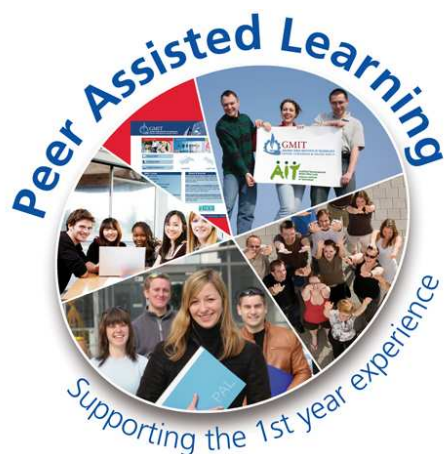




PHASE ONE PEER ASSISTED LEARNING PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT JANUARY - JUNE 2009



Supported by



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1. ABOUT THE PEER ASSISTED LEARNING PROGRAMME

1.1 What is Peer Assisted Learning

PAL at GMIT and PASS at AIT is a scheme that offers cross-year support between students on the same programme. It encourages first year students to support each other and learn co-operatively under the guidance of a trained student (a PAL/PASS Leader) from the 2nd, 3rd or 4th years of the programme.

***Note:** The project has a separate identity in each institute PAL in GMIT and Peer Assisted Student Support or PASS in AIT but was implemented in exactly the same format. PAL will be used for the purpose of this report.*

1.2 Background to the Peer Assisted Learning Programme

The GMIT Student Leadership Programme is a SIF II initiative supported by the HEA. It consists of two strands: 'Student Led Learning' in collaboration with Athlone Institute of Technology and 'Curriculum Reform' in collaboration with NUI, Galway. Under the 'Student Led Learning' projects, considerable effort has been invested in setting up and piloting the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme at GMIT and AIT. Planning and design of the new PAL Programme took place from October 2008 to December 2008. Phase one of the PAL Programme was then launched by both GMIT and AIT in February 2009 **on six first year programmes**. A total of **143 first year students** were involved in Phase One of the programme. They were **supported by 13 peer leaders** who were selected from second, third and fourth year programmes and have undertaken an intensive student leader training programme.

The PAL programme will play a key role in enhancing the first year experience, easing the transition to third level and retaining students on programmes. Students and staff in both institutes are very excited about this new innovation. Further information about the Peer Assisted Learning Programme is available on the PAL websites at both institutes www.gmit.ie/pal and www.ait.ie/pass.

1.3 Peer Assisted Learning Programme Aims

Often, one of the best ways to learn something is to talk about it with someone else. This is at the core of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL). PAL schemes are run “by students, for students”, with the only staff input at the managerial level.

PAL is **not** proposed as an alternative to taught classes, but as **an additional resource** where students can further their base understanding and develop independent learning skills.

The Peer Assisted Learning Programme aims

- to enhance the First Year Experience (FYE);
- to develop student leadership skills;
- to help first year students develop their independent learning and study skills;
- to help first year students adjust more readily to the requirements of their programme
- to enhance first year students understanding of their subjects and prepare more effectively for assignments and exams

The long term goals of the PAL programme is to help decrease drop out rates, increase grades and help students be successful during their time at 3rd level education and their future careers.

Peer Assisted Learning is NOT:

- teaching by students
- targeted at weak or problem students - all participants should benefit
- a means of reducing lecturer - student contact class time
- an environment for social chatting

1.4 Peer Assisted Learning Programme Benefits

PAL Programme **benefits to ‘PAL Leaders’ from year 2, 3 or 4:**

- o development of their personal and professional skills such as leadership, team working, organising, time management, listening, interpersonal communication, facilitation and presentation skills;
- o increased confidence;
- o provides valuable experience to enhance their CVs.

PAL Programme **benefits to Lecturers:**

- o A reduction in the number of minor requests and queries from first year students, as PAL Leaders can act as a first point of contact for ‘specific information/queries’ on settling into college life.

- Helps students to become better prepared for their lectures or/and tutorials, assignments etc.
- Help students learn more effectively in a peer based group.

PAL Programme benefits to the School Programmes:

- Creates links between year groups which can help develop a more cohesive course culture;
- Increases the level of student involvement in and ownership of learning;
- Support can be targeted at specific areas of a course or programme which students find particularly challenging with an aim to improve student understanding;
- PAL Leaders provide additional and considered feedback for the Programme Team;
- Evidence of valuable additional student support which can be used for Institutional Audit, Subject Review or for Programme/School marketing;
- In their student 'PAL Leaders', the programme gains committed students who can help promote the course and even meet with internal or external reviewers.

1.5 PAL Programme @ GMIT

The Peer Assisted Learning Programme at GMIT is identified as **PAL (Peer Assisted Learning)**.

Phase one of the PAL programme at GMIT provided weekly PAL sessions for 90 students. Each session was facilitated by two trained PAL Leaders. The programmes included:

Bachelor of Art in Hotel Management	30 Students
Bachelor of Science in Business Computing and Digital Media	30 Students
Bachelor of Art in Furniture Production and Technology	30 Students

1.6 PASS Programme @ AIT

The Peer Assisted Learning Programme at AIT is identified as **PASS (Peer Assisted Student Support)**.

Phase one of the PASS programme at AIT provided weekly PASS sessions for 53 students. Each session was facilitated by two trained PASS Leaders. The programmes included:

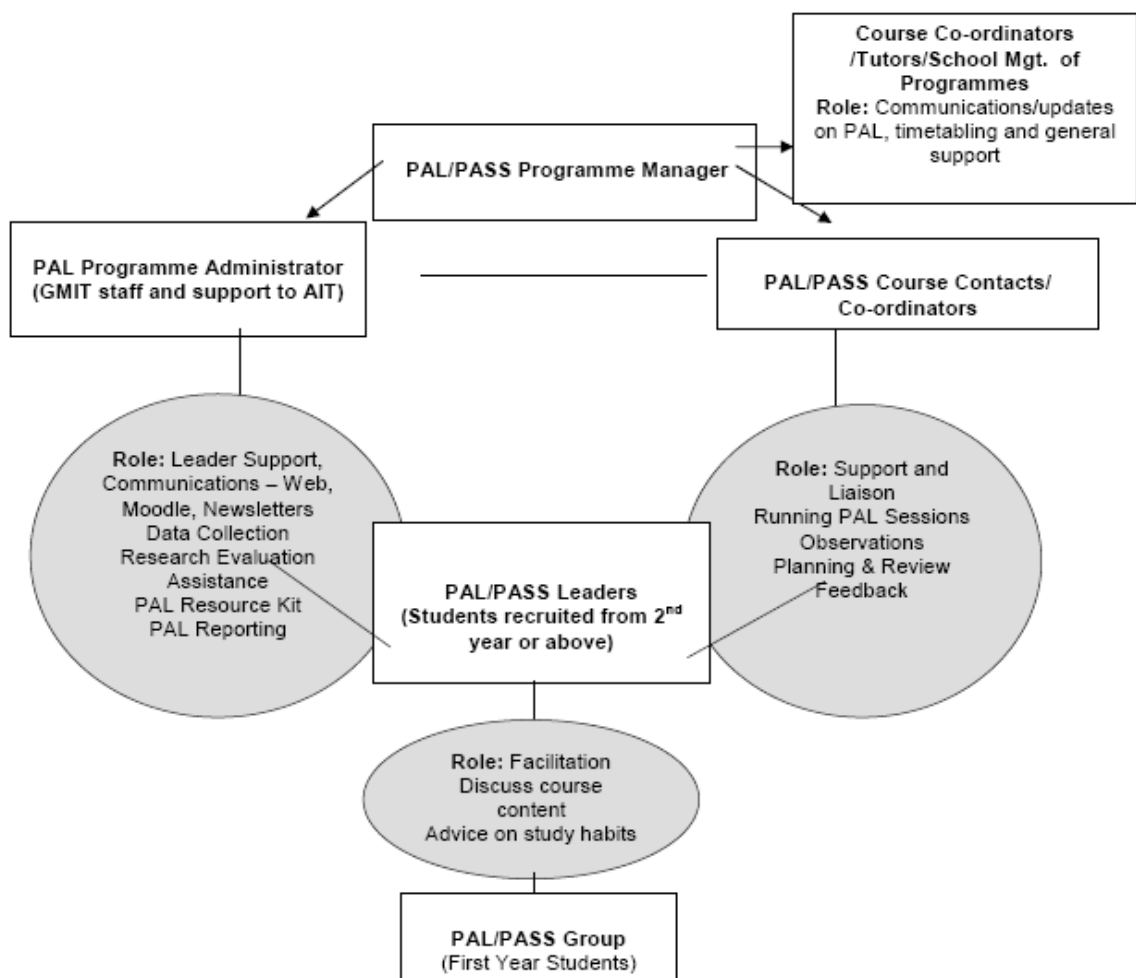
Bachelor of Business (Honours) Abinitio	32 Students
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Technology and Management	8 Students
Bachelor of Business in Hospitality Business Management	13 Students

