


A novel development of Peer Assisted Learning

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Purpose

- To share the benefits and pitfalls of an innovative adaptation to a peer learning scheme
- To demonstrate the use of evaluation to monitor and change practice
- To indicate further research / developments



Peer learning


**Tell me and I forget
Show me and I remember
Involve me and I understand**
Chinese proverb



Peer Learning

PAL


cooperative learning
collaborative learning
Supplemental instruction



PAL Benefits

Student

- help survive university life / social
- gain second year perspective
- gain deeper understanding course work
- co-operative / collaborative learning
- develop study skills: essay / exam prep
- develop critical thinking
- improve retention ("at risk courses")
- additional benefits for student leader

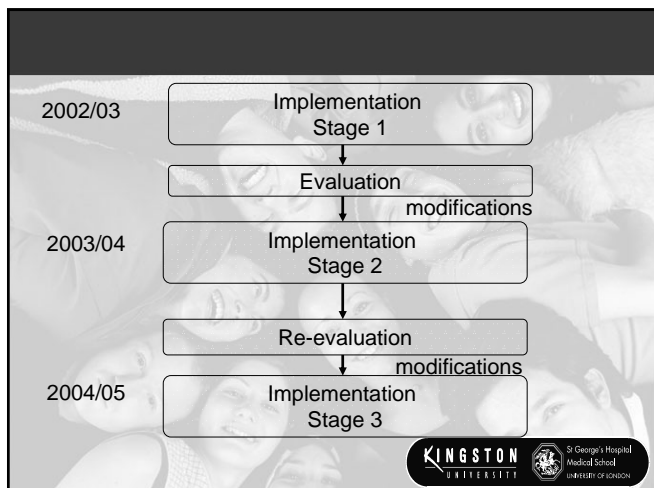


Additionally

Institution / staff

- ↑undergraduate places in UK universities
- ↑intake planned @ St George's (45 to 72)
- Need for novel ways to engage students in small group learning
- Evidence for Peer learning both locally, nationally and internationally





Stage 1 - Implementation

- 8 PAL groups (approx 9 students in each)
- 3 timetabled sessions from term 2
- PAL introduction lecture
- Encouraged rotating roles in group
 - Session leader and scribe (NB: **not** from other year)
- Guidelines
 - How to plan/select topics for discussion (via blackboard)
 - Session summary to return to PAL coordinator (staff)
- Encouraged to continue meeting

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Summary of Student Tutorial	Date:	Session Planner	Date:
Chairperson		Topic(s) - module/theme/lecture	
Scribe		Resources - video/computer lab/ data projector etc.	
No. of Students attending		Chairperson	
Duration of Meeting		Scribe	
Time Management	Satisfactory - Unsatisfactory		
Contribution by all students	Satisfactory - Unsatisfactory		
Evaluation	1. 2. 3.	Roles Chairperson 1. to allow due consideration of topic in allocated time (i.e. keep discussion focused, as appropriate) 2. to encourage all members of group to contribute/participate (note: all students need to be conscious of their role in this) 3. to ensure before the end of the tutorial that the summary sheet and 'Next Session Planner' are completed 4. to ensure room is left tidy 5. to return completed sheet to John Hammond ASAP after meeting Scribe 1. to list agenda of tutorial on flipchart or whiteboard inc. time to complete paperwork (see point 3 above) 2. to record any relevant discussions for group on flipchart or whiteboard 3. to ensure that relevant marker pens are available (i.e. flipchart/whiteboard) 4. to assist chairperson complete paperwork 5. to ensure room is tidy including cleaning whiteboard	

Reasons for modified PAL

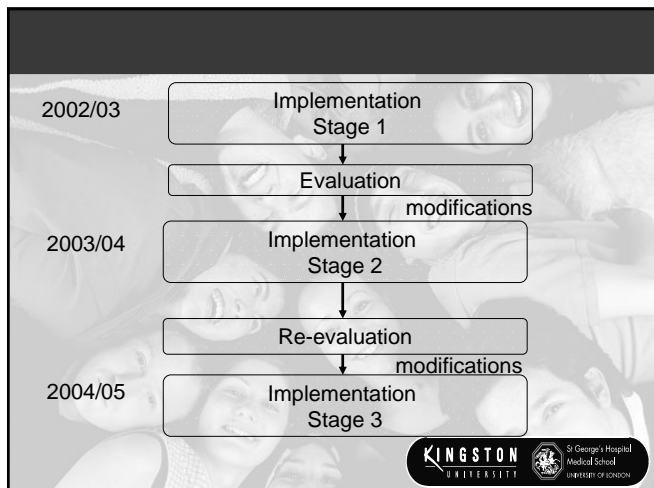
To Encourage:

