

Embedding PASS facilitators in core learning activities – Pilot Program

1. Institution :

University of Western Sydney

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3. Name of Program/Initiative

‘Embedding PASS Facilitators in core learning activities’

4. Brief outline of program

In 2011, the then College of Health & Science and the then School of Biomedical & Health Sciences (now School of Health & Science), in conjunction with the UWS Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) team developed a pilot project to embed PASS facilitators within core learning activities by them attending a portion of a three hour laboratory/workshop scheduled for the unit Principles Chemistry – a first year, first session introductory Chemistry unit.

The objective of embedding PASS facilitators into regular classes was to integrate PASS as an integral part of the L&T resources of the unit. It was hypothesised that more students would feel comfortable with and engage more with PASS sessions if they had direct contact with the PASS facilitator (a more senior student in their course) and perceived it as an integral component of the L&T experience of the units, rather than an ‘add-on’. In particular, it was thought that this may encourage more low SES and First-in-Family students to participate in PASS session.

Such a model also offers the opportunity, through integration of the PASS facilitator into the teaching team, to increase the resources available to support student learning within regular classes such as the laboratory where practical skills are undertaken, supervised by a limited number of demonstrators.

PASS facilitators were able to provide assistance to students during these sessions, helping them with laboratory activities and utilising this time to promote PASS sessions particularly to students who they perceived as requiring extra support. Extra PASS sessions were scheduled to accommodate anticipated increase in demand.

5. Purpose/Aims

- To enable students to “get-to-know” their PASS facilitator, thus increasing their feelings of security and confidence to attend voluntary PASS sessions.
- To increase participation in the PASS program where students will work with other students to understand the content of their unit and develop study strategies to improve academic performance, supporting student transition, engagement with other students and opportunities for building supportive relationships.
- To enhance and support student persistence and retention through increased participation in PASS.

6. Breadth of program (is it in a particular subject, program, school, faculty, across the institution, campus, with a particular cohort, etc)

The integrated PASS initiative was targeted as a pilot to one particular subject, Principles of Chemistry, which is a first year core subject, taught on Campbelltown campus within the School of Science & Health.

7. Category (please select all that apply and provide explanation where necessary)

Category	Y?	Explanation
Policy	N	
Curriculum	Y	Embedded into Principles of Chemistry, a core science unit within the School of Science and Health
Program	Y	PASS Program
Other (please specify)		

8. Outcomes

Attendance at PASS sessions by Principles of Chemistry students (one or more sessions) prior to introduction of the embedded model was 14% and 18% in 2009 and 2010 respectively. In 2011, under the embedded model, attendance effectively doubled, increasing to 35% of the total cohort.

There was an increase in attendance (one or more sessions) in the low SES attendees from 26.4% in 2010 to 28.6% in 2011. An equivalent unit offered on another campus which did not implement the embedded model showed no increase in attendance on previous years.

Feedback from a range of stakeholders including students, PASS facilitators and Unit coordinator was positive concerning the impact of having a PASS facilitator within the classroom environment. Positive feedback related to opportunity for enhanced learning and promotion of PASS.

It has been recommended that the School of Science and Health explore the option to extend this integrated PASS model into other first year core units to further encourage engagement of low SES students.

9. Publications/Reports (including links to those publically available)