PASS FACILLITATOR HANDBOOK

2008
This PASS Facilitator Handbook is based on the original *PASS Leader Development Handbook* (2006) compiled by Valda Miller, Elwyn Oldfield and Yvette Murtagh, The University of Queensland, as well as the *Peer Assisted Study Sessions Leader Training Manual* (1996) compiled by Eril Anne McNamara and Barbara Kelly, The University of Queensland.

This handbook also includes materials adapted from those found at http://www.peerlearning.ac.uk/. We include these materials with the kind permission of the Peer Assisted Learning Project which was based at Bournemouth University and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England under Phase Three of the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL3). Many thanks for his kind support to Hugh Fleming, Senior Lecturer & Learner Support Tutor (Peer Assisted Learning and Student Development), Academic Services, Bournemouth University, U.K.
Section 1

WHAT IS PASS?

Welcome!

P.A.S.S.

Outcomes and Benefits of PASS
Welcome to PASS!

"The authority of those who teach is often an obstacle to those who want to learn."
(Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman lawyer and statesman, 106 BC-43 BC)

Welcome to PASS! The importance of the journey you are about to commence is something that has been recognised for a very long time, as captured in the above quote which was written over 2000 years ago and encapsulates the philosophy behind PASS. We recognise that as a successful student, you are integral to the success of the PASS system. It is the sheer fact that you are a ‘knowledgeable peer’ with excellent communication skills that will allow you to facilitate, not lecture, the tutorial system that is PASS. In essence, PASS is about bringing people together and getting them talking about the issues and problems they are having with course work, and then giving them the skills and showing them how they can tackle these issues themselves, with the help of their fellow students.

So be assured, we mean to address head on the dreaded ‘silent rows’ of students who answer every question with a deathly stillness, faces strictly avoiding eye contact with the tutor in fear that a glance will be interpreted as a willingness to answer. We also aim to strike out tutorial sessions dominated by small, clicky groups who have known each other since kindergarten and exclude all others absolutely, especially those too shy to even try. PASS recognises that while breaking these cycles is partially up to the students themselves, the facilitator must play the key role in turning things about. The following manual contains hints, tips and down right solid strategies that will help you ‘get over’ these imposing hurdles to learning, tips that are based on both good research and years of teaching experience. We encourage you to take the time to read this book, and try out some of the approaches in your own PASS sessions. And most of all, we want you to have fun in your PASS sessions, and enjoy your time as a facilitator!
So by now you should be asking, “what is PASS anyway”? Good question! I am glad you asked. Firstly, let’s start by looking at the acronym, and seeing what each letter stands for.

**Peer**
- Recently studied or grappled with material: not experts
- No intimidation or status difference
- No grading or assessment role

**Assisted**
- Facilitate not ‘spoon feed’
- Assist not ‘lecture’
- Content specialists who foster active and collaborative learning by:
  - encouraging questions
  - prompting and probing for answers
  - re-directing questions to the group
  - listening for answers from all quarters
  - providing timely feedback and insight

**Study**
- Model different successful study techniques
- Willing to share what worked for them
- Adaptable for different learning styles
- Supplier of study guides / tips from lecturers
- A focus on understanding and deep learning
- Offering opportunities for students to practise and make mistakes

**Sessions**
- Regularly scheduled (once per week)
- Out of class
- Voluntarily attended
- Adjunct to, and more informal than lectures
- Students can choose session to find right “fit”
- Interactive – all students have opportunity to participate
- Friendly, fun, informal
- Enables students to find study partners
So PASS is all about creating an environment where students can gain the best possible learning experience regardless of academic ability.

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS OF PASS

‘The success of an institution and the success of its students are inseparable’

Desired Outcomes

The whole idea of PASS is to transform students enrolled in difficult subjects into active, autonomous, questioning, critical, reflective and collaborative learners, who form friendships and study partners, hence experience satisfaction and success in a learning-friendly environment rather than isolation and alienation, and who are more familiar with the direction of the course curriculum, have improved study skills, attain passing grades with understanding and are retained into second year level.

Who Benefits?

PASS benefits the:

• **individual student** and helps them to build up their confidence and self-esteem. This develops cognitive skills and the ability to master course concepts.

• **peer leaders** to develop a range of skills including group work, team leadership and communication skills. These skills can be applied to other situations, including post graduate research or job situations. Working on subject material can also enhance understanding in their own course work.

• **academic staff** involved in PASS so that they can receive regular feedback on how course content is being received by the learner and benefit from a reduced need for student consultation.

• **institution**. It is possible to target difficult courses and provide practical support for staff and students. The scheme helps to improve student performance and success across the ability range and can do more than simply reduce ‘failure’ rates. It has the potential to break down barriers between year groups and to develop an effective and successful learning community.

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

Other Benefits to Students and Leaders

First year students reported that PASS was of benefit in terms of:

• Adjusting to university life, study and culture
• The informality and opportunity for openness afforded by PASS sessions
• The cooperative aspects of PASS sessions
• Having the value of the PASS leaders’ perspective
• Understanding course subject matter
• Awareness of course direction and expectations
• Developing study skills
• Developing confidence with the course
PASS leaders report the benefits in terms of:

- Skills development, particularly communication skills and self-confidence
- Revision of first year material provided them with valuable underpinning for their second year studies
- Enjoyable, made friends
- Useful for placements, jobs, CVs and demonstrating a wider involvement in university life
Section 2
ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES
AND THE
THEORY BEHIND PASS

What is the Role of Peer Leaders?
Leaders have important roles in the learning processes of students in their groups

PASS as a Learning Model

Learning is Better When…

Learning how to Facilitate

Similarities and Differences between PASS and Teaching

Cultural differences in Learning

Learning for long term retention and transfer

Setting expectations for learning
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PEER LEADERS?

The role of the leader is to provide structure to the study session, not to re-lecture or introduce new material. The leader is a “model student” who shows how successful students think about and process course content. Collaborative learning is an important strategy since it helps students to empower themselves rather than remaining dependent as they might in traditional tutoring. Research suggests those tutoring relationships do not promote transfer of needed academic skills. Study group leaders must resist the temptation to act as experts or tutors for the first-year students. The temptation is indeed great. There is a great deal of ego satisfaction to be found in having the answers for students who are hungry with questions. Study group leaders may easily feel as though they are truly helping the students by “making sure they get it right”, however it is well known that if students solve the problem themselves they will hang on to the knowledge longer.

There are several reasons why, as a study group leader, you should resist this temptation. First, you may not have it right yourself. Do you really want to assume the responsibility of expertise? Second, even if you do understand material – even if you think you can explain much more clearly than the lecturers do – consider how it is you acquired that understanding. Did someone plant it in your brain cells? Most likely, the way you learned the material so well was by actively engaging with it – you struggled. Likewise, the first year students need to struggle too. That does not mean that you may not help – by providing approaches to finding answers, by modelling these approaches yourself, or by asking questions or providing feedback appropriate for peer learning. If you have any doubt about whether you have crossed the line too far, ask yourself, “If this were a study group of my fellow students in class X, would I function this way?” Keep your goal in mind: a successful academic enrichment program will find first year students able to actively construct knowledge independent of their study group leaders – not passively depend on them.

Likewise, just as the study groups you form on your own can degenerate into social groups or gripe sessions, beware of counterproductive study group interaction in the structured study groups. In particular, beware of allowing the study group to become an outlet for the rumour mill. While it is perfectly appropriate for students to feel comfortable airing concerns they have about the process of their education, your role should be to model successful student behaviours AND ATTITUDES. Successful students do not place responsibility for their learning on the lecturer but on themselves. Successful students do not waste their time criticizing lecturers or fellow students; they focus on the task at hand – learning the material.

LEADERS HAVE IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE LEARNING PROCESSES OF STUDENTS IN THEIR GROUPS

Establish and 'scaffold' the learning environment

Leaders play key roles in building a strong environment that allows the group to raise and explore its own questions. Competent facilitators are enthusiastic about course content, direct student involvement, introduce 'leading' questions, analogies and practical examples, yet create space for the group to carry out its own learning.

Co-produce and co-direct the learning

Each group establishes its own culture for learning week by week, so maintaining a flexible agenda is necessary. Leader-leader, leaders-students and students-students interrelationships form a focal point for learning. With each session, relative participation by students and leaders in knowledge construction can change, so that learning in PASS becomes an experiment in leadership. The challenge for the PASS leader is to recognise the value of each student's contribution towards reaching shared goal(s) and to incorporate this contribution into the knowledge pool.

Set group expectations

PASS leaders must address contexts for the learning at each session, by explaining the nature of the activities to be worked, putting the groups together, aligning their objectives for either cooperative or competitive role-play and assigning group members for specific roles within the group. Doing this sets the boundaries for group activities and helps raise both individual and group consciousness. Good facilitative leadership is born out of concern for the outcomes of all student members of the group.

The key to maintaining high quality group involvement is the leader who initiates and maintains good group interaction. The successful leader consciously builds and maintains a positive social-emotional climate within the group through personal behaviour, attitudes, and actions, which can also be learned by the students. Leaders should not only know and practise effective group leadership and provide a model for students to emulate, but should also help students learn and practise these skills themselves.

PASS AS A LEARNING MODEL

The benefits of learning in a peer-assisted environment are numerous, and include the fact that you, as PASS leaders, can help new students bridge the gap between the learning culture and expectations of high school to those of the university experience. You can also help students address the objectives from their course profile in a way that promotes deep learning and understanding of the course material. In this respect, leaders play an important role in helping to raise their students’ learning outcomes. According to educational theory perspectives, the fact that you are just ahead of your students, in terms of competence and experience, means that you can understand and empathise with their difficulties in gaining control of the new material, and can help them to construct a higher level of knowledge for themselves within this interactive framework. This learning model is consistent with Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. By aligning course curriculum objectives and assessment with their learning activities, you can keep students “on track” as far as their learning, and hopefully performance, is concerned.