1.7 PAL/PASS Session Content

PAL/PASS Leaders facilitate weekly one hour sessions for first year students and cover topics such as:

- finding your way around campus
- locating resources in the Library
- practising referencing skills
- how to avoid plagiarism
- discussing how to get the most out of lectures
- analysing note taking techniques
- exploring guidelines for getting the best from group work
- practising presentations
- reviewing lectures students have found really difficult
- analysing assignment questions

1.8 Phase One: PAL/PASS Organisation Structure



1.9 Phase One: PAL/PASS Programme Implementation Steps

Step 1 September – December 2008:

- Staff and Student Briefings from Bournemouth University and SIFII Management Team
- PAL/PASS Phase One Programme Nominations from Schools
- Reward Scheme for Pilot Agreed
- 'Student Leaders' Recruitment Campaign and Selection Process – from 2nd, 3rd or 4th year students.
- School/Department Timetabling/Scheduling of Sessions for Semester Two
- PAL/PASS Training Programme Planning and Handbook Development
- First Year Introduction Briefing Sessions about PAL/PASS sessions

Step 2 January 2009:

- A 3 day Training Programme for 'Student Leaders'. (incl. Moodle & Library tours)
- A ½ day Training Programme for 'Co-ordinators', 'Course Contacts', and School lecturing representatives e.g. on 'How PAL/PASS sessions run ' and 'How to support PAL/PASS Leaders'.
- The PAL handbook was distributed to all PAL/PASS Leaders, Programme Co-ordinators and the PAL/PASS course contacts in advance of the training programme. The PAL/PASS handbook contains all materials and content on running weekly sessions.
- Promotion Campaign set up including new websites www.gmit.ie/pal and www.ait.ie/pass, School Posters with PAL Timetable, Reception Information Stands, E-shots to 1st years etc.

Step 3 From February 2009:

- PAL/PASS Sessions timetabled in 1st year programmes (1 hour per week for 10 weeks in the semester).
- Two PAL Leaders run each PAL Session per week.
- The 1st year group decide what they want to cover, problems they are encountering i.e. review course material, analyse assignment requirements, past exam papers, discuss lectures or project work, how to use the library for research, practise citing references or to air other matters.

Step 4 March - April 2009:

- PAL/PASS Course Contact Meetings take place with Leaders
- PAL/PASS Course Contact Observation Sessions take place and feedback on each session provided to leaders.

Step 5 May - June 2009:

- PAL/PASS Phase One Programme evaluation takes place
- Preliminary research findings presented to PALNET Ireland in May, NUIG – CELT Teaching and Learning Conference in June and the CSSI Conference in June.

2. PHASE ONE: RESEARCH APPROACH & FINDINGS

2.1 Phase One Research Methodology

This is a collaborative research study in which peer assisted learning has been deployed simultaneously in both institutes of technology (GMIT and AIT), across a range of disciplines using an action research cyclical approach. Cresswell (2005) argues that a collaborative action research involves establishing a relationship that is acceptable and cooperative between a team of people. It requires negotiation of roles during the research process but the concept of interacting is central to understanding one's practices (p. 561). By engaging in collaborative action research one major focus of the study was that of change; it has been asserted that collaborative research 'can be a powerful force for change' (Middlewood *et al.*, 2001, p.145).

A critical theory framework has been chosen for the study which informed the choice of action research. According to Foucault "a critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are...it is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought rest". Therefore as academics we should be in a state of 'permanent criticism' which will lead to freedom of thought. He suggests "identifying and exposing forms of power in peoples' lives in order to move beyond forms in which we are entrapped" (cited in Olssen, 1999). A driver for this research is to examine if students are disempowered through the systems and norms that are associated with third level. Therefore the overall aim of the research is to determine if the introduction of a peer to peer scheme will enhance the learning experience of the participant PAL/PASS session groups and the employability skills of the peer leaders.

The action research incorporates two cycles, with the first cycle being evaluated and reviewed using a variety of methods including focus groups, surveys, observations and structured interviews involving students, academic staff and relevant members of the management team. The conclusions drawn will inform the second iteration in 2009-2010.

<p>GMIT 5 & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAL could be delivered to all 1st years at Letterfrack subject to timetabling • Initial issues with timetable. PAL Leaders had one room on timetable and students had another. • Would be better if session was scheduled earlier in the day when the students have reason to be at College. • If scheduled between two full classes as a Group – would encourage more to attend. • Start sessions from beginning of year. • Lecturers spoke to students about PAL after a request from the Leaders to explain more about it. • Room for PAL session - good
<p>POSITIVE/NEGATIVE EFFECTS:</p>	
<p>GMIT 2 GMIT 1</p> <p>GMIT 5 & 6</p> <p>GMIT 2</p> <p>GMIT 4</p> <p>GMIT 3</p>	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Chance to refresh 1st year material • Helped with study, time management • Picked up something from each PAL session which could be applied to own study • More focus on organisation skills • Time Management Skills <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication from Lecturers to students about PAL • Took up time. Also missed class because of scheduling – clash with Leader's timetable • A lot of pressure – time clashed with meeting with Lecturer and assignments • Role of Leader could be too much for 4th years – depending on individual
<p>IMPROVE PAL LEADER EXPERIENCE:</p>	
<p>GMIT 4 GMIT 2 GMIT 1 & 2</p> <p>GMIT 3</p> <p>GMIT 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start from September • Structured sessions – would work better • Independence good – more structure for 1st years for first number of sessions • Would be better to have tutor of programme as course contact • Get group together for outing, e.g. Delphi. This needs to be done in the 1st or 2nd week of sessions • 1st or 2nd week too early. Settling in time for students – sorting accommodation, etc. takes time in the first few weeks. • Learning to Learn module will be very helpful
<p>Training:</p>	
<p>Liked Most:</p>	
<p>GMIT 1 & 2 3 & 4</p> <p>GMIT 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liked Trainer • Very good • Very relevant information • Good fun – good interaction • Very good – helped to build up my confidence, especially the simulated PAL sessions

GMIT 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good • Confidence building – simulated PAL sessions very helpful • Good experience for future training or teaching • Groups mixed – this was good as everyone had to interact with each other • Section on plagiarism – important
Liked Least:	
GMIT 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training relevant to Bournemouth • More practical aspects of course needs to be looked at in PAL training • How to tackle maths, accounting
Change:	
GMIT 1 GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 4 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be adapted more to Institutes of Technology • Boundary setting needs to be more user friendly • Involved students in setting rules. • Rules set by students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Listen and respect to all ○ Confidentiality ○ No down putting and take things seriously ○ Try to attend all PAL sessions ○ Any subject is up for discussion ○ Everybody should participate in discussion • Disagreed with setting ground rules – reaction from students • Nothing to change – fully comprehensive • More simulated sessions would be worthwhile • Boundary setting important – support and facilitate, not teach
PAL Manual:	
Liked Most:	
GMIT 1 GMIT 3 GMIT 2 GMIT 4 GMIT 5 GMIT 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section J – materials to use with your PAL group – useful for participants and also for Leaders • Section D – 1st PAL session • Section J for backup • Manual very well laid out • Manual brilliant • Section I and Section J • Took a lot from it • Section D – Guidelines for 1st PAL Session • Useful reference tool • Very informative • Ice breakers very helpful • Section J – referred to this and could photocopy section for students • Overhead on Rules/Guidelines very useful
Liked Least:	
GMIT 1 GMIT 3 GMIT 2 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section K – Leader job description • All okay • Section G – promoting PAL – needs to be expanded • Size of manual - heavy and awkward. Could be smaller.

