.
- Has a high degree of cohesiveness, but not to the point of stifling individual freedom.
- Has achieved a high degree of communication and understanding between group members. As well as ideas, personal feelings and attitudes are encouraged to be shared as they are considered important to the work of the group.
- Is able to initiate and carry out effective decision making carefully, taking into consideration minority viewpoints.
- Can be objective about reviewing its own processes. It can face its problems and adjust to needed modifications in its operations.
- Maintains a balance between emotional and rational behaviour, and channels emotion into productive group effort.

3. Listening Skills

There's an exercise on listening in the follow-up training materials

Ineffective Listening	Effective Listening
Non-verbal behaviour	
Listener looks bored, uninterested or judgemental; avoids eye contact; displays distracting mannerisms; (doodles, plays with a paper clip, looks out of the window etc.).	Listener maintains positive posture; avoids distracting mannerisms; keeps attention focused on speaker; maintains eye contact; nods and smiles when appropriate.
Focus of attention	
Listener keeps focus of comments on self: "When something like that happens to me, I....."	Listener shifts focus of attention to the speaker: "When that happened, what did you do?"
Acceptance	
Listener fails to accept speaker's ideas and feelings: "I think it would have been better to....."	Listener accepts ideas & feelings: "That's an interesting idea; can you say more about it?"
Empathy	
Listener fails to empathise: "I don't see why you felt that".	Listener empathises "So you weren't very happy about that".
Probing	
Listener fails to probe into an area to better understand an idea or feeling.	Listener probes in a helpful way to follow up on an idea or feeling "Could you tell me more about what led you to feel that way?" and follows up: "You said that..."
Paraphrasing	
Listener fails to check by restating in her own words important statements made by the speaker.	Listener paraphrases at an appropriate time to check understanding: "So what you're saying is...."
Summarising	
Listener fails to summarise.	Listener summarises progress of the conversation from time to time
Advising	
Listener narrows the range of ideas by suggesting a 'correct' course of action: "Here's what I suggest you do", "Why don't you do this?".	Listener asks what speaker wants to do, or widens the range of ideas by suggesting a number of alternatives from which the speaker can choose: "So what would you like to do?" " Which option do you prefer?"

4. Stages of Group Development

Groups can be seen to develop through a sequence of **Forming → Storming → Norming → Performing → Ending**, each of which is regarded as a necessary precursor to the next. In other words, you can expect each of them to happen over a period of weeks, or even months, and sometimes even to repeat themselves.

Stage One: Forming

Group concerns

- What shall we do?
- Why should we do it?
- Anxiety, uncertainty, vulnerability.
- Reliance on PASS Leader.

PASS Leader Objectives

- To explain the purpose of the group;
- Ensure that each person has made contact with at least 2 other members in the group.

Stage Two: Storming

Group Concerns

- How can it be done?
- Differences of opinion expressed.
- Conflict between members about task.

PASS Leader Objectives

- To establish limits
- To clarify and respond to individual needs

PASS Leader Tasks

1. Clarify the role of group members and PASS Leaders.
2. Discuss a range of learning methods for the group:
 - a) Establish a rationale for skill acquisition.
 - b) Modelling or demonstrating e.g. use another PASS Leader, other group members.
 - c) Role playing/enactment: needs clear guidelines if it is to be successful. Use everyday situations familiar to the group.
 - d) Recall some (deep) learning strategies you have used successfully.

Stage Three: Norming

Group Concerns

- We can do it!
- Beginnings of group co-operation.
- Building up network of mutual support
- Familiarity and trust

PASS Leader Objectives

- To foster group cohesion
- To link ideas and wishes to action

PASS Leader Tasks

1. Facilitate group cohesion:
 - Provide feedback and encouragement for specific contributions. Acknowledge attempts at task as well as its successful completion
 - Maintain a positive outlook -focus on group's assets and present abilities
 - Deal with issues such as erratic attendance, conflicts between individuals as they arise.
 - Plan definite beginnings and endings to sessions, fostering a constructive atmosphere.
2. Facilitate group co-operation:
 - Emphasise active participation i.e. plenty of 'doing'.
 - Acknowledge all group members even though participation may vary.
 - Be prepared to repeat explanations and instructions and to modify activities to meet the abilities of the group.
 - Use a variety of learning methods and try not to stick to the same format each week - familiarity can lead to boredom.