Be aware that your students can have two different approaches to learning. These approaches are called either “deep” or “surface”. Deep learners analyse and find meaning from the coursework, whereas surface learners memorise selected concepts without really understanding them and skim over the rest of the words. Students’ learning approaches are influenced by a variety of factors. For example, if they consider that they can pass their exams by rehashing facts without understanding, they will adopt a surface approach to learning. Or if they learned, and succeeded, by surface learning at school, or they feel anxious, or are swamped with too much course work, they will continue to surface learn. However, when students are able to learn in a friendly and interactive environment, such as PASS, their level of meaningful interaction - or engagement - with the subject increases, and so does their willingness to adopt a deep approach to their learning.

“The surface learner is trying to “suss out” what the teacher wants and to provide it, and is likely to be motivated primarily by fear of failure. Surface learning tends to be experienced as an uphill struggle, characterised by fighting against boredom and depressive feelings. Deep learning is experienced as exciting and a gratifying challenge.”

(Adapted from Atherton, J. S. (2005). Learning and Teaching: Deep and Surface learning.)

LEARNING IS BETTER WHEN…

- Teachers are enthusiastic
- You set and achieve your goals
- It’s done in short bursts
- You are confident about yourself and the teacher
- There is a good supportive environment and encouragement is given
- You can put theory into practice
- It’s fun; you enjoy the experience
- A deep approach to studying is used
- It’s important
- It’s at the right time
- You’re actively involved
- You’re determined
- You get positive feedback
- You’re confident
- You have an incentive
- It’s step-by-step
- It recognises that people learn in different ways
- You have enough time to understand what you’re trying to learn

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, U.K.)
LEARNING HOW TO FACILITATE

A facilitator is a person who has the role of empowering students to learn in a collaborative learning group. In this setting, learning takes place through active and aware involvement – not just through the physical “doing” but also through the emotional energy that motivates the “doing”. Our feelings of enthusiasm and pleasure in what we do drive our motivation to keep going. In facilitation of learning, teaching is no longer seen as imparting information and telling things to students, but is more the guidance of students to self-directed learning. How students learn, and how to bring about this process, becomes the focus of concern rather than the old-style pre-occupation with how to teach things to people. In the old model, the teacher is primarily responsible for student learning. In the new model, the primary responsibility rests with the self-directing student, and only secondarily with the facilitator.

Facilitators can adopt three different approaches of managing the facilitation process:

1. **The hierarchical mode.** Here you, the facilitator, direct the learning process. You devise your learning activities, decide on the objectives of learning, structure the group dynamics for the learning process, and provide authentic examples to enrich the learning.

2. **The cooperative mode.** Here, you share your management of the learning process with the group, so that students are able to contribute to how they would like to structure and direct their learning. You, as facilitator, work with the students, guiding them, prompting them, redirecting questions, so that you can give meaning to their learning experience. Your collaboration with students leads them to a successful learning outcome, where students have made sense of the material and have reached the goals of their tasks.

3. **The autonomous mode.** Here, you do not do things for your group, or with them, but give them freedom to find their own way, exercising their judgement without any intervention on your part. The aim of learning is ultimately the self-directed practice of learning, and here you can create collaborative learning conditions within which students can take full control of their learning.

In a PASS context, with first year students, it is important to be flexible in how you choose your operating mode, which will vary considerably from group to group depending on the confidence or ‘know-how’ of the students.

Think about how you would like to facilitate a particular group of students: too much hierarchical control and students will remain passive and dependent, or will react and become hostile and resistant. They will not develop any skills for self-directed learning. On the other hand, too much cooperative guidance may degenerate into a situation where you are always the nurturer of their learning and they feel unable to take control of it for themselves. Probably the worst case scenario is the “too-much-autonomy-for-students” mode, where students may think that you are apathetic and slack, and wallow in ignorance and misconceptions.

Be flexible; these modes can overlap in the one session. For example, you can be basically hierarchical, but with elements of cooperation and autonomy. Thus, within hierarchical given exercises, students can be guided by you in a cooperative mode but can then adopt an autonomous and self-directing mode when they take their turn in discussions. Think about your role as a facilitator, with respect to how to best guide your group to engage deeply with the subject within these three modes of facilitation. Change your mode if you feel that group dynamics for optimal learning would benefit from an alternate approach. Consider how altering your mode may then alter how students approach their own learning tasks.

(Adapted from Heron, J. (Ed.) (1999). *Dimensions and Modes of Facilitation*).
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PASS AND TEACHING

Similarities:

- Structure of sessions, for example around assignments
- Aims to assist learning
- Planning and preparation
- Directing and receiving questions
- Teacher/Leader is focal point of class
- Concepts are clarified
- Similar aims, i.e. to understand the subject better and get good grades
- Facilitation of independence
- Both give advice and are a source of help
- Both have session plans/objectives

Differences:

- PASS doesn’t cover new material
- Leaders/students are equal; different relationship
- No formal assessment
- Different expectations
- PASS benefits students and Leaders
- PASS is more flexible
- PASS also deals with social and other university related issues
- Teachers have more course based knowledge than Leaders
- Different levels of authority
- PASS is planned around the student
- PASS encourages learning by interaction with others

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, U.K.)

"When I started PASS, I thought I knew what I would need to do to help people. I thought leading would be like being a tutor. I didn’t realise how important it is to people to have someone they feel is a companion rather than just a teacher."

"I thought that I would need a complete mastery of the material so that my students would never get stuck on a problem or worry that they had gotten the wrong answer. After leading a few people in various courses, however, I realised two things: I shouldn’t always give the students the answer; and sometimes the students don’t want just the answer. It is much more helpful to explore how to get a particular answer or to discuss the implications of an answer than to just write down a number and move on. Sometimes I may not even know the answer, but if I can get the student started and get them thinking, then I’ve done my job."

"One of the biggest realisations that I have made through this year of leading is that a lot of people just want reassurance and companionship as they struggle through problems. Just having someone there seems to make a big difference."

(Adapted from Peer Tutoring, Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University, U.S.)
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING

There are many cultural differences in learning. You may have students from a range of cultures in your PASS groups (racial, ethnic, socio-economic/class, gender, and regional cultures). It is important to think about these and their impact on the learning situation, as they may cause some hindrances to learning. For instance, some cultures value rote learning, in peer learning we try to focus on understanding; some cultures have deference to authority and will not challenge or question the lecturer or his/her content, in peer learning we encourage students to ask questions and to consider the whys of any statement; in some cultures students see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge while in peer learning we encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

Some techniques to assist with this are the use of pairing (putting a non-English speaking background student with a native speaker in paired problem solving; this forces the more reticent person to speak, but is not usually threatening); asking students to write down their questions anonymously removes the fear of challenging authority; having mixed leaders from varied cultures can provide effective role models and encourage students to engage and participate within this learning community.

LEARNING FOR LONG-TERM RETENTION AND TRANSFER

Why then do we have universities as learning communities? The main reason – some might argue the only reason – is transfer of learning. The underlying rationale for any kind of formal instruction is the assumption that knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in this setting will be recalled accurately, and will be used in some other context at some time in the future.

Here are a few basic laboratory-tested principles drawn from what we know about human learning:

1) The single most important variable in promoting long term retention and transfer is “practice at retrieval.” This principle means that learners need to generate responses, with minimal cues, repeatedly over time with varied applications so that recall becomes fluent and is more likely to occur across different contexts and content domains. Simply stated, information that is frequently retrieved becomes more retrievable.

Actual practice at retrieval helps later recall of any learned information more than does additional practice without retrieval, or time expended in learning the information in the first place. Practice at retrieval necessarily occurs over time and within a particular context. Transfer of learning can be aided by altering the context for retrieval. For example, students can practise retrieval by teaching learned concepts and skills to other students, or by responding to frequent questions asked in class or posed online. These retrieval practices can be part of the PASS learning activities.

2) Varying the conditions under which learning takes place makes learning harder for learners but results in better learning. Like practice at retrieval, varied learning conditions pay high dividends for the effort exerted. When learning occurs under varied conditions, key ideas have “multiple retrieval cues” and thus are more “available” in memory. For example, educational research suggests that significant learning gains can occur when different types of problems and solutions are mixed in the same lesson, even though the initial learning can take significantly longer. Like practice at retrieval, variability in constructing learning situations requires greater student effort but has positive results.

3) Learning is generally enhanced when learners are required to take information that is presented in one format and “re-represent” it in an alternative format. Cognitive research has established the fact that humans process information by means of two distinct channels – one for visuospatial information and one for auditory-verbal information. A given piece of information can be organized and “stored” in memory in either or both of these representational systems. According to dual-coding theory, information that is represented in both formats is more likely to be recalled than information that is stored in either format alone.

Learning and recall are thus enhanced when learners integrate information from both verbal and visuospatial representations. For example, requiring learners to draw visuospatial “concept maps” makes them a) create an organizational framework in terms of which to arrange the information they
are learning, and b) communicate this framework visually through a “network” of ideas – both of which are activities that enhance learning. Complex concepts can be related to one another in numerous ways, and depicting correct relationships among concepts is central to graphic organizing techniques.