Add/Change:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 4 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix Section on placements – essential for Hotel & Catering School to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Placement requirements ○ Contact ○ Outcome if placement is not done ○ Leaders need correct information on placements • Placements would not apply to 1st years in Letterfrack • More attractive flyer on PAL to hand out to students – could hand out at 1st PAL session • Library section – over informative. Could be more refined • More focus on facilities, e.g. online resources • Have manual on moodle – Leaders could just print required documents for each session • A5 size would be more user-friendly, e.g. size of prospectus • Inserts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Notes section at back ○ Diary for each Semester
PAL Leader Support:	
Contact/Meetings:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No meeting with course contact • One observation only • Met more with a Lecturer who became unofficial course contact • Very supportive – met with her all the time • Met contact once – discussed timetable • No observations • Informal discussion at end of Lectures
Discussion with Contact:	
GMIT 1 & 2 (with Lecturer) GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Silences with students ○ Placements - information ○ Repeat exam information ○ Practical information required by students not received from Lecturers • Never saw course contact • Discussed numbers attending sessions • General informal discussions • Confirmation on direction re 'Dihedral Angle problem' which had been raised at a PAL session • Got copy of continuous assessment schedule in advance – would use this to prepare for session • Got students to write down problems at end of session and would use this information for next session • Timetabling and general discussion on attendance
Other support:	
GMIT 1 & 2 3 & 4 GMIT 1 GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Lecturers were very supportive • Need to get more Lecturers involved • Head of School (Hotel School) very interested • Contact person should also be a Lecturer on the Programme • Lecturers supportive and encouraging • Lecturers saw value of PAL sessions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturers mentioned PAL sessions in class when the Leaders requested them to do so.
PAL Programme Management/Co-ordination:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 1 & 2 3 & 4 GMIT 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very good Very helpful Very supportive All requirements, e.g. writing materials, timetables, etc. supplied very quickly. Very good response to any queries
Helpful Additional Support:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly meeting with other Leaders – 2 per semester would be helpful. Due to location, monthly meetings with other Leaders would not suit Letterfrack Leaders Support of 1st year Lecturing Team would be beneficial New Leaders could ask previous Leaders for advice PAL Leaders – to attend 1st year Course Board meetings to deal with various issues for 1st years
Running PAL Sessions:	
Effective:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 3 & 4 GMIT 5 & 6 GMIT 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open/friendly sessions Sat with students – did not stand up in front of students Paired students for sessions Having a specific topic worked best for first few weeks Forward planning – sometimes difficult, depending on numbers turning up Ask students to volunteer to ask questions Encouraging students to express themselves and work together Showing students how to source information and to share this information Advise on websites to get information. Leaders brought laptop to session – shared project ideas Chats more effective for this Programme. Digital media aspect of Programme – encourage creative side of students through their projects All participants got feedback from sharing ideas – Leaders also took some information from participants.
Ineffective:	
GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needed more structure Students thought session should be more academic Didn't start in September Standing in front of class – necessary to sit with students and be more at their level
First Year Feedback:	
GMIT 1 & 2 3 & 4	Positive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped students become more socially interactive Negative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students didn't like PAL name

<p>GMIT 3 & 4 5 & 6</p> <p><u>INTERNATIONAL:</u> GMIT 3 & 4</p> <p>GMIT 5 & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students aware attendance is not mandatory • Mature student - attended all sessions - saw the benefits immediately • Helped socially • Had trouble understanding Lecturers sometimes – found PAL very helpful • More focused
<p>Finally:</p>	
<p>Advice to future PAL Leaders:</p>	
<p>GMIT 1 GMIT 3 GMIT 2 GMIT 4</p> <p>GMIT 6</p> <p>GMIT 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay confident • To keep students interested, finish on a good note • Learn from previous PAL leaders • Talk to course contact • Be open with students and try and encourage them to do the work themselves with you simply guiding them • Begin at the start of the academic year • Get down to students' level – interact and chat with them • Advertise yourself as a Leader – go to classes and introduce yourself to students to remind them of PAL • PAL sessions should start on the 1st week of classes. Must start the same time as lectures in order not to differentiate.
<p>Interest in Leadership role in Sept 2009:</p>	
<p>GMIT 4</p> <p>GMIT 3 GMIT 1 & 2 GMIT 5 & 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies completed in Letterfrack. Coming to GMIT for continuing study. Will share experience with new PAL Leaders • Studies completed • Will be on placements. Interested in 2nd Semester • Not available to be Leader. But would like to be a point of contact for new Leaders.

Also in May 2009, a focus group session took place with seven AIT PASS Leaders in Athlone. A range of questions were discussed in relation to their leadership experience (see appendix 4.1). The findings are presented in the table below under various categories from skills gained, challenges and recommendations to enhance phase two of the PAL Programme. Please note student PASS leaders are represented by number AIT 1 to 6 in column one of the table.

AIT PASS Leadership Experience	
SKILLS	
AIT 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching skills developed • Assignment work, coaching outside sessions • Supporting • Planning Ahead • Communication/Delegation • Team Work
AIT 4 & 3 5 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Planning & Organising • Speaking to Group • Preparation
AIT 6 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking in front of others • Prior very nervous speaking • Confidence in speaking • Team Encouragement
CHALLENGES – SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	
AIT 1 AIT 7 AIT 3 AIT 4 AIT 5 School/Dept Challenges: <u>IMPACT:</u> AIT 5 AIT 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not self learning • Still in Secondary School mode • Timetabling – rearranging • Looked on leaders as Lecturers • Timetabling – between two 2nd year classes • Under pressure to get to own class • Scheduled first – Friday. Change to different day clashed with own class • Lack of motivation to attend • Nervous of speaking initially • Over time people came out of shell • Lack of effort/understanding of what PASS is • Promotion – course contacts • Posters – not available in AIT • Timetabling – Classroom changes 1. Timetabling 2. Changing 1st years' impression of what 3. Thought that they were there to teach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas start • 1st years' perspective – extra hour • September start • Research skills – 4/8 weeks • Library etc. • Harder to change

<p>WORKLOAD: AIT 3</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>IMPACT:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidence (improved) 2. Confidence/Presentations 3. Interacting with Lecturers 4. Organisation • Negative: None • Higher attendance • September start – more structure • Know what is needed • Improve promotion – throughout all college and course manual • Talking to students from programmes not involved – would like this • Lecture expectations • Website
<p>Training:</p>	
<p>AIT 4</p> <p>AIT 1</p> <p>AIT 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun • New Experience • Hugh excellent trainer • DVDs – exercise helped leaders interact • Fun • Informative • Before – apprehensive
<p>Training</p>	
<p>Simulations</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>AIT 1</p> <p>NOT LIKED:</p> <p>AIT 3</p> <p>AIT 1</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>INDEPTH TUTORING:</p> <p>AIT 5 & 3</p> <p>AIT 1 & 2</p> <p>SEPTEMBER:</p>	<p>Training was like a PASS session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by doing • Planning first session • Time consuming – 2 days • Not shortened • PASS Leaders (past) • Lecturer involvement in training – course contact session • Moodle: 40 mins. • Library: 40 mins. • Extra Moodle 2 hrs. – individual sessions • 40 – Moodle – more time • Text messages used instead • Enough • Depends on skill level • Library significant • 2nd Session – 1 hour • Librarian – package proposed • Very informative • Introduction with 1st year group – Induction Week • Tours of the College

