Peer Assisted Learning and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PAL/PASS) Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy documents the principles underpinning Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) [1] at Macquarie University.

Background

(2) Macquarie University is committed to supporting students to achieve their full potential throughout the duration of their study program as identified in the University's Strategic Plan, Our University: A Framing of Futures, and the Learning and Teaching Strategic Framework.

(3) At Macquarie University, PAL and PASS are acronyms that are used synonymously for support initiatives in which more experienced students run weekly sessions / workshops for their peers through a collaborative study experience to aid learning and academic transition. The focus is primarily on educational support for particular units of study, rather than pastoral care which many Faculties address via Mentoring schemes.

(4) Generally, participation in PAL / PASS workshops:

a. provides students with opportunities to network and build relationships with other students;
b. builds self-confidence by enabling students to review and question course material (in particular difficult or challenging concepts) in a supportive environment;
c. assists students to develop study techniques, improve communication skills, develop group interaction skills; and
d. improves academic performance.

(5) Research [2] shows that PASS can assist in improving student retention and satisfaction. Students who attend PASS consistently produce higher results than those who do not attend.

(6) Units considered most appropriate for PAL / PASS generally have large enrolments and contain content that students may find difficult. To achieve maximum impact, the following selection criteria are suggested. Units should:

a. be core units with large student enrolments, particularly of commencing students;
b. have high failure or non-completion rates; and
c. be seen as historically difficult.

(7) To date, PAL / PASS offerings at Macquarie have been offered in face-to-face settings; however, there may be scope to expand the offering to online [3] communities.

Scope

(8) This Policy applies to all Faculties, Departments, Offices and students involved in PAL / PASS as a program (study

selection) coordinator, leader or workshop participant. Workshop leaders and participants can be based at either the North Ryde or Sydney City campus.

(9) The Macquarie University College (The College) is exempt from the provisions of this Policy.

Section 2 - Policy

(10) The University will:

a. **Offer annual PAL or PASS programming in all Faculties (on campus and / or online):**

i. Faculties determine the annual provisioning of funding to run PAL / PASS in alignment with the requirements of this Policy;

ii. Associate Deans, Learning and Teaching (or delegates) will, in collaboration with Unit Convenors and / or Program Directors, prioritise areas of study for inclusion in PAL / PASS programming from across the Faculty; and

iii. Large first year subjects with consistently high failure rates should be prioritised.

Ensure that PAL / PASS Provisioning follows set standards for student recruitment, training, support, remuneration, reward and recognition:

a. Standard selection criteria / eligibility. PAL / PASS Leaders:

i. must be current Macquarie University students;

ii. have previously completed the nominated subject and achieved a grade of Distinction or better, or demonstrated academic excellence in a comparable subject;

iii. completed at least 24 credit points;

iv. maintained a GPA of 3 or above (or equivalent as per new Assessment Policy);

v. be available for training in PAL / PASS leadership, or have previously completed a minimum of 14 hours recognised training.

(11) Note that each Faculty may also determine additional eligibility and selection criteria for PAL / PASS leaders, details of which are included in the PAL/PASS – Peer Assisted Learning and Peer Assisted Study Sessions Schedule. Any exception to the eligibility criteria will require approval from the relevant Faculty Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching.

(12) Standard processes for disseminating student PAL / PASS leader and engagement opportunities leveraging off existing communications platforms iLearn and CareerHub.

(13) Consistent PAL / PASS training:

a. PAL/PASS leader training must be coordinated by each Faculty by PAL / PASS accredited staff and consist of at least 14 hours of training;

b. All leaders must receive a certificate of training / participation.

(14) Set remuneration or academic credit for all PAL / PASS leaders:

a. Leader training is un-paid. The accreditation itself is a valuable qualification that leaders will have beyond the undergraduate experience;

b. Workshop facilitation is set at a minimum casual rate of HEW 3.1. Leaders must complete timesheets that are

endorsed and submitted to payroll by nominated staff; and

    c. Academic credit for conducting the workshops may be available as a PACE or related activity.

(15) Comprehensive support information (hard copy and online) for PAL / PASS leaders must be made available including:

    a. Key contact information for identified Faculty and Office-based staff who can support students in these roles, and intervene when necessary, and processes for escalating issues;

    b. Q&As that use consistent language and terminology;

    c. Available wellbeing and related support services;

    d. Work health and Safety (WH&S); and

    e. Relevant policy details including the Macquarie University Student Code of Conduct and Ethics Statement.

Ensure that PAL / PASS provisioning follows consistent workshop format standards including:

    a. A minimum of five (5) and maximum of 20 students per subject, to be facilitated by one (1) or two (2) leaders depending on the nature and requirements of the subject area.

    b. Workshops will be offered on the basis that:

        i. all students enrolled in a subject will be provided with the opportunity to participate in a PAL / PASS workshop, if available;

        ii. PAL / PASS is not a compulsory requirement for undergraduate subjects (participation is voluntary);

        iii. a student may attend at any time during the session (pending capacity of venues); and

        iv. there is no charge for students to participate.

> [NOTE 1] PAL / PASS is based on the SI (Supplemental Instruction) program developed in Kansas at the University of Missouri in 1973. It is now used in more than 30 countries around the world and yearly more than a quarter of a million students attend PAL / PASS Sessions. The University of Wollongong is the National Centre for PASS in Australia. Iterations of PAL / PASS programming have established in all Faculties at Macquarie since 2011.

> [NOTE 2] Paloyo, Rogan and Siminski (2016). The Causal Effects of the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) on Educational Outcomes and Discussion Paper; Dancer, D., Morrison, K., and Tarr, G. (2014). Measuring the effects of peer learning on students' academic achievement in first-year business statistics. Studies in Higher Education.

> [NOTE 3] At Deakin University, CloudPASS sessions (at a set time each week) are conducted in Blackboard Collaborate, a synchronous web conferencing platform which has been specifically designed to maximise the potential for students to collaborate.

Section 3 - Procedures

(16) Refer to the Peer Assisted Learning and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PAL/PASS) Procedure.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(17) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(18) Commonly defined terms are located in the University [Glossary](#).

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Rorden Wilkinson Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
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