When students engage in concept mapping, they focus on and identify different types of relationships or links among concepts. Many students report that concept mapping is a challenging experience, but that it pays off in long-term learning gains. Similarly, requiring students to write about or explain verbally what they have learned in a mathematical or schematic learning task also takes advantage of dual coding. PASS leaders need to construct activities that require both verbal and visuospatial processing of information to establish optimal learning conditions for students.

4) **What and how much is learned in any situation depends heavily on prior knowledge and experience.** Psychologists use the term “construction of knowledge” because each learner creates new meaning using what he or she already knows. Thus, the best predictor of what is learned at the completion of any lesson, course, or program of study is what the learner thinks and knows at the start of the experience. Leaders may need to assess learner knowledge and understanding at the start of every session, probing for often unstated underlying assumptions and beliefs that may influence the knowledge, skills, and abilities that we want students to acquire.

5) **Learning is influenced by both our students’ and our own philosophy of learning.** Academic motivation is related to underlying beliefs about learning itself and about how learning works. Many students complain that they “cannot do maths,” or will automatically have trouble with some other academic discipline. When questioned about this belief, what most are really saying is that they think learning ought to be easy but, in these disciplines, it is hard.

What they don’t know is that learning and remembering involve multiple, interdependent processes. Some types of learning occur implicitly, without conscious awareness. Others occur consciously but are relatively easy. Still other types of learning involve considerable effort, and are perhaps even painful and aversive, like learning how to multiply matrices. It is only after an initial investment in the hard work of learning that additional learning in these fields becomes more automatic, and consequently becomes easier. Determining the best way for students to learn and recall something will thus depend on what you want learners to learn and be able to recall, what they already know, and their own beliefs about the nature of learning.

6) **Experience alone is a poor teacher.** There are countless examples that illustrate that what people learn from experience can be systematically wrong. People frequently end up with great confidence in their erroneous beliefs. Confidence is not a reliable indicator of depth or quality of learning. In fact, research in metacognition has shown that most people are poor judges of how well they comprehend a complex topic.

The fact that most people don’t know much about the quality of their comprehension is important, because there is a popular belief that all learning and assessment should be “authentic”—that is, nearly identical in content and context to the situation in which the information to be learned will be used. But what is missing from most authentic situations—and from most real-life situations as well—is systematic and corrective feedback about the consequences of various actions. This corrective feedback is what is available to students who attend PASS.

7) **Lectures work well for learning assessed with recognition tests, but work badly for understanding.** Virtually all introductory university courses involve a lecture portion, in which a lone teacher mostly talks and writes on the board, while students take notes. This is a satisfactory arrangement for learning if the desired outcome is to produce learners who can repeat or recognize the information presented. But it is one of the worst arrangements for promoting in-depth understanding.

Lecturing is not optimal to foster deep learning. Understanding is an interpretive process in which students must be active participants. Learners need “cues” that trigger interpretation and force them to engage the material actively, even if they are sitting silently in a large lecture hall.

8) **The act of remembering itself influences what learners will and will not remember in the future.** Asking learners to recall particular pieces of the information they’ve been taught often leads to
“selective forgetting” of related information that they were not asked to recall. And even if they do well on a test taken soon after initial learning, students often perform less well on a later test after a longer retention interval. According to standard “memory trace” theories of how we remember, the act of remembering strengthens some memory traces and weakens—or at least fails to strengthen—others.

9) **Less is more, especially when we think about long-term retention and transfer.** Some introductory texts in psychology, biology, or economics seem to weigh almost as much as the students who carry them around. Leaders need to consider carefully the balance between how much and how well something is learned. Do not cover more and more content at the cost of deeper understanding.

10) **What learners do determines what and how much is learned, how well it will be remembered, and the conditions under which it will be recalled.** There is an old saying in psychology, “The head remembers what it does.” Our most important role as leaders is to direct learning activities in ways that maximize long-term retention and transfer. What lecturers do in their classes matters far less than what they ask students to do.

(Adapted from Halpern, D. F. & Hakel, M. D., *Applying the science of learning to the university and beyond: teaching for long-term retention and transfer*.)

(Adapted from O’Brien, M., *Supporting Teaching and Learning*).

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**SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR LEARNING**

Generally what is expected in learning at the University is application of knowledge, critical thinking, the ability to formulate your own point of view and justify it in ways acceptable in a given discipline. You, as leader, can assist students with information about course-specific expectations in terms of both content and process. Help students review course outlines, past exam questions, tutorial questions and problems and feedback given on written work.

You may help students by having them look at their course outline and draw a map of the content (the “what” of the subject) and have them compare them. Later you can go over exam questions to look at the “how” of the subject. What types of things are they required to know? In what format will they be required to present their information? If possible, get examples of examination answers from teaching faculty and review them with students. This should be done early in semester to allow good preparation for exams.
Section 3

PLANNING YOUR SESSIONS

Basic Skills for Leaders

Pass Leader Responsibilities

Leaders’ Checklist for Structuring Sessions

Providing Structure

Preparing Your PASS Activities
BASIC SKILLS FOR LEADERS

When all is said and done, the basic guide to being a good PASS facilitator is to be yourself! As a successful higher year student, you have already shown that you have the tools to succeed at university, so relax! The following 12 points may help you see that all PASS requires from you is your attention, some thoughtful planning and your ability to lead.

12 Key ways to make PASS work for you!

1. Most important of all: BE YOURSELF. Be relaxed and try to run your group in the most natural way for you. Create a friendly relaxed atmosphere.

2. Know the students’ names. Be interested in and concerned for the students. Did they miss a session because of an illness, problem, etc.?

3. Maintain eye contact and use gestures and physical movements effectively, but not to the level of distraction.

4. Plan an introduction to each session, an informal quiz or a particular question to open discussion.

5. Whatever study strategy you plan to use for the group session, be certain that you have a clear idea of what it should look like and how it should work.

6. Be flexible – plan for use of alternative strategies if the one planned is not working.

7. Don't feel tied to keeping up with content. You don't have to "do something" with every bit of content provided by the lecturer and the textbook.

8. Present clear board work.

9. Role model good questioning techniques. It is more effective to "model" how successful students learn a particular subject than it is to "tell" students how to do it.

10. Make use of the language of a particular discipline and the lecturer.

11. Allow time for questions to be answered. Well constructed answers take time. Wait at least 30 seconds for a response.

12. Provide closure for the session, perhaps a suggestion or direction for study, a summary or a prediction of the next class lecture. Ask students to participate in this activity.
LEADERS’ CHECKLIST FOR STRUCTURING SESSIONS

Before your Session:

1. Contact your partner and plan sessions. Use the weekly meeting with the PASS coordinators to ensure that you and your partner are prepared.

2. Determine what you need to review in order to be prepared for student questions.

3. Make sure you have your notes, textbook, and students’ learning activities.

4. Collect sticky labels for name tags.

5. Take student attendance at each session.

6. Make sure you know where your sessions is being held before the first session.

Introduction of Session:

7. **Arrive at the session early.** Wear your name tag.

8. Organise the furniture to suit your group. The arrangement of furniture in PASS is probably the single most important factor in determining the success of the session. If students sit in rows facing the leader, so that they cannot see one another’s faces, this will prevent interaction between them and put all the responsibility for the session onto the leader. If the leader sits in front of the board which is used to display information, then (s)he becomes the focus of attention and the “guardian of knowledge.” Rearrange the furniture so that students will always be sitting in groups. (Adapted from Habeshaw, Gibbs, & Habeshaw, 1998.)

9. Script the speech that you will deliver to the group to introduce students to Peer Assisted Study Sessions. You need to explain the concept of the study sessions and your role as a group leader. Remember to include the following points:
   - You are not here just to answer questions but to help them find their own answers.
   - You will serve as a resource for students to help them review lecture notes, prepare for exams, and discuss the readings.
   - You have attended a training session for group leaders.
   - You have successfully completed this course (when and with which lecturer/s).
   - It is guaranteed quality study time: activities are linked to learning objectives.
   - Study groups may emerge outside of this scheduled time.

10. At the outset of a PASS session, it is important to establish a feeling of collaboration right away by instigating a peer relationship. You want the students to feel that you are also a student, constantly learning and willing to share your ideas and perspectives with them. Many students who come to PASS do not have this view of leaders; they may see you as expert tutors. Whatever the student's attitudes, we want sessions to get off to a good start.

11. Smile, make eye contact, and speak clearly. You want to make the students feel welcome and at home, and to maintain that feeling throughout the session.

12. Take time to get acquainted, and ask your group to introduce themselves. Always exchange first names or nicknames, as you want students to know that you are PEER leaders. Find out which degree program they are in and if they have a background in the subject. Get to know and use students' names as quickly as you can. Create a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.
13. Explain the role of the leader while getting to know the student. It's important that you let the student know the difference between a peer leader and a teacher.

14. Circulate and complete attendance roll.

15. Remind your students to bring lecture notes to the session. Refer to the notes regularly.

16. Check that students understand the requirements and dates of assignments, readings, exams, and how their PASS activities are aligned to their forthcoming summative assessment.

(Adapted from The Penn State Undergraduate Writing Center Handbook for Peer Tutors in Writing Second Edition).

Content of Session:

17. If you have a large group, split them into smaller work groups to maximize participation.

18. Encourage your group to work hard on day one on some solid lecture based material. This is the best way to bond a group.


20. Remember as a group leader, you are a resource for students and their learning. Your role is to facilitate their learning process.

21. Wait for students to volunteer a well-developed answer. If you are uncomfortable waiting for 30 seconds, join students in looking through your notes or text.