PASS Manual:	
Liked Most:	
AIT 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section E • 36 suggested activities • Keep session interesting • Mock talk show • Section C • Planning for 1st session • Referring back to plan • Section C – How to run PASS sessions • Section D • In general – very good, descriptive, easy to understand/follow • Sections C,D and E • Overall – fantastic – all well covered • Refer to manual – great as back up • Tips for exams – copy directly for students • So much material in it • Running PASS sessions • Activities – ice breakers
AIT 2	
AIT 3	
AIT 4	
AIT 5	
AIT 1	
AIT 7	
Liked Least:	
AIT 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didn't get a proper chance to use two sections – Semester 1/2
Add/Change:	
AIT 6 AIT 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business – keeping Accountancy interesting • Accountancy – 1st Session – de-motivated • 2nd Session – compiled questions • Strength in that area • Hospitality students find account • Develop for each school • Generate materials • Specify for each course
AIT 5	
PASS Leader Support:	
Contact/Meetings:	
BUSINESS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team • Twice – discussed how sessions were going • Timetabling/attendance • PASS Co-ordinator – course contact • Meeting not scheduled • Would have approached course contact • Not formal • Did not feel course co-ordinator encouraged class to attend
HOSPITALITY:	
AIT 5	
Other Comments:	
AIT 5 AIT 3 AIT 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of PASS • Changing of timetables supported • Greater awareness – 2nd year lecturers were not fully aware • 1st year lecturers – support and encouragement • Sit in on PASS sessions
CC ROLE:	
Steering Group: 2 students reps.	
HOSPITALITY } ENGINEERING }	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided feedback

<p>AIT 1</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>AIT 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not lecturer from own department • No pre-conceived ideas • 1 or 2 plenty • 1 per semester • Schedule observations of semester – second/third week • First month
<p>Programme Co-ordination:</p>	
<p>CONTACT</p> <p>100%</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>AIT 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking how we got on • Questions/queries – happy to answer • Opinions • How best to approach • Need help • Communication – texts and e-mails • Communication for class • More support • More schools involved • More support needed • Pilot/test phase one – quite well • All lecturers in tune with what it is about • Involvement of more staff
<p>Running PASS Sessions:</p>	
<p>Effective:</p>	
<p>AIT 4</p> <p>AIT 6</p> <p>AIT 2</p> <p>AIT 3</p> <p>AIT 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to talk about problems • Break mould – not lecture • Feedback – what to do in next session • After session – ask to identify problem area, e.g. a/c • Planned sessions – PASS + papers – found very beneficial • Students determine – what to cover for next session
<p>Ineffective:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan session on your own without involving in planning • Having authoritarian approach – would not be helpful • Awareness of self in order to be able to run sessions
<p>First Year Feedback:</p>	
<p>AIT 3</p> <p>AIT 2</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>AIT 1</p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p><u>INTERNATIONAL:</u></p> <p>AIT 5</p> <p>AIT 6</p> <p>AIT 3</p> <p>AIT 1</p> <p>AIT 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficial: Economics – very happy • Negative: Attendance cannot..... Business PASS scheduled on Fridays • Asked for feedback after sessions • Help with projects • Accounting • Interaction • Christmas start • Test • Dedicated – came in during rag week • Positive – drawings of former houses • CAD drawings – support outside • Didn't attend • Worked fine – economics • Good at communications • Support outside of class • Attendance – full attendance • By one • Knowledge of cultures

2.3 PAL/PASS 1st Year Student Findings

GMIT & AIT 1st Year Student Survey Findings:

143 first year students in GMIT and AIT were offered PAL sessions for one hour per week for 10 weeks from February to April 2009. An electronic survey was distributed to the first year students at the end of April 2009, to gain feedback on their PAL experience. A total of 43 students completed the survey and this represents a 30% response rate. The findings are presented below.

1. In what way if any has PAL/PASS sessions helped you as a first year?

1. Through PAL, I was introduced to something that I might had only seen by next year, such as "Google Sketchup".
2. It has helped me integrate with my class mates more in a very friendly environment
3. PAL was a great experience I only wish more people had attended. PAL helped me to understand what was to come on the course in following years and I now feel more prepared for the next stages on the course.
4. It has helped me to adjust into college life better and given me more confidence in interacting with my peers.
5. It helped me get a better idea of what kind of standard was expected of me.
6. The PASS class help me to improve my English. Helping us to finish the assignment.
7. Share the information, classmates know more about each other, have an effect on team work
8. Get information on my class project. Help get idea out of my head ...make the class work as a team.
9. Get to know the class better and helped with projects.
10. It has helped me to get a better understanding of the course
11. Helped me make friends in the class
12. It has helped get a better understanding of college life from people who have been here longer

2. What was the best thing about PAL/PASS for you as a first year student?

1. Learning from other students that have already done first year
2. Getting answers to questions about placements and 2nd year subjects and expectations
3. Getting prepared for exams
4. The relaxed class environment
5. I learned a lot more about placements
6. The leaders were easy to talk to and helped explain or find out things I didn't understand

	about college in general
7.	Helped me understand the course better.
8.	Being able ask the any question to the PAL leaders as they have done the year already and have experience e.g. on placement and exams
9.	Gave advice on exams
10.	I had more explanations on different subjects
11.	Interesting
12.	It helped me a lot
13.	Helped me when I got stuck with something
14.	Messing around but still getting work done.
15.	Getting to know people from other years and knowledge on future lessons.
16.	Being able to ask questions that I felt were inappropriate to ask in lectures.
17.	You could talk openly about any question or query you had.
18.	Share the information and ideas.
19.	Students get together to share the ideas about the project
20.	Made closer to my class mate
21.	Helped with subjects that students were finding hard to follow. Especially the Over sea students.
22.	Getting to know each other as a group
23.	Helps to gain knowledge of the college and how it works
24.	It let us get 2 know everyone that little bit better
25.	A more relaxed class environment for all the students

3. What was the worst thing about PAL/PASS for you as a first year student?

1. There wasn't really a worst
2. PAL session was on a Tuesday 12 to 1 a time that we would normally have off
3. Didn't begin at the start of the year
4. The time it was on
5. It was a lecture that was made to easy not to bother going
6. It was not on at the best time on the timetable and if was on at a more suitable time I believe it would have had higher attendance

7. It was scheduled at 9 o'clock in the morning
8. I can not think of any.
9. Time on timetable.
10. There was no bad thing
11. Starting it in the second semester didn't work as I knew my way around college at that stage and many of my classmates left the course by the second semester.
12. It was all good
13. The low attendance probably due to late start in the year
14. I think it was started too late in the year, I think it would have been a huge help in settling into college life in the first few weeks of college.
15. The worst thing about PAL was that it didn't start until February. It would of being a great help in September when I first started.
16. I don't think that in this class have worst thing. But it's more focused the international student's language.
17. No worst things, but can be improved
18. At first it was embarrassing to talk in front of the class. But I got over it.
19. It started too late in the year some students may have done with this help at the start and would have it made it easier to make friends and know what was expected of you.
20. Too late in the year starting
21. The late start and the actual time the class was on if it was earlier in the day it would be better
22. It could have been on from the start of the year
23. The time and place of the class changed a few times

**4. Do you think the PAL/PASS Programme could be improved for next year's students?
If so, how?**

1. No I think it worked very well this year
2. Yes it should be run from September not February.
3. No
4. Yeah starting from the beginning of the year would help 1st years settle in
5. Send text messages to all students to indicate when it is on
6. Don't have it early in the morning, no one will go. Start it at the beginning of the year so they get help from the start.