Stage Four: Performing

Group Concerns

- We are doing it!
- Contributing towards group goals
- Commitment to group -members and task

PASS Leader Objectives

- To encourage participation
- To facilitate productive problem solving
- To remain flexible and responsive to individual needs

PASS Leader Tasks

1. Use linking experiences to encourage use of skills in wider professional and social contexts e.g. field work, local companies, etc.
2. Encourage the generalisation of skills:
 - Suggest group members look for own examples, case studies, etc.
 - Pitch activities at the appropriate level for the group.

Stage Five: Ending

Group Concerns

- Have we achieved our target?
- Reluctance to end the session with an accompanying sense of loss
- Dependence on group support and social contact

PASS Leader Objectives

- To allow individuals to leave with a sense of integrity and purpose
- To maintain group cohesion and commitment
- To facilitate ending on a constructive and positive note

Balance between group and individual needs

The above stages can be seen in the following diagram in which the relative concerns of the individual and the group are matched with the task needs. The relative sizes of the circles indicate how influential the different needs are likely to be at each stage of group development. The broken lines round the circles for the Ending stage indicate a degree of fluidity very much depending on what may or may not follow the last organised meeting of the group.

Stage of group development	Individual needs	Group needs	Task needs
Forming	Large circle	Small circle	Very small circle
Storming	Large circle	Large circle	Very small circle
Norming	Small circle	Large circle	Small circle
Performing	Small circle	Small circle	Large circle
Ending	Small circle	Small circle	Small circle

Relative influence of individual, group and task needs on group members' behaviour at different stages of group development based on Guirdham, M (1990) Interpersonal Skills at Work, Prentice Hall

Of course, all groups don't progress in these linear ways or at the same pace. And a change in group membership or the task can cause the group to fall back to a prior stage as the existing norms and methods prove to be inadequate.

All in all, what is important in matters of group development is to recognise that each of the stages forms a natural and desirable part of a group's progress and to be able to recognise what is happening when it happens as well as to make the appropriate choices of what to do based on the previous suggestions.

Most groups, if they are developing effectively, will move fairly quickly through the first three stages, devoting most time and energy to the more mature, and productive, performing stage.

Working in Cross Cultural Settings

1. Introduction

Working in a multi-cultural setting is challenging and rewarding. It is also an opportunity to develop the wide range of intercultural competence skills that employers now seek.

It is likely that some of the students in your PASS sessions will be students who come from outside Ireland and who are used to studying in very different ways. Indeed, you may be an international student yourself in which case you will know how different our system of education is here in Ireland!

What follows are a few suggestions on how you might better overcome some of the challenges of working with a diverse group of students in PASS. These suggestions also apply to working in any multi-cultural setting.

2. Reflect on your own experiences

First of all take five minutes to reflect upon your own experiences of working with people from other cultures.

What observations have you made about the way that, for example, Chinese students differ from you in the way they learn and behave?

- How do they greet each other?
- How do they behave in the lecture theatre?
- How they relate to the lecturer?
- How they relate to each other?
- How they relate to other non-Chinese students?

3. Be explicit

The Irish (to generalise) are often very polite and afraid of stating the obvious. Irish people are very good at implying rather than explaining what we expect and what we mean. When helping students to learn new approaches, be explicit.

Some examples:

Assessment - You may need to decode an essay title. What do the various 'procedure' words mean? How is 'evaluate' different from 'justify', or 'discuss' different from 'describe' (see advice notes on 'Essay writing' in your PASS Student Leaders Manual for more examples).

Clarify the criteria lecturers use when marking (and what a 'good' mark means).

Planning - Don't forget international students might take much longer to produce work if English is not their native language.

About interpersonal relationships - Tell them how you wish to be addressed. Make your role and its limitations (or boundaries) absolutely clear early on. Be explicit about when and how you can help them.

4. Feedback – your important role!

International students who study in the UK are probably willing to change the way they have always done things (they chose to come here and expected difference), however this may be a difficult and slow process. It is useful to be aware of the importance of your role in this context. They can ask you things they might not wish to ask the lecturer and you can give them useful feedback and lots of examples of good practice in a non threatening environment.