22. If students are unable to answer the question, refer to the source of information. For example, provide the date of the lecture that contained the information and search for the answer together. Avoid taking on the responsibility of providing answers.

23. Encourage students to summarize major concepts of the lectures and use the whiteboard.

24. If information is incorrect, questions students about it or refer students them to specific references from the text or notes.

25. Avoid interrupting student answers. The sessions should provide a comfortable environment for students to ask questions and attempt answers.

26. Keep an eye on the time during the session. Plan your time - how long you will spend on lecture review, quiz, other problems. Don't spend too long with one student or small group and ignore the rest.

27. Be prepared to abandon your plan; the group needs to work on THEIR problems as well.

Conclusion of Session:

28. Leave time (after 45-50 minutes) to do a concise summary of what you have achieved in the session and give the students some directives about next week's session: guidance on what to study and what to prepare for the next session. Good closure wraps it up and provides continuity to return next week.

29. Make sure you collect your attendance roll, clean all boards, and leave the room tidy.
PROVIDING STRUCTURE

As a PASS leader, you need to find the balance between offering enough structure to keep the session on track whilst allowing individuals the freedom to express their ideas. Using session plans when meeting with your partner can help this process, and you can use some of the following ideas.

1. **Work systematically through the agenda**
   
   Remember to set an agenda, stick to it, and remember to close the session.

2. **Use a variety of techniques to keep the session interesting**
   - Use group discussion and pair work, and ask students to do board work
   - Keep the session informal but also make sure you focus on course concepts
   - Spend some of your time sitting with students and some time at the board
   - Get students to spend some time referring to text and notes for specific answers
   - Lead general open-ended discussion
   - Provide information visually and verbally

3. **Emphasise definitions and rules**
   
   Focussing in on definitions of new terms, or summary explanations of theory, can help provide structure to the session.

4. **Provide information visually and verbally**
   
   Some students learn better visually, others verbally. Try to make use of both, e.g. by using pictorial representations (diagrams) and verbal illustrations (lists and mnemonics).

5. **Provide analogies and example**
   
   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**

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**
   
   Make a list of problem steps where appropriate

9. **Summarise important points**

   At the end of each agenda item, summarise the main points. This will work even better if you can encourage students to provide the summary for you.

**Summary – outline of a PASS session**

Your PASS session will last around 50 to 55 minutes. The timescale may run something like this:

- **0-3 minutes** Welcome students to session.
- **3-6 minutes** Allow group to settle; join in any general conversation.
- **3-6 minutes** Set the agenda for the session.
- **6-45 minutes** Systematically work through the agenda, leading discussion, group work or activities.
- **45-50 minutes** Summarise the main points from the session with students’ help.
- **50-55 minutes** Discuss and get feedback about what the students want for the next session.
One of the crucial aspects for the success of PASS with respect to maintaining high student attendance rates is the fact that each session learning activity has some aspect that is designed and chosen by students and leaders to target the specific learning needs of the students in that group. By involving students in making decisions concerning their own learning, they take control of and become more engaged in their learning, and feel empowered to keep attending and become self-directed learners. Because activities are student-directed, issues important to students are covered to the level of detail that is required.

Many PASS leaders find that the most successful activities are those which they create themselves. We strongly encourage this, as it is both rewarding to you and beneficial to your students, and we would certainly welcome your contributions.
### Understanding & Responding to Student Learning Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems and Issues for Student Learning</th>
<th>Supportive Strategies and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak or incomplete existing knowledge</td>
<td>Be informed about potential or existing gaps in learning and literacy, and develop contingencies for the most widespread issues within specific subject areas, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect or misunderstood existing knowledge (misconceptions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-intuitive principles, theories or laws</td>
<td>• develop powerful examples, illustrations or models of difficult concepts/principles/theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken-for-granted assumptions or unexamined personal opinions</td>
<td>• be explicit about the learning processes needed to succeed – encourage the use of deep learning strategies and higher order thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate approaches to learning</td>
<td>• point students to useful resources or support services to consolidate literacy levels and prerequisite knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak information literacy skills</td>
<td>• be deliberate and diagnostic with feedback on student learning, progress and in all communication to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation (Perceptions of irrelevance of subject matter)</td>
<td>• provide opportunities for collaboration and peer-support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation (Isolation or perceived lack of support)</td>
<td>• offer a variety of teaching and learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences in preferred learning styles</td>
<td>• find ways to be flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing priorities (work, family, and community-based commitments)</td>
<td></td>
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Section 4

GETTING YOUR SESSIONS WORKING

Communication Skills

Techniques for Encouraging Participation

How to ask Questions

Redirecting Questions

Tips and Hints from Past Leaders

Difficulties experienced by PASS Leaders and Possible Resolutions

Active Learning Strategies

Closing your Session
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

‘Understanding what students are thinking and how they are feeling is the first step to getting retention results’

To facilitate discussion between students in a PASS group, the leader asks, suggests, prompts and invites questions, and is generally concerned not only with the content of the discussion, but also with the feelings of each group member. He/she tries to promote good group interaction, stimulate responses and helps the group members with their thinking. Some of the ways to facilitate group interaction are described below.

Support Group Members

The leader must be supportive of all group members participating in a discussion and in particular be supportive of those students who have problems of entry into the mainstream of group interaction, such as:

- the person who is suddenly unable to answer when asked for a response
- the shy person who offers irrelevant information on his first attempt
- the unpopular person
- the person whose ideas are always just given by the last speaker
- the person who needs a supportive, helping hand.

When a student makes an error, ask another question to allow that student to correct the error. Another method is to ask the group for a different point of view. Whenever possible, the leader should refrain from direct correction to avoid inhibiting participation. When students become apprehensive about the reception of their thoughts, they begin to offer only those answers that they consider acceptable to the leader.

It is important for the leader to remember that getting the wrong ideas out into the open is one advantage of discussion. Recognition by the leader that a large segment of the group has serious misunderstandings about a particular idea/topic makes it possible to provide experiences to rectify these misunderstandings.

Communicate with Empathy

Empathy involves seeing the world through the eyes of the other person. When students are feeling discouraged, distressed or helpless, what they need most is to feel understood and accepted. In order to empathize you should try to understand their experience as they experience it.

Take some time to reflect on the concerns you had when you were a first year student and use empathetic statements. Some examples:
- You're feeling tired / overwhelmed / confused...
- You're feeling isolated on campus
- You appear to be afraid of failing

Listen Attentively

It is most important as a leader that you listen to your students and encourage and allow your students to listen to each other. The peer learning session should never be a mini-lecture. The goal is to allow students to learn by discussion, debate and sharing knowledge and ideas. Hence, you must listen attentively and in a non-judgmental way. Avoid your own inner distractions and listen to what is said and how it is said. Asking yourself questions like, "How do they view this situation?" may help you understand why the student is having difficulty.
Active listening is a demanding skill which requires practice and perseverance. Use non verbal clues such as smiling, nodding, etc. to indicate acceptance of ideas. Use phrases such as "Uh-huh," “I see,” etc. to indicate to the speaker that you are listening and to encourage them to proceed.

Equity

Be aware that students in your sessions may have diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. You should therefore be sensitive and understanding of their differences without being discriminatory.

You may have students with English as a second language (ESL) in your class. Some of these students may want to speak to you in their native language if they are aware that you also speak this language, but try to resist this. However, it is acceptable to allow students to speak to you in their native language if they are struggling to articulate their questions in English, but always reply to them in English. This will:

- benefit the students by encouraging them to practice their spoken English,
- allow other students to listen to your explanations which could generate productive group discussion about common problems, and
- eliminate the possibility of offending students who do not understand the language.

Providing Feedback

Feedback is the response we give a student about their progress on how they are performing a task. Feedback may be about content (what the student is saying) or about behaviour (what the student is doing). It is important that feedback be constructive. It may be presented as an affirmation:

- Yes, that's right, you've got it!

Even if the student has the wrong content, it is important to provide the feedback in a constructive way. To do this:

- Maintain eye contact
- Use the student's name
- Focus on the behaviour / what was said by the student
- Consider how it could be improved
- Focus on what they are doing well / successfully

Remember, people need to hear seven positive statements to be able to hear one negative statement.

- Use your listening skills to see how the feedback was received.
- Try, as much as possible, to use group members in the feedback process.

If students have significant problems (behavioural, learning or personal) it is not your job to take care of them. It is your job to send them to the appropriate professionals to assist them.

Encourage Participation

Encourage participation by letting students know that their contributions are wanted. Invite students to recap, summarise, or just jump in and contribute. The leader should also seek divergent ideas and encourage disagreement with peers. Such involvement assists people to feel that they are members of a group and that it is fine to disagree.


(Adapted from Lewis, D. (1994). Identifying and Responding to Students in Need.)
TECHNIQUES FOR ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Your main job is to encourage active learning and to encourage students to participate in discussion.

1. **Use students’ names**

Using students’ names can help you and your students to feel more comfortable and increase student participation. You can make use of the attendance roll if you cannot remember names easily.

2. **Place the emphasis on student ideas**

Students often have the correct ideas, it just takes time to put them together (and it is easier simply to be ‘told’). Always encourage students to share their thoughts, because students build new concepts upon their own ideas and new course material.

3. **Use positive reinforcement**

This can have a positive effect on learning and confidence. Examples of positive reinforcement include offering praise for an answer (even if not correct), using a posture of interest and concern, maintaining eye contact, smiling and nodding and making positive comments

4. **Delayed positive reinforcement**

Remind students of correct ideas they have offered earlier.