7. Make it mandatory to go
8. Lecturers should use the PAL leaders to go over subjects which are difficult and are important on the exam
9. By not being scheduled too early in the day and to include the students more in what they are talking about.
10. I believe that it should be made mandatory to students .
11. No it is perfect
12. Well I found it was very well run the only thing I would say is there could be more of them
13. Yeah have them going through papers from previous years to get a good insight to the layout of the exams
14. Start it at the beginning of the year after Christmas was too late. It's the first few weeks of college that it is needed most.
15. Yes, I think students should be encouraged more to attend and the awareness made a bit more public. A stand in the canteen maybe.
16. Yes, by starting it in semester one.
17. I think if it is brought in early in September it would be a great help for the up and coming first years.
18. Can set up some interesting activities in this class.
19. I think it was very beneficial and it would be very good for 1st year students next year. although I think if it going on for the whole year it might be hard to keep the students motivated because they might get bored.
20. It would be better if it was started in September.
21. By taking the feedback and adapting to it.
22. It could be a whole year thing so it could be more effective
23. Better explained and advertised to the new first years in the first few days of college. Weeks into college I hadn't a clue it was starting.

2.4 PAL/PASS Staff Findings

Staff focus group sessions took place in Galway and Athlone in May 2009. The aim of the staff focus group was to gain feedback from each programme and school involved in phase one of the PAL Programme. The staff focus group addressed a range of questions including their understanding of Peer Assisted Learning, the role of leaders, PAL/PASS staff training and their experiences from observing PAL/PASS sessions in action. The focus group questions are outlined in the appendix 4.3 and the key findings from the session are highlighted in the table below.

Peer Assisted Learning Programme	
PURPOSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get students to help each other, pool ideas, etc. • Integration and assistance into a new system • Sense of community – getting students to gel from the beginning. • Help 1st years ease into Programme. • To provide a safe environment for clarification of expectations, etc. • A peer network 	
ROLES OF LEADERS:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact. • Provide an informal setting for class to come together as a group and to help each other - the first couple of meetings are important for this. • Promotion of learning and introduction to a new environment. • Support for students and organising sessions. • To facilitate sessions and provide advice where appropriate. 	
HELPED – 1st Years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great for problem solving, e.g. Dihedral Angle for Letterfrack students • Made it clear not to teach – Leaders facilitated only. • PAL programme could be rolled out as a pilot for all of Letterfrack students – a common group for all 1st years. • Very well – especially the integration of International students. • Helped with difficult subjects. • Helps to clarify academic expectations and helps students not to feel on their own. 	
HELPED - Student Leaders:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed their confidence • Leaders pro-active – have matured with it. • More responsibility – more confidence • Good Leaders selected who took ownership of their roles • Confidence, Planning, Organisation Skills developed. 	
Staff Training:	
Liked Most:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gave a good insight as to what to expect • Re-assurance to staff that material is not being re-taught • Good explanation of purpose and benefits for students. 	

Liked Least:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would have preferred some more guidance on issues that might arise. 	
Add/Change:	
<p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brief presentation from either Leaders or course contact persons (for practical aspects) ○ Induction Week – Leaders can undertake this role, e.g. ice breakers. ○ Social Event during 1st week or 1st month – opportunity for PAL Leaders to get to know each other. ○ One-pager ‘Questions & Answers’. ○ Review of PAL should be on website. ○ A link to website should be e-mailed to all staff at the end of the year. ○ End-of-year meeting – opportunity to promote PAL. ○ Separate training for staff and students – an initial talk of approximately 1 hr. ○ Leaders introduced to staff – initially 	
PAL/PASS Manual:	
Liked Most:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful information, good resources • GMIT and AIT specific • Professional look • Introduction very clear • Very easy to use • Ring binder – great for notes 	
Liked Least:	
	N/A
Add/Change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information of assertiveness training • Appendix for Letterfrack – copy of presentation given to 1st year, e.g. registration, etc. • A5 size – good idea 	
PAL/PASS Leader Support:	
Contact/Meetings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informally every 1-2 weeks, with 2 formal meetings also arranged. • Regularly on an informal basis due to open-door policy. • Informal meetings. 	
Discussion with Contact:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session attendance • Review sheets • Any issues arising • Issues arising 	
Other support:	
PAL Programme Management Co-ordination:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive • Informative • Well managed • Very Good • Good Communications/ promotions 	
Helpful Additional Support:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have sessions on timetable from week 1 of teaching year • Key Lecturers who teach 1st year – key course contacts e.g. L2L lecturers 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAL should be on agenda for School meetings • All PAL leaders to meet – once during each semester to share experiences etc. • Introductory week – introduction of Leaders to 1st years by PAL manager/team very important
<p>OBSERVATIONS FEEDBACK - Running PAL/PASS Sessions:</p>
<p>Effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive, organised, created discussion • Leaders managed to involve everyone in the group • Good team and balance • To use facilitation and encourage discussion among students themselves • Leaders – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good rapport with students ○ Good facilitators ○ Spoke of their own experiences ○ Some questions leading into final year queries, e.g. plagiarism • Computer Labs. Location important • Informal atmosphere • Personality of Leader important to the success of the session • Well organised • Held formal meeting after observation
<p>Ineffective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders in AIT did not have the experience or knowledge to deal with queries on the final year project and could have given the wrong information. • Leaders in AIT or GMIT should avoid providing tuition or being too prescriptive.
<p>First Year Feedback:</p>
<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone spoke and got involved ○ Aided learning ○ Always felt part of the group <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time of day
<p>Advice to future PAL/PASS Leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be yourself – helps to put students at ease • If in any doubt – get correct information from Lecturer/ Course Contact • Buy into the importance of the role • Do not become involved in providing tuition
<p>PAL/PASS Programme Improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social event should be organised • More promotion of PAL/PASS programme • Training – before induction • Selection of Leaders – important process in order to secure a good mix of skills and competencies which can compliment each other. • Timetabled from day one • Course contact currently teaching 1st year group • Should be reinforced by the Head of School and Department and other teaching staff as a valuable initiative.

2.5 PAL/PASS Session Findings

The following table outlines feedback from PAL Leaders on a sample of PAL sessions that took place.

SAMPLE TOPICS COVERED IN PAL SESSIONS	COMMENTS/NOTES
<p>Introduction about PAL</p> <p>Icebreakers</p> <p>System 32 – method of calculating holes for adjustable shelves</p> <p>Excel</p> <p>Dihedral Angle</p>	<p>As this was the first session, everyone was a bit nervous. Class engaged after the icebreaker.</p> <p>Interesting to see the reactions by asking the same question in a different way.</p> <p>A lot of the group were much clearer about the system at the end of the session.</p> <p>It may be easier for computer-based session to have smaller groups as people can get lost very easily.</p> <p>Very difficult. Students finding this topic very difficult and complex. I could see that some students were still confused at the end of the session, so it will be continued next week at their request.</p> <p>Difficult to steer the group when you have little knowledge of the topic itself. Noted to course contact for lecturer to cover in class and then practiced in the next PAL session.</p>
<p>Icebreaker about Easter Holidays</p> <p>Upcoming sample exam questions</p>	<p>Good interaction and fun, helped students relax into the session</p> <p>Got students to work in groups and tackle different questions and then feedback to everyone towards the end of the PAL session</p>
<p>General Introductions between PAL Leaders and attendees.</p> <p>Plagiarism</p> <p>Group Project Work</p> <p>Referencing</p> <p>Discussion on Project Scope.</p>	<p>Timetabling issues were raised.</p> <p>Good interaction, focused learning, relaxed.</p> <p>Got students to help each other with projects.</p>

2.6 PAL/PASS Staff Observation Session Feedback

PAL Leaders in Galway and PASS Leaders in Athlone were informed at their training programme in January that an observation session would take place with the programme manager or course contact assigned in their school/programme. The purpose of the observation session was to give feedback to the leaders on their role as facilitators and address any concerns they may have. Each leader was aware of the date of their observation session and forwarded a copy of the observation criteria in advance of the visit (*see appendix 4.5 PAL/PASS Session Observation Form*).

