Title: **Supporting transition through Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Understand more about peer assisted learning and the pedagogic approach that underpins it at Bradford
- Be aware of possible impact of peer learning, the benefits for students at different levels and for the institution
- Consider how to implement or develop a similar scheme at their own institution

Session Outline

Underpinning PAL at Bradford is how we conceptualise the student experience as one where students themselves play an integral role in their own learning. Drawing on situated learning and 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998 and Jaques and Salmon 2007), PAL aims to foster 'partnership learning communities' (Healey et al. 2014) and offers a cross disciplinary framework in which to operate and 'nurture' students (Barnett 2007) to realise their own strengths. Giving them ownership for building their own learning and that of others, strives not just to enhance understanding, but aspires to create a more engaged community of learners.

This session will outline how PAL works at Bradford, with combined staff and student perspectives on the transition support scheme. It will explore the impact of peer support for first year transition and the development of graduate attributes for the peer leaders, with themes regarding employability, future focus, course/skills development and engagement with study highlighted. The scheme also connects to the institution's wider teaching and learning approach and was noted in our recent TEF statement of findings for its role in personalised learning. Sector evidence links peer learning to academic and social confidence and supporting retention (Keenan 2014 and Ford et al. 2015), and also demonstrates the broader value of engagement and belonging for student success

(Thomas 2012). Working with students in a learning partnership seems to be enhancing such integration at Bradford.

The session will go on to focus on helping attendees to scope out if/how they could develop such a scheme at their own institutions, including what approaches, resources and networks could be utilised. Attendees will also be made aware of the developing Academic Peer Learning Network, with a view to developing a broader community of practice for staff and students working together within peer learning.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

5 mins – welcome and intro

15 mins –background and impact of PAL

- Overview of how PAL developed at Bradford
- What PAL at Bradford aims to do and how it operates
- Raise key principles but how different models exists

15 mins - Evidence of impact

- Evidence from PAL at Bradford
- Evidence from the HE sector
- Staff and student perspectives

25 mins – group activity, possible aims and approaches of academic peer learning

- What do they want to achieve? What kind of scheme/ model would they develop?
- What could PAL align to in your institution? (what strategies, priorities, approaches - e.g. student retention, employability, transition, student engagement, personalised learning, students as partners)
- Discussion of ideas/sharing of practice - how do you get buy-in?

20 mins – group scoping activity, resources/networks that could be used to establish peer learning at institutions

- Group co-produces a PAL 'Network' of who they'd need to involve to develop PAL or similar at their institution
- Deliverers highlight the Academic Peer Learning network and other support (broader community of practice)

10 mins – summary and close

- Start to established a new group (each other) - they can offer support as 'newcomers' to develop and implement their ideas after the conference, aided by 'old timers' from the wider sector community

References

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