- Cooperative / collaborative learning > peer tutoring
- group problem solving
- deeper learning and critical thinking
- identification of different roles in team work
- independence from expert

Other

- Lack of consistent availability from other level students to support traditional PAL

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Stage 1 - Evaluation

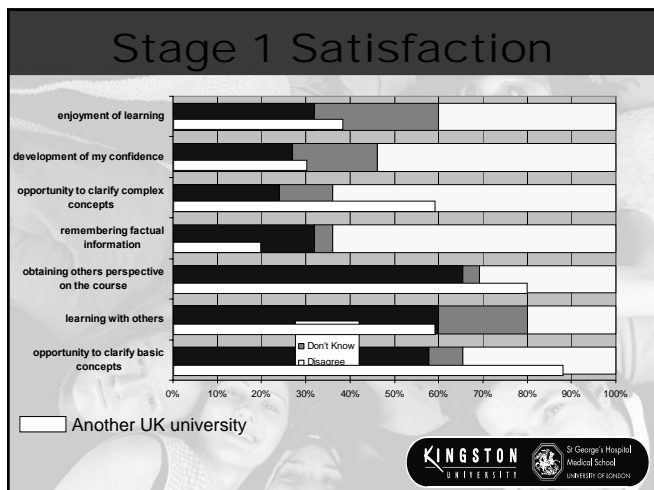
Student satisfaction / perceived benefits

- 20% students continued to meet following initial 3 sessions
- Students agreed that PAL helped with:
 - “learning with others”
 - “gaining others perspective”
 - “clarifying basic concepts”

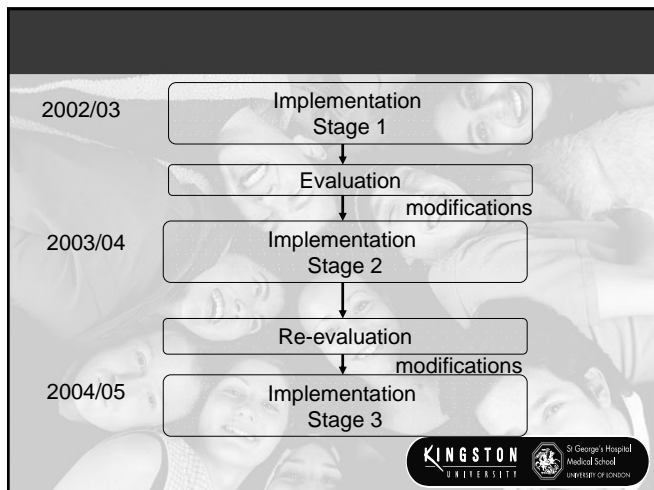
Negative findings

- Students did not feel that PAL contributed to:
 - “developing study skills”
 - “reassurance about non-course concerns”
 - “settling into university”