Three sample observation session summaries are presented below from 1 to 3. For confidentiality reasons the school, institute, leaders and students who participated in phase one of the PAL/PASS programme are not identified.

1. Sample Observation Session

The leaders commenced the session by welcoming students and checking what students were working on. They proceeded to identify topics for discussion. They asked for a review for the week. The leaders' ensured sufficient time was left for feedback and managed the feedback process using positive reinforcement. The leaders used small group work mentioned students' names and encouraged participation. The leaders monitored each group's progress and understanding and encouraged students to refer to notes and textbooks. The leaders redirected questions and waited for responses. They asked open-ended questions and probed for responses. They sought clarification and examples, as required. They moved well between groups to elicit information. When ending the session they gave and received feedback, summarized main points and requested ideas for next session. They thanked students for their engagement. In general the leaders were supportive and played to their own strengths by using their experience and offering appropriate advice. They maintained balance of leadership and empathy with students. They showed evidence of planning and study skills advice was integrated. Leaders had built an excellent rapport with their group.

2. Sample Observation Session

The student started by welcoming students and asking for a summary of key issues covered in lectures. Topics for discussion were identified. The group interaction involved small group or pair work; the leader used students' names and monitored each group's progress and understanding. Sufficient time for feedback was given and feedback was well managed with students encouraged to use the whiteboard. The leader redirected questions and waited for responses; they used open-ended questions to probe and sought clarification and examples.

When completing the session the leader gave and received feedback requested ideas for the next session and thanked the students for attending. In general the leader was supportive, showed evidence of planning, used experience appropriately and maintained a balance of leadership and empathy. Referencing and sourcing information was integrated into the session. The leader had built a good rapport with their group.

3. Sample Observation Session

The leaders commenced the session by welcoming students and checking what students are working on they proceeded to identify topics for discussion. The leaders' ensured sufficient time was left for feedback and managed the feedback process using positive reinforcement. The leaders used small group work mentioned students' names and encouraged participation. The leaders monitored each group's progress and understanding and encouraged students to refer to notes. The leaders redirected questions and waited for responses. They asked open-ended questions and probed for responses. They sought clarification and examples, as required. When ending the session they gave and received feedback, requested ideas for next session and thanked students. In general the leaders were supportive and played to their own strengths by using their experience and offering appropriate advice. They maintained balance of leadership and empathy with students. They showed evidence of planning and note taking advice was integrated. Leaders had built a good rapport with their group.

2.7 Workshop Outputs: Are 1st Years Disempowered?

On June 11th and 12th GMIT and AIT designed and delivered a PAL Workshop at the NUIG 7th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference. At the workshop delegates were asked to participate in a group discussion relating to 1st year students and how they are disempowered. The findings from the discussion are presented below.

How are 1st year students disempowered / what prevents them from making a successful transition to Higher Education?

- Lack of information
- Not knowing what is expected of them
- Change in responsibility for learning/study
- Self management
- Social element – being away from home (security of family and friends)
- Impersonal class – large classes where they could feel anonymous
- Time Management – part-time job, travelling home
- Performance issues
- Independence issues related to new-found freedom
- Budgeting
- Lack of confidence/identity
- Expectations from peers on what first year should be like
- Overwhelmed by extent of open-ended nature of course – unable to filter
- Social skills
- Assumptions of lecturers
- Different teaching methods in 2nd and 3rd level
- Unrealistic expectations
- Poor knowledge of resources available
- Language barriers
- Cultural barriers
- Lack of communication or explanation re learning outcomes/assessment
- Mature students:
 - Not used to forms of assessment
 - Find it hard to find a work/life balance
 - Computer knowledge
 - Financial issues – the ability to budget
 - Time planning/time management

2.8 Conclusions & Recommendations: Phase One Findings

Institute Level

GMIT and AIT collaboration on the PAL programmes rollout and evaluation has led to sharing of ideas and plans for further student led learning and curriculum reform initiatives.

In the long term, both institutes recognise how PAL/PASS will help decrease drop out rates, increase grades and help students be successful during their time at 3rd level education and in their future careers.

School/Department Level

School staff involved in phase one from planning, rollout and evaluation gained great insight and appreciation for the PAL/PASS programme and could clearly see the benefits to the first year students and the leaders.

From April – June 2009, GMIT PAL leaders received an opportunity to share their experiences with the programmatic review panels. The review boards welcomed the initiative.

Going forward staff recognise the importance of communicating the support of the programme to their first year students and integrating PAL/PASS sessions on the programme timetable. There are also opportunities to include PAL/PASS on the programme board agenda.

Student Level

- **First Year**
 - First year students who were actively involved expressed that PAL/PASS sessions enhanced their learning experience and assisted with their integration although the project commenced in January.
- **Leaders**
 - Training in facilitation skills and running PAL/PASS sessions has developed their professional skills and is an attractive addition to their CV's.
 - Through their participation in this research project, the leaders have gained an insight into the rollout process and evaluation of a learning programme.
 - Leaders got the opportunity to attend and participate in international and national conferences.

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 Credits 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 timetable office and liaison with School management 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 board agenda**.
7. **PAL Course Contacts/ Tutors** required for each school with speciality in the 'school subject area'.

3. PEER ASSISTED LEARNING PROGRAMME NEXT STEPS

3.1 Phase 2 PAL/PASS Programmes 2009-2010

Phase two of the programme commenced in September 2009. 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.

GMIT Programmes Running Weekly PAL Sessions from September 2009- April 2010 include:

GMIT PAL Programmes 2009-2010	Estimated Student Numbers
Bachelor of Science in Business Computing and Digital Media - Science School	40
Bachelor of Science in Computing and Energy Systems – Engineering School	30
Bachelor of Arts in Gnó agus Cumarsáid - Business School	25
Bachelor of Arts in Art & Design - Humanities School	100
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Hotel and Catering Management - Hotel School	40
Bachelor of Business in Bar Management - Hotel School	30
Bachelor of Business in Hotel Management - Hotel School	40
All First Year Programmes in Letterfrack Campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o BSc in Furniture & Wood Technology o BSc in Furniture Design & Manufacture o BSc (Hons) in Design & Technology Education. 	70+
BA in Personnel Management – (CIPD) Life Long Learning and Business School	40
Bachelor of Science in Construction Management & Refurbishment Maintenance - Castlebar Campus	65
Total	480

AIT Programmes Running Weekly PASS Sessions from September 2009 - April 2010 include:

AIT PASS Programmes 2009 - 2010	Estimated Student Number
Bachelor of Business (Honours) Ab initio	35
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Technology and Management	10
Bachelor of Business in Hospitality Business Management	20
Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing	32+
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in Psychiatric Nursing	15
Higher Certificate in Business Studies	100+
Total	202+

All schools in GMIT and AIT are represented in phase two of the PAL programme rollout in 2009-2010.

Note: AIT will adopt a two stage approach in terms of expanding PASS to additional undergraduate programmes in 2009 - 2010. Stage 1: In semester 1 the initial programmes from 2008-2009 will be supported by trained leaders from year 3 who have self selected to engage with the new first year cohort. Stage 2: Additional programmes will be identified in semester one for trial in semester two and training will be provided for leaders in January 2010.