5. **Repeat student responses**

This can act as positive reinforcement, to summarise or clarify comments and enable others to hear comments.

6. **Ask appropriate questions**

The PASS leader should ask questions that require students to think about important concepts and give substantial answers that reveal a lot about their thinking.

7. **Use Socratic questioning**

Socratic questioning can be used to lead students to correct answers. This is where the PASS Leader breaks down difficult concepts into small chunks of information that students can answer more easily. Instead of asking “How do we address this whole problem?” ask first “What is the first thing we need to do to understand this?”

8. **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.

9. **Wait for student responses**

It is important to train yourself to wait for student answers. Students may need time to think and gain confidence when asked a question. After a while they will usually respond with an answer or 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 or answer – learn to be patient and this will usually lead to better discussion and more group involvement.

Encourage students to find the answers in their lecture 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, and encourage them to do so.

10. **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.

11. **Encourage student verbalisation**

As discussed above, when students put their ideas into words it helps them to process information. Also, when a student verbalises an idea it helps their learning processes and encourages other students to share their ideas.

12. **Encourage them to search in their notes for clarification**

If there are discrepancies between students, ask them to compare notes and come to a consensus.

13. **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.

14. **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 don’t understand something or can’t remember, then say so. This will help students feel that you are involved as a participant.

15. **Refer to the course profile regularly**

Encourage students to bring their course profile to PASS sessions. Check that students understand the requirements of the reading lists, assignments and exams. Get them to look regularly at the learning outcomes so they are well aware of what they should be able to do.

16. **Use small group/pair work**

If your group has more than 15 students it is useful to divide into subgroups and encourage them to find an issue they wish to explore. If you are on your own you can then move between groups to challenge and offer support and encouragement.

Use individual and pair work to get students involved. The student leader can create problems based on the course for students to do. This can help students become immersed in the material and provide a springboard for discussion. Where students are engaged in individual or pair work this can also provide an opportunity for the leader to offer more individual assistance.

17. **Encourage students to use the whiteboard**

Physical activity helps prevent students being too passive or bored; it also encourages students to talk to one another.
HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS

The key to encouraging discussion in the group is asking questions of your students that make them do the thinking and talking. Below is some general advice on the types of questions you might find useful to ask of students, to encourage communication within the group.

Types of questions

Probes

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 other knowledge.

Examples: What makes you think that?
          Why do you think that?
          Can you tell me how you arrived at that answer?

Clarification

Used when a student’s answer is vague or unclear. The leader asks the student for meaning or more information.

Examples: What do you mean by…?
          Could you explain that in a little more detail?
          Can you be a bit clearer about that?
          How would you explain that in an essay or exam?
          Anything else you would like to add to that?
          Can you be more specific?
          In what way?

Critical Awareness

Used when the leader suspects the student does not fully understand or wants the student to reflect on the answer.

Examples: What are you assuming here?
          Could you give an example of that?
          Do you have any evidence to support that?
          How could you investigate the truth of that?
          Are you sure?
          How might someone argue against that point?

Refocus

Encourage the student 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 …?

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, UK)
REDIRECTING QUESTIONS
(Turning questions back to the group or not giving answers)

There will be times, especially in early sessions, when students will expect you to provide direct answers to their questions. There may be times when it is appropriate for you to answer questions, however, PASS sessions should be about discussion of ideas, and so students should be discouraged from taking the easy option of you telling them what they need to know.

If the level of direct questioning becomes a problem, it may be worth reminding the group that the purpose of a PASS session is for students to discuss and work on course material, and that your job is to help them do this.

**Some useful, general redirection questions**

- Can anybody help X answer that question?
- What was said in the lecture about this?
- Does anyone know the answer to that question?
- What do you think about that?
- What information would you need to answer that?
- Does anyone have any hints about this in their notes?
- Let’s try and work that out together.

**Other useful and challenging process questions**

- What are we trying to find out here?
- What do you need to do next?
- Can you suggest another way to think about this?
- Could anyone add something to this?
- What kind of exam question might come from that lecture?
- What is it? ie definition
- What is its purpose? ie why?
- When would you use it?
- When have you done something like this before?
- Would you like to add something to this answer?

**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 and your students can enjoy.

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, UK)

"During my time as a leader, I’ve learned that I don’t have to be perfect. There is more to leading than just spouting answers. Leading is about being there with the student, struggling through concepts with them, working through problems, and ultimately showing them that the class isn’t as scary or impossible as they may have originally thought. Sure some students are all business and just want answers. But most of the people I’ve had in my classes were really just looking for someone who had been in their shoes at one point and was willing to try and help.”

(Adapted from Peer Tutoring, Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University, U.S.)
TIPS AND HINTS FROM PAST LEADERS

‘The first six weeks on campus are the most important and critical in determining whether the student is going to stay or leave. To get students to stay, you must get them started right.’

Conducting your sessions:

1. Use an icebreaker for the first few sessions, personify anything and everything, talk to students on their level, and smile a lot!

2. Arrange for groups to present completed activities. This is an efficient way of showing and discussing the completed activities.

3. Begin with a discussion of the lecture material that is relevant to the activity before tackling the principal activity. Reinforce connections to concepts presented in lectures during presentation of the completed activity and, after presentation, discuss how to apply these concepts to solve relevant past exam questions.

4. Share the workload evenly with your partner.

5. Remember to give at least three encouragements for every one criticism to your students – they will appreciate your personal and caring approach to their problems.

Promoting active participation:

1. Grade problems according to difficulty: easy to hard. Ask students to explain their version of the concept to the class.

2. Present students with a challenging problem sheet to solve, followed by an interactive discussion of possible strategies to adopt to solve each problem before they commence the activity.

3. Present students with a combination of a summary table and a concept map to complete, followed by a class discussion concerning application of this knowledge to real life issues.

4. Crosslink information from different topics, and include real-life practical examples for authenticity. Use analogies as a novel way of explaining difficult concepts, so that students can practise skills in interpretive thinking.

5. Throw ‘hard’ questions open to the whole group and encourage students to refer to their notes where necessary.

6. Give students control over what they would like to do the following week, and how they would like to present it: butcher’s paper? overhead slides? board?

7. With large groups, getting students to write answers on the board promotes better visual explanations and discussion for the whole group, rather than having many short butcher’s paper presentations.

8. Setting challenging problems usually promotes discussion of answers and strategies amongst students, especially if structured as inter-group activities.

9. Ask students who are finished to help others with their problems. This ‘active participation’ strategy works especially well if a group of students who are having difficulty understanding
English are helped by another group of students from the same country but with better language skills.

10. Keep reviewing questions – keep a ‘bank’ of questions from each week on square ‘monopoly’ sized cardboard – shuffle and pull questions out at random week by week for quick revision.

11. With ‘game-generated’ questions, stop after each question and ask students to explain the answer to others, with guidance from you if necessary. Sometimes, with fast ‘quick quizzes’, students may not understand why a particular answer is correct.

12. Have multiple activities with different modes of presentation at the one time. This keeps students active and leads to high interest and interaction. Physical movement to the board (in pairs, if students are shy) increases enthusiasm and energises the group.

Providing Reassurance:

1. Provide opportunities to attempt MCQ’s from past exam papers.

2. Let students know that it is acceptable to give wrong answers to questions, as discussion can be generated about why and how the student arrived at that particular answer.

3. Personally approach, advise and discuss topics with each and every group.

4. Adopt a casual, supportive but ‘in control’ attitude.

5. Keep first questions easy (True/False, one word answers…) to build students’ confidence.

6. Ask students to write down anything problematic from the previous 2-3 weeks of lectures. Use this information as a base for the following week’s activity.

7. Praise all individual attempts to participate – encourage all discussion.

8. Show students where they can access the information required in notes, learning guide and textbook. Make them familiar with all available resources. Talk about what and where they can access information from the library.

9. Do not make activities too difficult until you have determined the extent of knowledge of your group. Do not assume that your students know or understand what you are talking about.

10. Don’t spend too much time with activities set in ‘game’ mode at first. Make sure that the students are aware that they are being productive and reinforcing course learning during PASS.

11. Monitor all PASS groups continually and make sure that you and your partner circulate from group to group during the session. Do not sit out in the front while your partner is presenting his/her activity to the students. Be interactive, interested and communicative.

Time Management Issues:

1. Do not write questions on board during PASS session as it may take too much time and students will be tempted to copy down what you write as well. Instead, use photocopies of your activities and overheads for yourself and/or students.

2. Have additional “challenging” questions available for students to solve if they have finished their activity ahead of the whole group.
What NOT to do:

1. Never seat students in rows: it will discourage group work.

2. Never tutor or lecture: your students will expect you to be always correct.

3. Don’t talk down to students: they are your peers and potential friends outside the classroom.

4. Never ask for a volunteer: this can produce either an embarrassing silence or answers volunteered by the same one or two students.

5. Never do a ‘whole class’ activity for more than twenty minutes.

6. Do not run a whole activity on questions that are too challenging.

7. Do not ask for poster presentations on lecture summaries: students will copy from lectures.

8. Do not use unstructured, uninformative games as activities.

9. Do not ignore students’ questions if you don’t know the answer. Instead, direct them to other students, textbook, or any other immediately available resource. If the answer is not forthcoming, then direct the group to find the answer and discuss this issue the following week.

10. Don’t be discouraged by a transient lack of interest in some sessions: students may be preoccupied with assessment demands in other courses. Be assured that participation will increase later!

DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY PASS LEADERS AND POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

Leaders have experienced a number of challenges with managing their PASS sessions. Some are:

1. Difficulties with disruptive, uncooperative or difficult students. In a small number of cases leaders have experienced such problems, which has been difficult especially as they themselves are often nervous at first.