5. Keep it simple

Students need time to think and digest what you say before they reach an understanding. Keep it simple!

Avoid metaphors, puns, jokes, colloquial phrases and slang, or, if you do use them – BE EXPLICIT – explain what they mean!

Be willing to repeat what you have said if necessary.

6. Speaking in class

Being expected to argue, articulate and share opinions can be difficult in a second language. Pair and small group work can help a lot and is a useful way of giving students time to practise a response before sharing their ideas with the whole group. (*Section E of this guidebook "Structuring Group Discussion" contains more ideas*).

7. Increase your cross-cultural sensitivity

Try to get to know something about your international students, where they come from and what their life is like back in their home country. Don't be afraid to ask questions! Exploring what others do and how they think will help you to become aware of your own rules, assumptions and conventions.

8. West is best?

Remember that the way we learn and the way we do things here is just one way of doing things and not necessarily the best way of doing things, just different.

Be careful not to make value judgements. Remember, all students need to learn the rules and the way we do things here if they wish to succeed.

9. Irish home students

You will have a very important role in creating a supportive environment where discussion of cultural difference and things in common can thrive. You'll need to consider the following in relation to the other students in your group:

- How do Irish-based students perceive the international students?
- How might you deal with any difficulties in communication or understanding?
- How might you encourage more interaction and cross-cultural sensitivity?

10. Group work

Groups that include a variety of cultures often find it hard to work effectively together. Tension may arise where group work is assessed in terms of outcome rather than process.

PASS sessions provide an ideal forum in which to analyse the process of working together in multi-cultural groups through discussing the difficulties and the positive aspects too. Use PASS as a tool to increase cross-cultural awareness within the group.

Source: Carroll, J., 2002, Suggestions for teaching international students more effectively: www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/

Working with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

What is the VLE?

The VLE is a learning management system. It allows teachers to create an online learning environment where they can provide both course resources and interactive activities for students. Each PASS programme has a course space on the VLE for you to manage your PASS group.

Some useful VLE features:

- uploading and sharing of materials
- online discussions and chats
- quizzes / surveys
- allows students to upload their own files
- instant messaging
- blogging
- building of useful glossaries
- calendars and event scheduling
- journals

How can the VLE complement the PASS programme?

- Gives you and the students you are mentoring an environment that's available 24 hours, from on or off campus.
- Creates a sense of community around the PASS programme.
- Students get to interact and help each other.
- Questions asked on the forum can be seen by all – so one student's query can help others.
- Serves as a good clear record of how the PASS programme is progressing.
- A private common area for all PASS leaders allows you to liaise with your contemporaries on other courses.
- Your the VLE PASS space can be reused and used to help subsequent programmes, if you so wish.



Section G

Promoting PASS

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Promoting PASS

Many students will not be familiar with the idea of PASS so we have to promote it in an encouraging and stimulating way. Effective promotion can help develop and sustain interest in and awareness of PASS.

Promotion can take a number of forms, such as:

- Speaking at first year lectures
- Speaking at Class Rep events
- Emails to students
- Through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- Posters and publicity material on appropriate course notice boards
- Arranging to meet your group in the student café/bar
- Text Alerts
- Facebook, Twitter and other social media / app tools.

When promoting/advertising PASS, try to emphasise:

- The benefits of PASS
 - Helps understanding of challenging course material
 - Helps students have a clear view of course direction and expectations
 - Helps increase grades
 - Helps develop good study habits, such as in note taking and essay writing as well as taking an active part in discussion.
- Character and content of PASS
 - Tell students what you plan to cover that week with specific examples
 - Let them know it is student-owned - they can raise anything they wish in sessions

Never mention the voluntary nature of the PASS scheme to first years. For many, voluntary equals 'don't have to go'.