In Summary since Sept 2009 the PAL Programme is running:

- in **18 programmes** – weekly one hour PAL sessions
- **across 7 schools/ specialist discipline** areas
- in two institutes - **GMIT and AIT**
- supporting **700+** 1st year students
- facilitated by **45 student leaders** from 2nd 3rd or 4th year

PAL Leadership Training Programme:

Bournemouth University provided PAL Programme training to staff and student leaders from both institutes in January 2009. Following this, GMIT received certification from Manchester University to train Peer Assisted Learning Leaders in June 2009. AIT will undertake the Manchester PAL certification programme in December 2009.

GMIT and AIT have now developed a PAL Leadership training programme which suits the Institutes of Technology and this has been rolled out in September 2009 and will be reviewed and updated post phase two evaluations in June 2010.

PAL Leadership Module (Elective):

In Phase two both institutes are exploring the possibility of jointly developing/implementing a PAL/PASS leadership module or a Civic Engagement module which would incorporate the PAL Leadership role. The first draft of this module was circulated at the November 2008 SIF II Steering Group meeting and a presentation was made to the GMIT standards group in May 2009.

GMIT have consulted with Glasgow University, Manchester University and Letterkenny Institute of Technology on the development of the PAL leadership module. Glasgow, Manchester and Letterkenny all have a 'PAL leadership module' available as a level 7 elective to students.

3.2 Phase 2 Evaluation Plans

During phase two of the evaluation of the PAL Programme, the model for analysis devised by Miles and Huberman (1998) will be adopted in order to elicit a more in depth analysis of the qualitative data provided. The observations of the respondents will be classified into two levels on which PAL/PASS impacts the first year students and the student leaders, namely:

- Direct outcomes
- Meta level outcome and side effects

Direct outcomes are defined as '*specific outcome*' where a '*meta level*' outcome is considered '*as affecting more general aspects of a students functioning*' (Miles and Huberman 1998, p189-190). This model will allow the researchers to distinguish between these two outcomes and provide a representation of the type of responses which can be categorised accordingly.

Therefore the phase two evaluation report will also:

- examine programme retention rates pre and post PAL implementation;
- survey first year students who did not attend PAL weekly sessions or PAL 'drop outs';
- PAL leader and first year PAL session participant student results;
- undertake a comparative analysis between students who did attend PAL sessions versus students who did not attend PAL sessions;
- present business cases from other institutes operating PAL Programmes
- examine the financial business case for ongoing investment in the institute PAL Programme.

4. APPENDICES

4.1 PAL/PASS Leader Focus Group Questions

PAL/PASS Leadership Experience:

What were the most important skills you developed from your experience as a PAL/PASS Leader?

What challenges come from first year students?

What challenges come from your school?

What challenges come from the institution? (i.e., timetabling, scheduling and space issues?)

What were the positive and negative effects of your activities as a PAL/PASS Leader on your work and your workload?

What do you think would improve your PAL/PASS Leader experience?

Training:

What aspects did you like most about the PAL/PASS training programme?

What aspects did you like least about the PAL/PASS training programme?

What would you **add** or **change** in the PAL/PASS training programme?

PAL/PASS Manual:

What aspects did you like most about the PAL/PASS Manual?

What aspects did you like least about the PAL/PASS Manual?

What would you **add** or **change** in the PAL/PASS Manual?

PAL/PASS Leader Support and Supervision:

How often did you meet your PAL/PASS Course Contact?

What did you discuss with your PAL/PASS Course Contact?

Were you provided any other support from your school teaching team? *if so, what kind of advise or support*

What would you change with PAL/PASS course contact supervision?

How did you find the PAL/PASS Programme Management/Co-ordination team?

What kinds of additional support would be helpful?

Running PAL/PASS Sessions:

What do you find to be the most effective approaches when conducting your PAL/PASS sessions?

What kinds of approaches do you find to be ineffective when conducting your PAL/PASS sessions?

What do first year students say about the PAL/PASS programme?

What do they say that is positive?

What do they say that is negative?

What do International students say about the programme?

Finally:

If you could give a future PAL/PASS leader one piece of advice what would it be?

How do you think the PAL/PASS programme could be improved for next year's leaders and students?

Are you interested in continuing the PAL/PASS leadership role in Sept 2009 ?

4.2 1st Year PAL/PASS Student Experience Survey

Welcome to GMIT/AIT Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Programme Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Your responses will help us to evaluate the PAL/PASS programme at GMIT and AIT and make any improvements for next year.

You do not have to put your name on this questionnaire. All responses will remain anonymous and you are assured of complete confidentiality.

However, if you want to enter the prize draw to win a digital camera, you will need to enter your name and email address at the end of the survey. Your personal data will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw.

Thank you very much for your help.

GMIT and AIT PAL Programme Team
A SIF II Project (HEA funded)

PAL/PASS FIRST YEAR STUDENT EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Course

1) Please indicate which course you are studying: (drop-down menu or 3 courses on pilot)

Section 2: Attendance at PAL/PASS Sessions

2) How many PAL/PASS sessions have you attended? (drop-down of 1-10)

Section 3: How has the PAL/PASS Sessions helped you?

3) Do you think the PAL/PASS programme has helped you to:

- Integrate more quickly into College life? Yes No
- Get a clearer understanding of course direction and expectations? Yes No
- Develop your learning and study skills to meet the requirements of higher education? Yes No
- Improve your understanding of the subject matter of your course? Yes No
- Prepare yourself better for assessed work and examinations? Yes No

4) If there are any other ways in which you think PAL/PASS helped you, please write them below

Section 4: Your views on the PAL/PASS Programme

5) What was the **best** thing about PAL/PASS for you as a first year student?

6) What was the **worst** thing about PAL/PASS for you as a first year student?

Section 5: Next year

7) How do you think the PAL/PASS programme could be improved for next year's students?

Section 6: Please insert your name, contact number, course and email if you wish to enter the prize draw.

4.3 GMIT/AIT Staff Focus Group Questions

Peer Assisted Learning at GMIT & AIT:

What do you think the purposes of PAL/PASS are?

What do you think the roles of the PAL/PASS Leaders are?

How do you think PAL/PASS has helped the 1st year students?

How do you think PAL/PASS has helped the student leaders?

Staff Training:

What aspects did you like most about the staff PAL/PASS information and training sessions?

What aspects did you like least about the staff PAL/PASS information and training sessions?

What would you **add** or **change** in the staff PAL/PASS information and training sessions?

PAL/PASS Manual:

What aspects did you like most about the PAL/PASS Manual?

What aspects did you like least about the PAL/PASS Manual?

What would you **add** or **change** in the PAL/PASS Manual?

PAL/PASS Course Contacts - PAL/PASS Leader Support and Supervision:

How often did you meet your PAL/PASS Leaders?

What did you discuss with your PAL/PASS Leaders?

Were you provided any other support from your school teaching team? *if so, what kind of advise or support*

What would you change about PAL/PASS course contact supervision?

How did you find the GMIT PAL/PASS Programme Co-ordination team?

What kinds of additional support would be helpful to support the PAL/PASS Programme?

Observations Feedback – PAL/PASS Leaders Running PAL/PASS Sessions:

What do you find to be the most effective approaches by leaders when conducting PAL/PASS sessions?

What kinds of approaches do you find to be ineffective by leaders when conducting PAL/PASS sessions?

What do first year students say about the PAL/PASS programme?

What do they say that is positive?

What do they say that is negative?

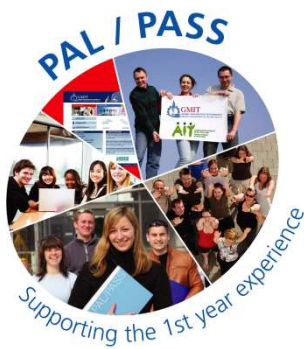
What do International students say about the programme?

