

Title: Impact of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) on MPharm students' transition to university and preparedness for assessments

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Background: PAL involves trained Year 2 MPharm students, PAL leaders, facilitating study groups for 15-20 Year 1 MPharm students. PAL leaders are more approachable and familiar with the course from students' perspectives, than course lecturers. PAL leaders can empathise with new experiences Year 1 students face when commencing university¹.

Method: Quantitative research was carried out which targeted Year 1 and Year 2 MPharm degree students at the University of Portsmouth who had previously attended PAL sessions. The questionnaire consisted of questions and statements about Peer Assisted Learning. Questionnaires were self-administered and distributed in Year 1 and Year 2 MPharm lectures at the University of Portsmouth.

Results: 213 questionnaires were distributed and 182 were returned, producing 85% response rate. The majority of MPharm students, 70% (n=174), reported that PAL sessions supported their learning, helped improve their knowledge of subjects and/or helped them understand how to meet course expectations. Furthermore, 75% (n=182) reported that PAL helped them adjust to university life, make new friends, adjust to living away from home and/or improved their overall experience of university. MPharm students felt better prepared for effective study 79% (n=47) and assessments 78% (n=74) if they attended more than half of the scheduled PAL sessions. PAL was an enjoyable learning experience for 89% of students (n=127) and 88% (n=166) preferred to ask PAL leaders questions rather than members of staff

Conclusion: Peer Assisted Learning aids MPharm students' transition into university and regular attendance of PAL helps students feel better prepared for assessments and could improve their overall academic performance.

References

1. Capstick S and Fleming H. Peer-assisted learning in an undergraduate hospitality course: second year students supporting first year students in group learning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*. 2004;1(2):69-75.