



Re-imagining our curriculum  
Consolidating the First Year Experience

Prototype Project Updates:

January 2016

<b>General Details</b>	
<b>Project Title</b>	Students as Partners – A Peer Assisted Learning Pilot
<b>Name of Main Applicant</b>	Dr Gavin Sewell
<b>Position Held</b>	Lecturer in Chemistry
<b>College</b>	DIT
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<b>Email</b>	gavin.sewell@dit.ie
<b>Names of any co-applicants (&amp; colleges they are based in):</b>	Claire McDonnell (DIT Learning Teaching & Technology Centre) Thomas Butler (DIT postgraduate taught student) John Colleran (School of Chemical & Pharmaceutical Sciences, DIT)
<b>Signed</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>TU4D Theme (Please tick)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Induction/early orientation <input type="checkbox"/> First 5,6 or 7 weeks; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment and feedback; <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Attributes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students/ autonomous self-directed learners, <input type="checkbox"/> Learning spaces – virtual & physical <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Curriculum models	
<b>Summary of Prototype project</b> (max 200 words)	<p>Based on similar initiatives in other colleges, we piloted a Peer Assisted Learning programme in the School of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences in DIT.</p> <p>We drew on the experience of a colleague from the University of Liverpool, Dr Gita Sedghi, who has implemented PAL in chemistry and has supported colleagues to extend it to a range of other disciplines. She supplied advice as well as resources and materials. She has been invited to visit DIT on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> and will give a lunchtime presentation open to all.</p> <p>We recruited 8 PAL Leaders from 3rd and 2nd year and a training session was run with them from 5-7pm on 5<sup>th</sup> November (with assistance from Leslie Shoemaker).</p> <p>First years were informed of the initiative by announcing it during lectures, labs and tutorials. Posters and the Kickstarting College Success Facebook page were also used.</p> <p>We ran PAL sessions from 5-6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (9th, 10th, 16th, 17th &amp; 30th Nov and 1st Dec). The following topics were identified in consultation with lecturers; electronic configurations and periodic trends, balancing equations, and the mole. Participants in a session could suggest topics also.</p> <p>The maximum attendance was 7 students and the average was 3 students (see photo that follows).</p>

		
<b>Project dates</b>	November 5 <sup>th</sup> to December 1 <sup>st</sup> (preparatory work from October 6 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>Main proposed original project outputs for the TU4D</b> (max 100 words)	<p>(please include as a list of bullet points. These can be ones modified from the original submission)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This pilot project allows for the implementation of Peer Assisted learning locally using a model that can be extended to other disciplines.</li> <li>• This 1000 word paper presents the lessons learned and can be used to plan for wider implementation.</li> <li>• PAL Leaders were invited to an informal feedback session in December.</li> <li>• PAL participants will be invited to participate in an online survey when semester 1 exam results are available. They may also be invited to a focus group interview in May/June.</li> <li>• Dr Gita Sedghi will visit DIT on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> to mentor PAL leaders and give a presentation to interested staff.</li> </ul>	
<b>Project outputs including any evaluation data</b> (max 300 words, data to be included in an appendix but can be summarised here)	<p>(please include as a list of outputs aligned to TU4D themes, as relevant eg <i>1. Induction/orientation; 2. First 5,6 or 7 weeks; 3 Assessment and feedback; 4. Students as autonomous self-directed learners 5. Peer mentors 6. Graduate Attributes 7. Learning Spaces and 8. Alternative Curriculum Models</i>)</p> <p><b>2. First 5,6 or 7 weeks and 4. Students as autonomous self-directed learners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customised PAL Resources By modifying materials provided by Dr Gita Sedghi, we have produced a range of resources and supports – e.g. PAL leader application forms and training workshop, 1 page summaries on PAL for academic staff, PAL leaders and students.</li> <li>- Feedback from PAL leaders 7 of the 8 PAL Leaders attended a feedback session in a local café. The main points raised were that the training provided was useful, as were the first year lecture notes and tutorial problems that were made available through Webcourses; that a change of days to Tuesdays and Thursdays might help with attendance, as would starting the PAL sessions earlier in the semester (mid-October) and recruiting PAL leaders the previous April-June. They mentioned that useful resources for the PAL sessions were a leaving certificate chemistry textbook, links to worked examples on Google / You Tube and a summary of the formulas that are needed in 1<sup>st</sup> year.</li> <li>- Visit by Dr Gita Sedghi Gita will visit DIT on Feb 18th to mentor PAL leaders and the authors of this report and to give a presentation over lunchtime to interested staff (this presentation will be videoed).</li> </ul>	
<b>Lessons Learned</b> (max 200 words)	(Please summarise what you learned from the prototype project that you feel would need to be taken into account within a full project implementation)	

	<p>We focussed on implementing the PAL process in DIT and are pleased that this has now been achieved. However, we began this pilot implementation later in the semester than would be recommended and the first PAL session took place about 3 weeks later than we would have preferred. This is likely to have contributed to the low participation by first year students. We realised that clear communication with other staff across the College was important as peer mentoring was being implemented on some programmes and some students and staff became confused.</p> <p>The feedback from the PAL leaders was very useful and, if implementing PAL more widely next year, we would be able to ask some of them to be involved as ambassadors and implement their recommendations to recommend people look for PAL leader applicants in April-June 2016 and start the PAL sessions earlier (mid-October).</p>
<p><b>Next stage</b>(max (max 200 words)</p>	<p>If you haven't already done so, how do you plan to evaluate your prototype project (please include at least one evaluation method and nature of data to be provided to the TU FYE working group)</p> <p>The 8 PAL leaders involved in the project provided feedback already.</p> <p>We plan to invited the student participants to take an online survey very soon when semester 1 exam results are available. They may also be invited to a focus group interview in May/June.</p> <p>How do you plan to develop /implement your project outputs/findings over the next months? (please reference possible future funding applications and/or change to your practice)</p> <p>Now that we have piloted it, we hope to run PAL sessions in both semesters of the next academic year in the School of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. We will draw on feedback from the PAL leaders, students and our mentor, Dr Gita Sedghi, to do this. To facilitate extending the pilot in this way and, hopefully getting other disciplines involved, we intend on applying for any appropriate funding that is available.</p>