- Therefore communicate to the first year groups PASS study sessions and is on their timetable for a reason. Their programme is fortunate to have the scheme set-up on their course. Therefore students are required to attend.. just like they are required to attend lectures! But the difference with PASS is they will not have an exam at the end of term.
- PASS is all about the weekly experience. Attendance at PASS sessions is the bonus to the student in the long term and it will impact how they perform in all their exams and assignments in the long term.
- Finally explain PASS will help you get to grips with 3rd level college life, it is 'serious but fun' where you get a better understanding of your course, prepare for your exams and assignments as well as meeting friends.
- All first year students who attend 6 or more PASS sessions receive a PASS group certificate.
- Research has shown those attending 4 or more PASS sessions can increase their academic performance by 10%

Never allude to PASS as being in any way remedial. It is not, and any suggestion that it is can have a dramatic adverse effect on attendance.

And you may want to keep in the back of your mind that it can help you with your learning, but don't tell them that!

Example Promotional Poster/Flyer

Peer Assisted Study Sessions

'Supporting the First Year Experience'

Attention First Years

BSc Science

Attend Your Weekly PASS Sessions

<INSERT DAY and DATE>

<INSERT MONTH>

<INSERT TIME>

<INSERT ROOM NUMBER>

PASS Leaders Names: XXXX and email

PASS Session topics include: accommodation issues, information on the best places to go, find your way around campus, locating resources in the Library, practising your referencing skills, avoiding plagiarism, discussing how to get the most out of lectures, analysing note taking techniques, fun group work tasks, practising presentations, reviewing lectures you've found really difficult, analysing assignment questions or projects and lots more.

For more information visit <INSERT WEB ADDRESS IN INSTITUTE>

Attending PASS can help you get to know your course and classmates better, help your understanding of a variety of topics and prepare you for assignments, projects and exams.

Attendance at PASS

One of the biggest problems experienced at College and a number of other places where PASS runs, is that of low attendance. As a student PASS leader, you should anticipate that attendance at PASS sessions may be very variable and not feel that it is by any means all your fault!

Even some of the most successful, long-running PASS schemes in the UK expect a maximum attendance of no more than 50%, with attendance often at 10% or less.

The following are some ideas for how you might address any problems of low attendance. Most importantly, speak with your staff PASS Academic Contacts, and management. It can be very disheartening to turn up to an empty room, but this has most likely nothing to do with your skills as a PASS leader.

Some reasons for low attendance and some possible solutions

Lack of awareness about PASS

- Use promotional methods
- Place posters, promote PASS in lectures and tutorials, ask course tutor/lecturer to promote PASS.
- Set up a blog or facebook group etc.

Inconvenient slot in timetable

- See if it is possible to change slot to the agreement of your students, yourself and course tutor by requesting a change in the timetable with management.

Students 'don't need help'/ perceive PASS as remedial

- Emphasise that PASS is about increasing understanding of all students - everyone can increase grades and understanding. Promote PASS as study sessions and an opportunity to review difficult course material.

Students finding help elsewhere

- Offer students something they can't get elsewhere e.g. plan activities with staff that may appeal to them.

Course not challenging

- Prepare more challenging activities and material with staff.

Students unmotivated (or lazy, hungover, uninterested...)

- Try changing session methods - e.g. arrange to meet elsewhere (café?), try new activities, make sessions more/ less formal, ask what they wish to cover. Run a PASS session via Moodle.

Course demands are low (no assignments due in)

- Promote PASS as an opportunity to prepare for the next due assignment.

Sessions not going well

- Discuss with management and PASS Academic Contacts ways of managing sessions.



Section H Working with your school teaching team & PASS academic contacts

Guidelines for working effectively with your
school teaching team and PASS academic contacts 85

Working with your school teaching team and PASS academic contacts

Your PASS Academic Contact fulfils an important supporting and advisory role for you as a PASS Leader. You will be expected to meet with this person at regular intervals. Meetings may take place every fortnight to begin with and then once each month. In these meetings you will discuss how things are going in your PASS sessions and your PASS Academic Contact will provide you with advice on issues to address in your PASS sessions. S/he will usually be required to report on PASS to School Management and School Committees and may request some input from you to include in their report.