Finally:

If you could give a future PAL/PASS leader one piece of advice what would it be?

How do you think the PAL/PASS programme could be improved for next year's leaders and first year students?

4.4 PAL/PASS Workshop Discussion Question – Are 1st years disempowered?



PAL Workshop Exercise:

In pairs discuss this question:

How are 1st year students disempowered/ what prevents them from making a successful transition to Higher Education?

4.5 PAL/PASS Session Observation Form

PAL Leader _____ Programme/Course _____

Date _____

Time of session start _____

Room number _____

Time of session end _____

Prompt	Comments
<p>Starting the session</p> <p>Welcomes students <input type="checkbox"/>; round of news items <input type="checkbox"/>; checks what students are working on <input type="checkbox"/>; asks for summary of key issues covered in lectures <input type="checkbox"/>; identifies topics for discussion <input type="checkbox"/>; schedule agreed with group & written down <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Group interaction</p> <p>Small group or pair work <input type="checkbox"/>; uses students' names <input type="checkbox"/>; encourages participation <input type="checkbox"/>; monitors each group's progress & understanding <input type="checkbox"/>; encourages students to refer to notes, etc. if stuck <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Gathering feedback</p> <p>Ensures sufficient time left for feedback <input type="checkbox"/>; manages the feedback process <input type="checkbox"/>; involves all groups/pairs <input type="checkbox"/>; encourages students to use whiteboard or OHP <input type="checkbox"/>; ensures key points written down <input type="checkbox"/>; uses positive reinforcement <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Asking questions</p> <p>Redirects questions <input type="checkbox"/>; waits for responses <input type="checkbox"/>; asks open-ended questions <input type="checkbox"/>; probes, seeks clarification/examples, as required <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Ending session</p> <p>Summarises session <input type="checkbox"/>; gives & receives feedback <input type="checkbox"/>; requests ideas for next session(s) <input type="checkbox"/>; thanks students <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>General</p> <p>Supportive <input type="checkbox"/>; encouraging <input type="checkbox"/>; smiles <input type="checkbox"/>; evidence of planning <input type="checkbox"/>; uses experience & offers appropriate advice <input type="checkbox"/>; maintains balance of leadership & empathy with students <input type="checkbox"/>; study skills advice integrated <input type="checkbox"/>; references/URLs written down <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

Signed: _____

4.6 Networking and Dissemination of Findings

- In April, SIFII Project Manager from GMIT (Carina Ginty) and AIT Learning and Teaching co-ordinator (Nuala Harding) with student Leaders (Brian Flynn, School of Business and Sharon Flaherty, School of Humanities from AIT and Janine Bartley and Darius Morozas from the Hotel School in GMIT) attended the European PAL Symposium ('**Students learning from students - from theory to practice**') hosted by the Katholieke Universiteit in Leuven, Belgium. Pdf-files of the talks presented on the symposium "Students learning from students: from theory to practice" are available on:
<http://wet.kuleuven.be/onderwijs/studiedag/monitoraat/programma.html>
- GMIT (Carina Ginty) and AIT (Nuala Harding) presented at **the PAL Ireland Symposium hosted by Trinity College, Dublin**, on May 8th and 9th (www.palnetireland.com) The presentation described the GMIT and AIT PAL programme implementation steps, phase one evaluations and the collaborative action research approach.
- GMIT (Carina Ginty) and AIT (Nuala Harding) designed and delivered a **PAL workshop at NUIG 7th annual teaching and learning conference on the 11th and 12th June**. This workshop addressed the PAL programme implementation steps, issues, challenges, evaluation of Phase One and Phase Two plans. At the workshop students leaders (Brian Flynn and Aoife Dempsey, School of Business from AIT) simulated a PAL session in action to academics. The workshop received a lot of interest from many IoT's and Universities. Student leaders were praised for their role as facilitators. For more information visit
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/celt/conference/conference2009.html>
- GMIT (Carina Ginty) and AIT (Nuala Harding) ran a similar **PAL workshop with PAL leaders at the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI) First Year Experience** Conference which took place in IT Sligo on June 15th -17th. The workshop included a presentation on research findings from GMIT and AIT PAL Phase One Evaluations and students leaders (Brian Flynn, School of Business and Maura Burke, School of Humanities from AIT) simulated a PAL session in action with academics. Link to programme:
http://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/academic_practice/pdfdocs/CSSI_Conference_Programme.pdf

4.7 References

Cresswell, J. (2005) *Educational Research*, Pearson, New York.

Horkheimer, M. (1982) *Critical Theory*, Seabury Press, New York.

Middlewood, D Coleman, M, and Lumby, J. (2001) *Practitioner Research in Education Making a Difference*, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, London.

Miles, B and Huberman, A (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis an Expanded Source Book*, 2nd ed, Sage, London.

4.8 Useful Links

www.palnetireland.com

www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/studentsaspartners/peersupport/pass/

<http://pal.bournemouth.ac.uk/>

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/learning/?id=5>

<http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/pass/>

4.9 Acknowledgments

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.

The following staff and students in GMIT and AIT participated in phase one of the PAL Programme.

First year students from GMIT 2008-2009:

Bachelor of Art in Hotel Management	30 Students
Bachelor of Science in Business Computing and Digital Media	30 Students
Bachelor of Art in Furniture Production and Technology	30 Students

GMIT Staff involved with Phase One:

Carina Ginty, SIF II Manager, GMIT

Michael Hannon, Assistant Registrar, GMIT

Dermot O'Donovan, Head of Letterfrack Campus, GMIT

Kate Dunne, Lecturer, Letterfrack Campus, GMIT
Thomas Sheppard, Lecturer, Letterfrack Campus, GMIT
Deirdre McMahon, Lecturer, Hotel School, GMIT
Cait Noone, Head of Hotel School, GMIT
Gerry Talbot, Head of Department in Hotel School, GMIT
Aidan Luddy, Lecturer in Hotel School, GMIT
Mary Healy, Lecturer in Hotel School, GMIT
Gerry O'Neill, Lecturer in Hotel School, GMIT
Gabriel Hicks, Head of Department in School of Science, GMIT
Annette Cosgrove, Lecturer, School of Science, GMIT

GMIT PAL Leaders Phase One:

Brian Geaney, School of Science
Daniel Cronin O' Mahoney, School of Science
Darius Morozas, Hotel School
Janine Bartley, Hotel School
Michael Karl Dorney, Letterfrack Campus
Ann Foley, Letterfrack Campus

First year students from AIT 2008-2009:

Bachelor of Business (Honours) Abinitio	32 Students
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Technology and Management	8 Students
Bachelor of Business in Hospitality Business Management	13 Students

AIT Staff involved with Phase One:

Nuala Harding, Co-ordinator, Learning and Teaching Unit, AIT
Dr. Joesph Ryan, Academic Registrar, AIT
Alison Sheridan, Lecturer, Bachelor of Business, AIT
Sandra Griselain, Lecturer, Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Technology and Management, AIT
Fergus Higgins, Lecturer, Bachelor of Business in Hospitality Business Management, AIT
Dr Pat Mulhern, Head of Development, AIT
Dr Brian Murphy, Head of Department Life and Physical Sciences, AIT
Sarah La Cumbre, Student Services Manager, AIT
Treaasa Fox, Student Counsellor, AIT
Caroline O'Hora, Student Representative, AIT
Darren Price, Student Representative, AIT

AIT PASS Leaders Phase One:

Ardan Hennessy, Bachelor of Business (Abinitio)

Brian Flynn, Bachelor of Business (Abinitio)

Aoife Dempsey, Bachelor of Business (Abinitio)

Nikita Dementiev, Bachelor of Business (Abinitio)

Maura Burke, BBS in Hospitality Business Management

Sharon Flaherty, BBS in Hospitality Business Management

Niall Gavin, BBS in Construction and Technology Management