   • With time, disruptive students have tended to either cease attending PASS or quietened down. We encourage leaders to be assertive in extreme cases and if necessary to ask such students to behave or leave or to contact the course cooordinator.

2. Difficulties with being expected to ‘know the answers’ and being asked a lot of direct questions. This seems to be a common problem, perhaps perennial to PASS. This could be addressed in a number of ways:

   • Setting expectations effectively at the start of the semester can help. The first PASS session can be used to help ensure students are aware of the role of the PASS leaders. When problems arise, revisit these expectations.
   • Students can be reminded of the ethos of PASS – that it is not for them to be taught by leaders but to discuss and arrive at answers for themselves.
   • Leaders are encouraged to persist with a facilitative style (such as asking open-ended questions and re-directing questions) and not be tempted to give in to such
demands. This can help turn around the character of sessions. Placing the responsibility on first year students means that the pressure is not on the leader.

- Directed activities can be used to ensure that there is a focus on problem-solving work to be completed by students in class.

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, UK)

**ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

*A Few Group Exercises for Cooperative and Collaborative Learning*

A variety of activities will make the learning more fun. You can use the whole group, smaller sub-groups, groups of three, pairs, or other combinations.

If you are using group activities, give clear instructions; set a time limit; have a debriefing session for students to summarise what they have learned. e.g. "take five minutes with the person on your right to discuss and write down three major points..."  

**Working on problems in pairs**  
Working on problems in pairs enables students to clarify their thinking by explaining a concept or a procedure to one another. It ensures full participation, since each person must be either listening or talking. Pairs can be especially useful in peer learning groups, since they require little organization. It can be as simple as turn to the person on your left, and then turn to the person on your right. After a paired activity like this, the student has talked with two other students. Further, as the leader you will quickly become familiar with the students who regularly attend, and can thus make effective pairing for problem solving (i.e. pair strong students with weaker students, or English speakers with non-English speaking background students). This can also be quite useful if you have some dominant students attending. Pairs are a very non-threatening procedure for learning, as the students assist each other with a problem prior to presenting it to the main group.

**Triads**  
Triads operate with three members in the same way as pairs.

**Rounds**  
Rounds are a useful way to get all students quickly involved, especially the shy ones. A student (or leader) makes a brief statement or comment. The round then continues around the group. Each person adds a comment. Students have a right to pass. Rounds can be used to summarise or review points raised in the peer learning session.

**Jigsaw**  
Jigsaw is excellent for tasks that have several distinct aspects or components. Home teams are formed, with each team member taking responsibility for one aspect of the problem in question, researching it and then discussing it with their team mates. Expert teams are then formed of all the students responsible for the same aspect. The teams go over the material they are responsible for and plan how best to bring the results of their research and discussion back to their home groups. Positive interdependence is fostered because each student has different information needed to complete the task, hence the term “jigsaw”.

**Buzz Groups**  
Buzz groups are pairs or small groups of students who are assigned a task or discussion topic for a limited period (less than five minutes) during PASS. A good moment to suggest ‘buzz’ is when you would like all students of your group to reflect actively on something, particularly in an area that they may be finding conceptually difficult. The class discussion later can be productive in providing explanations for the problematic area.
Case Studies
Case studies are authentic or hypothetical stories or dilemmas which require students to investigate, analyse and synthesise the available information, solve problems, and evaluate various viewpoints on the issue. Case study requires active involvement of the participants, and is a very effective group activity.

Cooperative Group
Groups may be asked to submit something in writing such as a quiz, a problem solution, an analysis, or connections to another topic. The group as a whole, as well as each individual in the group, is held accountable for achieving a specific goal.

Concept Mapping
A concept map is a way of illustrating the connections that exist between terms or concepts discussed in class. Students learn to link together important related concepts and ideas. Concept maps are drawings or diagrams showing the mental connections that students make between a major concept and other concepts they have learned. Typically, concept maps capture the main ideas and the relationships between them.

Debate
Discuss statements from a variety of viewpoints in a controversial area. To involve all students, divide them into as many subgroups as there are points of view in the controversial area and then get each subgroup to prepare a case for its viewpoint. Debates have the advantage of further improving students’ skills in argument and increasing their capacity for understanding the other person’s viewpoint.

Frequent Short Quizzes
Periodic testing has been shown to improve student performance. Quizzes of easy revision questions can be taken by groups at the beginning of the session. Alternatively, more difficult questions that are designed to consolidate knowledge constructs can be taken by groups at the end of a session. After the quiz, answers can be discussed with the whole group.

Muddiest Point
The Muddiest Point technique provides a high information return for a very low investment of time and energy. The technique consists of asking students to jot down a quick response to one question: “What was the muddiest point in this activity?”

One-Minute Paper
The One-Minute Paper provides a quick and extremely simple way to collect written feedback on how well your students are learning. At the end of the session, ask students to respond briefly to some variation on the following two questions: “What was the most important thing you learned during this session?” and “What important question(s) do you have regarding what you are still unsure of?” You can then structure your next activity so that these questions may be answered.

Pyramid
The Pyramid exercise involves students first working alone, then in pairs, then in fours, and so on. Normally after working in fours, they join in some form of whole group activity or discussion that involves the pooling of their conclusions or solutions. For example, in Stage 1, students could note down some questions of their own which relate to the activity topic. In Stage 2, pairs of students then try to answer one another’s questions. In Stage 3, pairs join together to make fours and, in the light of their discussion of the questions, identify general problems and areas of controversy in their activity topic.

Thinking-Aloud, Pair-Problem Solving (TAPPS)
Students work on problems in pairs, with one pair member functioning as problem-solver and the other as listener. The problem solvers verbalise everything they are thinking as they seek a solution; the listeners encourage their partners to keep talking and offer general suggestions or hints if the problem solvers get stuck. The roles can be reversed for the next problem.
Think-pair-share
Students in a group first work on a given problem individually, then compare their answers with a partner and synthesise a joint solution. The pairs may in turn share their solutions with other pairs in their group or with the whole class.

Carousel Brainstorming Exercise
In a carousel brainstorming exercise, several questions are introduced by the leader, usually on large poster paper (one question per poster each). Students working in cooperative groups write their response to each question, moving from poster to poster after specific time intervals. They can indicate agreement/disagreement with previous responses and modify them accordingly. After the carousel has been completed, the leader and groups discuss the content presented.

Student-Generated Test Questions
Students are asked to generate possible examination questions. This provides feedback through seeing what students consider the most important content, what they understand as fair and useful test questions, and how well they can answer the questions that they have posed. It also empowers students to believe that they can predict and study for examinations in a proactive manner rather than believing that exams are chance events and that study is often unpredictable.

The Quick Quiz
The Quick Quiz is used to develop and reinforce comprehension, improve retention of information, stimulate interest in a subject area, and promote student participation. A Quick Quiz can be a good opener (and the session then flows from the "gaps" in knowledge) and it can be a good way to close (so that students know what to review for the next session). Students can also be asked to bring a quiz question to the session (anonymously putting the question in the hat). If possible, find something complimentary to say about wrong answers. "That's a very good guess. If I weren't sure, I might have guessed that." Don't let wrong answers stand. Keep it light and short! Ask a maximum of 10 questions.

MCQ Strategy: “Who wants to be a Millionaire?”
Have a pair of students at the front of the room, with the multiple choice questions on overhead. The pair then try to answer or discuss the answers among themselves. They are allowed to have ‘Lifelines’ as in the original game, where they can (a) ask the audience (b) ask a friend or (c) have a 50/50 of the answers. They could for example lose half of the points of the question by asking for the lifelines. This method promotes good discussion of all answer options.

Beat the PASS Leader
Leaders ask a lecture-based question to the students and anyone is allowed to answer it. Then students get a chance for revenge – they try to stump the leaders!! A tally is kept from week to week. The beauty of this game is that it encourages all students to participate: they all work together in answering the questions and with respect to formulating them. Slower students could get basic clarification on concepts without appearing unknowing, and more advanced students are able to ask real ‘challenge’ questions to satisfy their own thirst for knowledge!

Articulate
Each group has six words to define and other groups have to identify words from definitions – promotes group interaction!

CLOSING YOUR SESSION

To ensure that students do not lose sight of the big picture, reserve the last few minutes of any session for a review and summary of the session. You could start closing the session around five to ten minutes before the end.

Some ways of closing the session:

1. Put students in pairs or small groups and ask the different pairs to each complete one of the following tasks:
   - Write a list of the ten most important points covered in the session. If the session focussed on a particular lecture, ask for ten key points about the lecture.
   - Write a paragraph explaining what was covered in the session.
   - Write three possible exam questions you might expect to arise from the material covered. When this has been completed, you can then go around the room asking for feedback and write the key points on the board.

2. Get students to say what they thought was the single most important concept, idea or understanding that they learned during the session. Write up some key points.

3. Get students to organise the selected topics into more generalised concepts. You will probably remember how overwhelmed you felt by the volume of information you had to deal with in your first year. The practice of organising this volume of information is essential.

4. Get students to suggest how the session has related to the course syllabus and learning outcomes.

5. Ensure the roll has been completed by all.

6. Ask students to say whether there is anything they would like to cover in the next week’s session. Write a list of points on the board and make a note of them yourself.

7. Thank everyone present for their time and contributions.
Section 5

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MENTOR

What Mentors Do

Developing Good Study Habits

How to Plan your Time

Tips for Reading Texts

Tips for Assignment Writing

Exam Preparation
WHAT MENTORS DO

This section, *What it means to be a mentor*, is a compilation of tips and skills that leaders can use to help their students to achieve to the best of their ability and become successful lifelong learners.