Some of the ways in which your school teaching team, PASS Academic Contacts may help you:

- Involve you in the Induction Week / Welcome Week so you have a chance to meet your group informally
- Keep you aware of changes in the course - particularly areas which have changed between you taking the first year and your student group's first year
- Provide you with resources, such as course handbooks, unit guides and teaching schemes
- Make sure you have copies of first year assignment schedules and briefs
- Be someone to whom you can pass on feedback from your group including areas they may be finding difficult. The PASS Academic Contact can then liaise with other members of the teaching team and feed back any specific issues of concern
- Help you review your last PASS session(s)
- Help you plan for subsequent PASS session(s)
- Help by creating, providing or suggesting activities for you to use in PASS sessions - such as a case study, quiz or problem to work through
- Act as an adviser for your work in PASS by discussing with you how PASS sessions are going
- Advise you on course matters - whether specific to the subject matter of the course or the workings of the course (e.g. appeals procedure)
- Pass on suggestions from other members of staff regarding work or issues to be discussed in PASS
- Assist with any logistical matters, such as room changes or timetabling problems

Some of the ways you can help yourself, your PASS Academic Contact and ensure your course gets full value from PASS:

- Use the session plan and review form (Section K) in meetings with PASS Academic Contacts so as to generate a clear plan for PASS sessions (even if you don't end up following it exactly)
- Keep your PASS Academic Contact aware of what has been covered in your PASS sessions. Talk through areas of confusion or difficulty with them
- S/he will want to know what successes you are having and how PASS is helping the student group. Let them know what has gone well in your PASS sessions so that they can include this information in their reports to Course Committee meetings
- Let the PASS Academic Contact know what difficulties you are experiencing so s/he can support and advise you. This will help give a balanced view of how PASS is progressing.

- Make constructive suggestions for how your PASS Academic Contact and other staff could help you e.g. a request for sample exam questions to use in a PASS session or a request to ask a particular lecturer to go over an area of difficulty again

A checklist is given below that summarises the points above.

Checklist for meeting with PASS Academic Contacts

Previous PASS session(s):

- What was the level of attendance?
- What was discussed?
- What did students have problems with?
- What went well, what didn't go too well, and why?

Subsequent PASS session(s):

- What aspects of the course will be covered in your next PASS session?
- What activities will you use to help your group review course materials or prepare better for assessed work?
- Are there any areas of help or advice you need from staff?



Section I

Forms for Planning, Review and Evaluation

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Peer Assisted Study Sessions - Session Plan

PASS Leader:

Date:

1. How did the last session go? What requests were made for the next session?
2. Aims of session:
3. Information required from staff:
4. Course subject matter to cover, if any (refer to requests from students, ideas from staff, teaching schedule etc.)
5. Study skills to cover, if any (e.g. library, referencing, essay writing, time management, presentations)
6. Group techniques to use (e.g. pair-work, pyramid)
7. Activities/techniques to use (e.g. lecture review, quiz, practise presentation, assignment analysis)

0 -15 mins:

Welcome

Share News

Brief review of main points from recent lectures

Anything additional to cover?

Agree topics for discussion

Agree schedule for session

15 mins: Pair or small group discussions.

35 mins: Start gathering feedback.

Questions/clarification/answers/sharing ideas.

50 mins: Ask what they would like to cover next week. Thank group for their input and end session.

Peer Assisted Study Sessions Programme

Programme Name:

Leader Name(s):

1. Session overview
(describe the session in your own words)

2. Course components/ topics covered (if any)

3. Number of Leaders

4. Number of Participants

5. Additional Information (factors which had a bearing on the success of your session and your performance)

PASS Session Review For completion by PASS Leader

Date of session:

Location:

Positive Points

Negative Points

6. The session in general

7. Group learning

8. Your facilitation/ group management skills



PASS Session Review For completion by PASS Leader

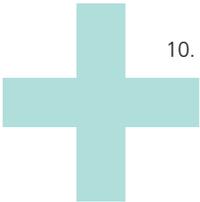
Positive Points



9. Activities used (e.g. review notes, brainstorming, general discussion)



10. Self-development (how the session influenced own skills and knowledge)



Negative Points



12. Please rate the following

disagree

agree

The session was helpful to first years

1

2

3

4

5

The session was helpful to me

1

2

3

4

5

13. Issues to raise with PASS Academic Contacts or Manager

14. Other notes

