



# Peer Assisted Learning - PAL

# Peer Assisted Student Support - PASS

*Supporting the 1st year experience*

"It helped me get a better idea of what kind of standard was expected of me"

"The leaders were easy to talk to and helped explain or find out things I didn't understand about college in general"

"PAL / PASS gave me confidence and helped me adjust quickly into college life"

"PAL / PASS helped gain a better understanding of the expectations of the lecturers"

"In our PAL / PASS sessions we could ask any question and the group work and session activities are great fun"

## WHAT IS PAL / PASS?

PAL has been set up in GMIT and PASS in AIT to support the 1st year experience. It is on the first-year timetable for one hour per week and it involves working with other students to get the most from the programme. PAL / PASS is about getting to know classmates better, learning actively, discussing, practicing, working out problems together, planning how to go about studying and settling into college life.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

PAL / PASS Leaders have completed a PAL / PASS leadership training programme and they run the weekly PAL / PASS sessions. Leaders are students who come from 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of their programme. They have a great idea of what first-years are experiencing. Leaders can offer advice and suggestions, help with how to study in college, how to tackle assessments and exams, guide discussions and help first-year students be successful.

## PAL / PASS CAN HELP FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- ◆ Adjust quickly to 3rd level life
- ◆ Integrate with class mates in a very friendly relaxed environment
- ◆ Improve learning and study skills
- ◆ Be better prepared for exams and assignments
- ◆ Gain a greater understanding of your programme and modules

## PAL / PASS LEADER BENEFITS

- ◆ Complete the PAL / PASS Leadership Training Programme
- ◆ Facilitate weekly PAL / PASS Sessions with 1st year Students
- ◆ Develop personal and professional skills such as leadership, time management, active listening, interpersonal communication, facilitation, and presenting
- ◆ Networking opportunities with other Leaders in GMIT, AIT and internationally
- ◆ Increase confidence
- ◆ Enhance Curriculum Vitae

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

For more information on the PAL Programme in GMIT visit [www.gmit.ie/pal](http://www.gmit.ie/pal) and PASS Programme in AIT visit [www.ait.ie/pass](http://www.ait.ie/pass)  
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## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

### STEP 1: SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2008

- ◆ Consultations with Bournemouth University.
- ◆ Staff & Student PAL/PASS Briefings and Workshops.
- ◆ Programme nominations sought for phase one rollout of PAL/PASS programme.
- ◆ Agreed leader reward scheme for phase one.
- ◆ Leaders recruitment campaign.
- ◆ Development of the PAL/PASS Programme Manual.
- ◆ Timetabling of PAL/PASS Sessions.

### STEP 2: JANUARY - APRIL 2009

- ◆ Training Programme of Student Leaders.
- ◆ Briefing Session with PAL/PASS Course Contacts.
- ◆ Launched websites [www.gmit.ie/pal](http://www.gmit.ie/pal) and [www.ait.ie/pass](http://www.ait.ie/pass).
- ◆ Promotion campaign of PAL/PASS programme to 1st year students.
- ◆ **Phase one begins: From February 1st weekly PAL/PASS sessions start running one hour per week for 10 weeks on six programmes in GMIT and AIT supporting 143 1st year students and facilitated by 15 trained leaders.**
- ◆ Two PAL/PASS leaders run each session.
- ◆ Observation sessions take place on PAL/PASS sessions.
- ◆ Leaders submit attendance and session review forms weekly to PAL/PASS Programme Management.
- ◆ Meetings take place with PAL/PASS Leaders when required.

### STEP 3: MAY – SEPTEMBER 2009

- ◆ Phase one of the PAL/PASS programme is evaluated through student surveys, focus groups and meetings with staff involved.
- ◆ Preliminary research findings presented to PALNET Ireland in May, NUIG – CELT Teaching and Learning Conference in June and the CSSI Conference in June.
- ◆ Phase two PAL/PASS programme nominations sought in each school.
- ◆ PAL/PASS leader recruitment campaign in April followed by interviews and leader selection in June.
- ◆ GMIT receive certification from Manchester University to train Peer Assisted Learning Leaders.
- ◆ PAL/PASS Programme Manual and websites updated.
- ◆ GMIT and AIT develop and deliver a leader training programme.
- ◆ Phase two leader training took place in September at both institutes.
- ◆ Phase two of weekly PAL/PASS sessions start September 7th and run until April 30th 2010.
- ◆ **There are currently 18 programmes across seven schools/specialist discipline areas running weekly one hour PAL or PASS sessions supporting 700 plus first year students which is facilitated by 45 PAL/PASS trained student leaders. These figures are expected to double by next September 2010.**

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following steps are required in order to embed the PAL or PASS programme in GMIT or AIT.

1. Offer a PAL/PASS Leadership Module/Civic Engagement Module (Elective – 5 Credit Award) to 2nd, 3rd or 4th year students.
2. Post SIF II funding, appoint an Institute PAL/PASS Manager with overall responsibilities for programme management, leader recruitment and selection, staff and leader training, observations, student mentoring, semester and yearly evaluation reporting, timetabling of weekly sessions, communications with school management, staff and student body, promotion, PAL/PASS leadership module assessing, quality control.
3. Timetabling management - scheduling with Schools - to avoid clashes and to ensure it appears on the 1st year timetable.
4. Produce PAL/PASS Yearly Evaluation Reports - Key Student Experience Data and Retention Analysis Tool.
5. Ongoing communications support to 1st years about the purpose of PAL/PASS required from Programme Co-ordinators/Tutors, teaching team and school management.
6. Include feedback from PAL/PASS sessions at programme boards agenda.
7. PAL Course Contacts/ Tutors required for each school with speciality in the 'school subject area'.

### NOTE

*During the rollout and evaluation of phase one of the PAL/PASS programme GMIT and AIT have consulted with other successful PAL programme operators including Bournemouth University and Manchester University in the UK, Leuven University in Belgium, Granada University in Spain, and PALNET Ireland members.*