‘Learning is based on discovery guided by mentoring rather than on the transmission of information…academics can learn from students as students are learning from academics’


The following is a list of things that mentors do. As you read the list, have a think about when others have done these for you, or you have done these for others.

A good mentor will:

- set high expectations of performance
- offer challenging ideas
- help build self-confidence
- encourage professional behaviour
- offer friendship
- confront negative behaviours and attitudes
- listen to personal problems
- teach by example
- provide growth experiences
- offer quotable quotes
- explain how the university works
- coach their students
- stand by their students in critical situations
- offer wise counsel
- encourage winning behaviour
- trigger self-awareness
- inspire their students
- share critical knowledge

DEVELOPING GOOD STUDY HABITS

Six Study Tips

Students in your PASS groups will benefit from your guidance on study skills and effective study habits. These six brief tips are intended to help them start off at university with appropriate study habits which should, in turn, improve their academic performance and minimise common problems.

As a PASS leader, you may think that some of the advice offered is fairly obvious. However, every year there are students who fail to complete their programs of study. There is no harm in suggesting to members of your PASS group that it is advisable to start their course with good study habits rather than think about them towards the end of their first year … when it may be too late!

1. Create the right working environment

Suggest that, at the very least, they make sure their room is properly organised for studying. They should have the following:

- Desk or table – where they can leave things and come back to them if they take a break.
- Chair with proper back support
- Desk light
- Book shelves
- Pin board for timetables, assignment deadlines, useful telephone numbers, etc.

2. Attend classes

It might appear pretty obvious advice to encourage your PASS group to attend their classes. Nevertheless, many student failures result from a lack of regular attendance at lectures, practicals and tutorials. Points you could make, supported by comments based upon your own or a friend’s experience, include:

- The course timetable has been designed to facilitate an effective way of developing their understanding and capability.
- Failure to attend is likely to impair their progress and leave gaps in their knowledge.
- If they really do have to miss a class, advise them that they should ask a friend to take notes and collect handouts for them. When they return they should ask their friend to explain these notes and handouts to them.
- Please make clear that they should not attend PASS sessions as a substitute for going to classes.

3. Read and review lecture notes as soon as possible after each class

It is all too easy to file away one’s notes without giving oneself time to read and reflect upon the contents. Consequently, incorrectly recorded information remains uncorrected and the student is likely to have only the most superficial recollection of the content of their course. As a PASS leader encouraging good study habits, you should point out the benefits to members of your group of reading and re-reading their notes. Not only does this activity form the first stage of exam revision, it will also help them to:

- Review key ideas raised in their lectures
- Identify any gaps in their notes – they should try to get the missing information from another student as soon as possible.
- Compare their notes with those of other students to see what different aspects they have noticed
- Link new ideas to concepts with which they are already familiar
- Identify things they didn’t quite understand – they should follow this up through discussion with other students at a PASS session and / or through reading their textbooks.
- Revise essential facts and details

In addition to reviewing and re-reading notes, suggest they should:

- Reorganise their notes if necessary and either use a highlighter pen to pick out important details or note key words / ideas in the left hand margin
- Think up their own real life examples and applications for new ideas rather than simply relying on those their lecturer has given them.
- Refresh their memory by re-reading these notes before the following week's classes. This approach will help prepare them for exam revision.
- Critically evaluate what they read or hear. Make a list of the questions they would like to ask or issues they wish to raise. Can they answer them themselves from their notes or from further reading?

4. Form a study group or join a PASS session

Forming a self study group can help students to acquire extra perspectives, tap into a wider pool of experience, clarify their own thinking, and gain others’ assistance. PASS sessions are intended to provide these opportunities. If members of your PASS group are interested in continuing their discussion outside their PASS sessions, you could advise them to:

- Choose students who seem interested in class. If they belong to another lecture stream you will likely benefit from hearing different ideas and perspectives.
- Take time to get to know each other
- Use their study group to review material already learned or to clarify problem areas.
- Make sure they remember the purpose of the meeting … it is to better understand course material, not to have a social chat – they can always visit a café for social discussion afterwards.
- **Set agreed time limits for the discussion.**

From the start you should make it clear that PASS sessions can help students to master course concepts by providing them with opportunities to discuss or practise their subject in a safe place under the guidance of an experienced student leader who has been through the course already.

5. Make study tasks manageable

Students in your PASS groups may feel daunted by the amount of content they are expected to cover. As a PASS leader you can help them by suggesting some of the following ideas:

- Set yourself mini-goals so you gain a sense of achievement by completing them.
- Break large tasks into smaller tasks.
- Break each of these sub-tasks into smaller, very specific mini-goals.
- Set a realistic time allowance for each mini-goal eg. ‘Make notes on pages 29-40: 30 minutes.’
- Give yourself a start time, and keep to it.
- Set a target end time. If you have not finished, keep going until you have.
- Make sure you have completed each mini-goal before moving on to the next.

6. Take regular breaks while studying

Some students set themselves unrealistic targets and get disheartened of they are unable to study and concentrate for long periods of time. As a PASS leader, you can help them study more efficiently by suggesting:

- You will not study well if you are too tired to concentrate.
- Experiment until you find which times and places suit you for different types of tasks.
- Take regular breaks while you are studying. For example you could:
  - Use long periods of study – around 50 minutes followed by a 10 minute break – if you are organising relationships and concepts, drafting an assignment, or revising for an exam.
• Use shorter periods of study – 20 minutes broken up by 5 minute breaks – for re-reading notes, self testing, or thinking about what you are learning.
• If you get bored, change to another task or activity.
• Stop studying when you are no longer being productive.

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, UK)
HOW TO PLAN YOUR TIME

1. Schedule fixed blocks of time first.

2. Estimate the required study time for each course.

3. Assess the types of time required for particular courses, e.g. vocabulary review may be best done in short bursts of 15 minutes, while researching an assignment may take 2 or more hours to get to the library, find the journals and then read them.

4. Plan for the full learning cycle:
   - **Preview** – immediate preparation before class (review notes and text book to anticipate lecture content, or review problems before practical or tutorial).
   - **Lecture / Tutorial / Practical** – class activities (listen, make notes, ask questions, discuss, take tests)
   - **Review** – immediate after class review (edit and summarize notes, write up prac, set purpose for later study)
   - **Study** – intensive study sessions (review lecture or class notes, clarify definitions by cross referencing with text books, read and study text books, write assignments and prepare for exams).

5. Avoid scheduling marathon study session (if large blocks of time are required eg. researching and writing an assignment, break the time set aside into smaller tasks).

6. Set clear starting and stopping times.

7. Include time for travelling and errands.

8. Schedule time for fun, exercise and relaxation.

9. Set realistic goals. These should be:
   - measurable
   - attainable
   - consistent with your overall needs
   - rewarded when met

10. Revise your time plan to ensure it is meeting your needs. Allow flexibility in your schedule.

11. Make contingency plans for "unexpected events".

(Adapted from Ellis, D, 1991, *Becoming a Master Student*)

TIPS FOR READING TEXTS

As a University student reading is one of the main ways you acquire information. You will read to elaborate lecture points, to broaden your knowledge of a topic, and in preparation for assignments. Hence, you will have a much larger amount to read than was expected in high school, and you will have to read from a combination of different sources and integrate them. To read as efficiently and selectively as you can, you need to:

- read with concentration and an active mind.
- read to discover, evaluate and use the ideas conveyed.
- use a systematic reading procedure.
- read at a rate which is suited to your purpose and the nature of the material you are reading.
1. Survey

Make a preliminary survey of your textbook. What is it about and how are its parts organized? Check the table of contents, scan the chapters for content and typical format. Is there a glossary? Are headings used? Are there diagrams? Are there summaries at the end of the chapter? Review questions? You may approach a journal article in the same way: skim the abstract, the section headings, graphs/diagrams, and read the conclusion more closely. Skim reading is usually done rapidly.

2. Question

Read with a clear purpose in mind. If you are reading to answer an essay question, think about what it may mean. What is the underlying controversy? What information will you be looking for? What evidence could be required? What assumptions will you need to watch for? When you are reading for further information, as in reference from lectures, make a chapter survey. If there are no questions at the end of the chapter, read the introduction, the topic sentences and the conclusion, and formulate your own questions based on the conclusion: What was proved? How did they formulate this conclusion? What evidence was presented? What logic is used to get from the introduction to this conclusion? This is what is meant by "active" reading.

3. Read

Read what you need in depth. First read the introduction and conclusion to understand the purpose of writing and the author’s message. Then trace the argument in the body of the paper, and judge the validity of the presented arguments and evidence. At this point you may want to draw a concept map, to organize the ideas presented in the writing and to show that you understand the relationship between the ideas. This lets you know how much mastery you have; it also encourages you to read actively.

4. Recall

Concentrate all of your attention on selecting the main points of an article. If you side track to another idea, jot it down on a piece of paper and return to your reading. Writing definitions or summaries on index cards may also help you to focus and aid with review later. Being active in this way helps your concentration.

5. Review

Write summary notes in your own words since they represent your own thinking; later they will be powerful cues to the ideas on the page. Organize the facts and ideas of your notes under categories. Check your summary against the text.

6. Improve your reading experience

Watch how long you assign yourself to read. You may need to give yourself more breaks. Know your energized times of day, and read the most difficult material when you are most fresh.

When reading is tough, use an index card to cover the lines you just read. Read again, then give it a rest. Write a short summary for each section. It may help to read it out loud. You can look for an alternate text in the library. It may also help to try to explain it to someone else. This reinforces the parts you do know and what you still need to review. It is helpful if you have a fellow student to share this activity with.

Mark your book when have finished reading a full paragraph or headed section and have paused to think about what you just read. This will keep you from highlighting everything that looks important at first glance. Underline brief but meaningful phrases, rather than complete sentences.
Try cross-referencing. For example, if you find an idea on page 60 that has a direct bearing on an idea back on page 28, draw a little arrow pointing upward and write "28" by it. Then turn back to page 28 and alongside the idea there, draw an arrow pointing downward and write "60" by it. In this way you will tie the two ideas together, in your mind and in your reviewing.

TIPS FOR ASSIGNMENT WRITING

These are some general hints to assist you in assignment writing. There will be variation between courses as to what is required in the form and presentation of assignments. Read and follow the guidelines provided by your faculties for your specific courses.

Assignments are much more about thinking than about writing. You will spend at least half your time choosing the topic and researching, before you even begin to write. This is essential activity, often making the difference between a passing and high scoring assignment. Plan time to do it fully.

1. CHOOSING THE TOPIC

You may be given a range of topics to choose from, or have to construct your own. In choosing the topic consider:

- your own interests and background
- what you might learn from undertaking the topic
- resource materials available.

If you construct your own topic, approach teaching staff to see if it seems appropriate.

2. ANALYSING THE TOPIC

An early task is to brainstorm as many ways as possible to go with this topic. This is useful for dealing with "dead ends" - eg. if there are insufficient resources for one topic, you can move onto another. Generate "quantity" thinking before you narrow it down and focus on the problem as you define it by asking:

- What does the topic imply? What are its complexities?
- What needs to be defined?
- What are the operative words? (verbs which instruct you how to approach the content, e.g. "discuss", "interpret")
- What assumptions are being made?
- What are the core and controversial issues?
- What is my point of view?
- What relevant material has been in lectures and tutorials?
- What is already known about the topic?
- How does the topic fit in the context of the subject?
- Which resources may be useful?

You may need to do some preliminary general reading to assist you to form this "big picture", and in the early stages of your specific reading you may see new implications in the assignment title.

3. RESEARCHING THE TOPIC

Reading must be purposeful and selective, focusing on aspects of the question you are trying to answer. Read and take notes on what is most relevant to your task, i.e. for the issue you want to discuss – how does it support your point of view? Always keep the topic in front of you as you read and keep the word "because" in your head as it forces you to justify your reading. Record the source and page number with your notes.
4. WRITING

- Keep a working ideas page. As you read you will discover facts and insights—relational discoveries resulting from grasping the implications of facts.
- As you integrate your ideas look for the direction your argument should take. Identify the main themes of the material to plan for a systematic presentation. Remember, every argument must advance your thesis.
- Sketch an outline of your argument, e.g. create an issue tree.
- Most assignments have a brief introductory section to establish the scope of the paper, followed by the main body of the discussion and a conclusion or summary. Write the first draft but allow plenty of room for additions and alterations.
- Review the draft to ensure that it does indeed flow logically from its title and that the argument is consistent. Make revisions as needed for greater clarity (in the structure of the paragraphs) and precision of expression (spelling and grammar).
- Avoid plagiarism at all costs! All the sources from which you have taken information or ideas should be explicitly acknowledged as you use them in the text and then listed in the references. Use the system of referencing required for your discipline.
- Keep a copy of your assignment as a safeguard against loss.

5. DEALING WITH WRITING BLOCKS

If you are having difficulty getting started, make a list of tasks to be done in order to complete the assignment. This allows you to put it into perspective by breaking it into smaller, manageable tasks and to assign a reasonable time for completion. You will most likely not stick to this religiously but it gives you a starting point.

Getting stuck in the midst of an assignment can occur for a number of reasons, each of which can be overcome:

- Running out of inspiration. If you feel bored with a topic take a break and try another task. Later talk about your topic with a friend. Explaining it may generate new directions for you.
- Continuing to seek references rather than getting down to writing. You may fear that you have not read enough, or you may be in a cycle of “read, make notes, re-analyse” to avoid writing. You have read enough when you have enough evidence to support an argument or when you seem to be reading the same things. If you are in an analysis cycle or you keep on finding more (the possible references seem endless) set a deadline on obtaining references and note the parameters you have set in your writing. Contract with yourself to write something on the topic for 10 minutes non-stop. Don’t worry about organisation or order, simply get things down.
- Focussing on the marker. Worrying too much about whether it will be good enough can inhibit your writing. Pretend you are writing to a friend to tell them about the topic and try to present the arguments as you would in a letter. Later you can reform it into an assignment. The important thing is to start to express your ideas.

EXAM PREPARATION

Review Dates

The dates of exams should be reviewed regularly so that students are reminded to start studying early.

Help the students gain familiarity with the appearance and structure of exam papers.

Discuss with the students the kinds of questions to expect on exams and how to access past papers. Also explore the amount of emphasis that will be placed on the text, lecture, outside readings. For example, one half of the points are earned through multiple choice items that focus on information from the lecture and text; the other half of the possible points are earned through two essay questions that focus on the supplemental readings, the assigned novels.
Develop Practice Exams

Have students submit 3 to 5 questions. These questions can be assembled into a practice or review exam and returned to students for study.

If appropriate, periodically offer practice essay questions. Encourage the students to outline the answer first. Initially, have the students use their book and lecture notes, but work toward a normal test situation.

Provide sample summary sheets for each exam which provide less and less information, thus forcing students to progressively become more and more independent and able to write their own summaries. The first summary sheet could be written by the students as a group.

Practice analysing exam questions

Ask students what each question requires – and what it does not require. If the lecturer distributes a sample question or has a file of previous tests on reserve in the library, discuss the key words of the question in the session (why, how, when, explain etc). Often students become anxious simply by the language of the question.

- Encourage students to assess answers
- Emphasize the importance of good time management in exams.
- Take time after the mid-semester to review performance and see what they can learn from it.

Help students to discover their errors and strengths. Ask: Which part of the exam was the easiest for you? Why? Which part of the exam was the most difficult? Why? Which of the following activities did you complete prior to the exam (required reading assignments; review of lecture notes; self-testing of material to be covered by the exam; prediction of possible questions by you prior to the exam)? How much time (in hours) did you spend preparing for the exam? What changes might you make in the way you study for the next exam in this course?
Section 6

ADMINISTRATION AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When and How to Refer

Who to Contact for Other Problems

Occupational Health, Welfare and Safety
WHEN AND HOW TO REFER

As a mentor, students may often come to you with other problems, or you may become aware of difficulties they are facing that you do not have the skills or time to deal with. Even when students don't talk, you may see signs of distress such as fatigue, increasing cynicism, tendency to withdraw, lack of motivation, confusion, or statements reflecting a sense of worthlessness, helplessness or hopelessness.

If you are aware of this you can refer.

How to Refer

The suggestion to seek alternative help must be made in the context of your concern for the student's well-being.

You could say:

• I am certainly willing to help you with your academic work but feel I am perhaps not the best person to assist you with these difficulties...
• I'm sure it is in your best interests to get this kind of help from someone who has more experience in this situation. I can only guess at ways of handling it...
• Talking to someone from Student Support Services may help you solve this problem...
• You seem to be OK with content. The Study Skills Centre will be able to concentrate more on the strategies you can use in your approach to learning...

You may choose to:

• give them the phone number so the student can make an appointment
• walk the student to Student Support Services if it seems necessary to do so –
• reassure them of your continuing interest and check from time to time to see how things are going
• specify the nature of the support you are able to give

Remember:

• All Student Support Services are free
• Brochures are available on study skills
• All individual appointments are confidential
• Further Information: www.flinders.edu.au/students/current/ or email getconnected@flinders.edu.au
• The range of services available include:
  - Accommodation Service
  - Child care
  - Computers
  - Graduate careers
  - Health and Counselling
  - Mentor programs
  - Professional development
  - Student Learning Centre
  - Employment Service
  - Faxes, photocopying etc
  - Union Support Services
WHO TO CONTACT FOR OTHER PROBLEMS

Concerns / Difficulties with PASS

- organization
- administration, eg. pay
- timetabling
- leadership
- rooms
- individual students
- liaison with lecturers

Contact the Coordinators

Concerns / Difficulties with Subject Matter or Lectures

- assessment
- curriculum based questions

Contact the Lecturer directly

- If you email the lecturer directly, let the PASS coordinators know about the issue as well so the feedback may be circulated to other leaders, for example by copying the email to the PASS coordinators.
- Raise your concerns at the next PASS meeting.

“One of the most important tools in leading is encouragement. The biggest challenge in learning, I think, is being unsure of your knowledge and therefore being scared to make mental leaps based on what you know. I think it’s really important when a student grasps a concept or applies it correctly to give the accolades and affirmation so they know without a doubt that they do understand that concept and can be master of it on a test, for example.”

“By far, I think the most important leading technique is to get people to realise how capable they truly are. So many people seem to have most of their trouble because they think they are incapable of really learning the material. I think PASS is very important for undergraduates to be a part of. Academia is not just about grades and assignments and homework, and I think PASS reminds us of that. It brings us closer to the ideal community centred on learning.”

(Adapted from Peer Tutoring, Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University, U.S.)
REFERENCES


Ellis D. (1986). Becoming a Master Student, College Survival Inc.


Peer Assisted Learning Project, Bournemouth University, UK.


Other helpful references