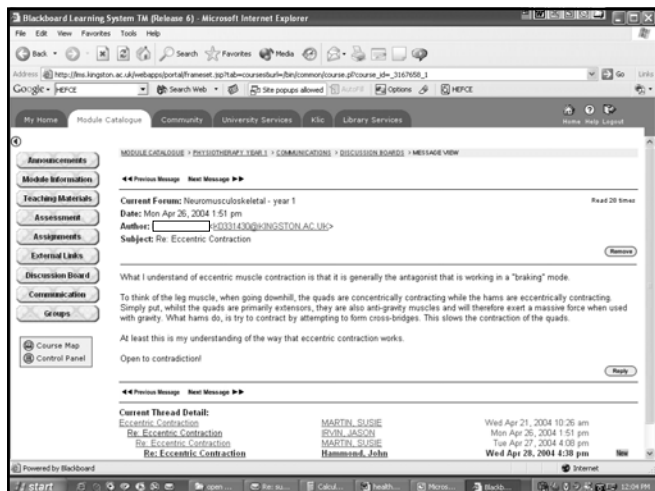
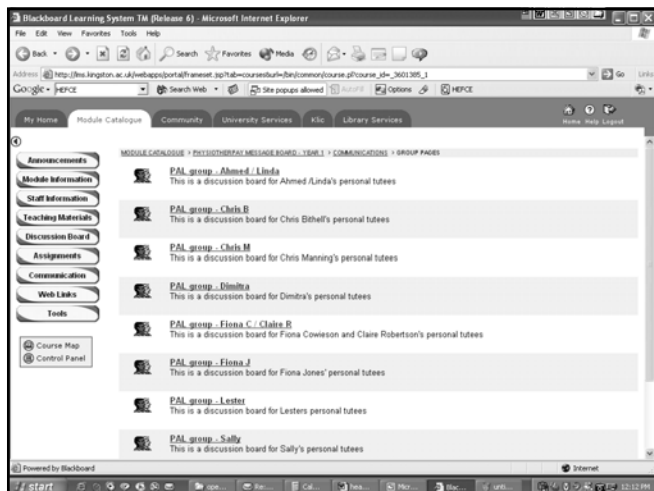
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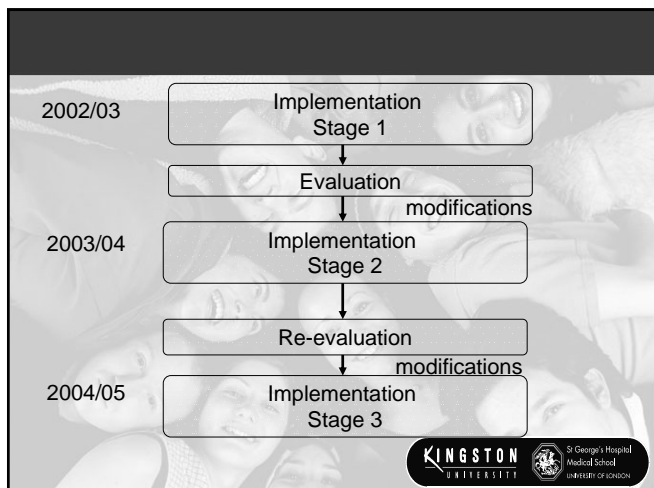


- ### Informal feedback
- Students did not respond to loose structure / direction
 - Misconceptions that sessions are additional rather than supporting or purposeful
 - Different group dynamics
 - different from other working groups (practical groups, personal tutor, CFP)
 - some groups worked, others didn't
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- ### Stage 2 Implementation
- Improved induction to Peer learning
 - Workshop to facilitate the team work, identification of different group roles and respect of roles.
 - 6 timetabled sessions
 - Improved balance between **directed** and **self directed** learning
 - provided case based learning scenarios and students identify own learning needs
 - gradually weaned off throughout term
 - Greater staff involvement
 - initial provision of stand-by support from a tutor
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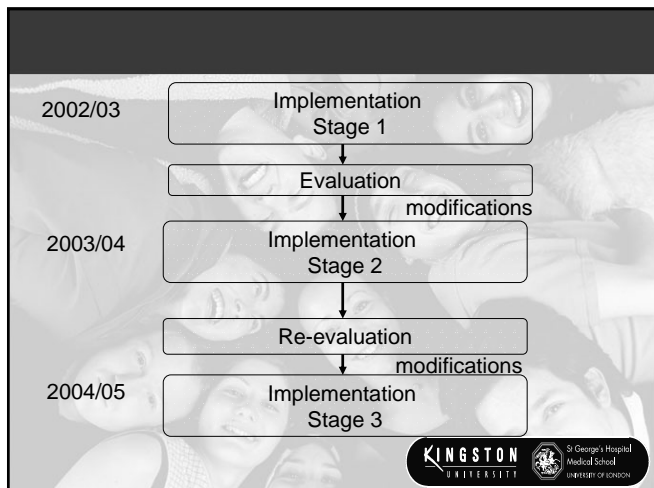
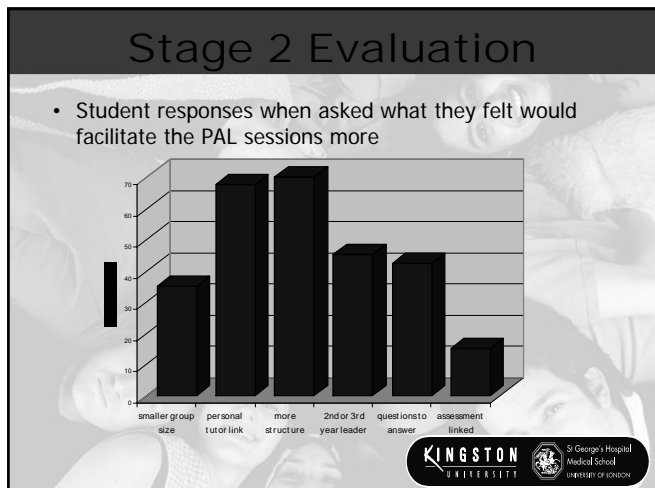


Stage 2 Evaluation

Student satisfaction / perceived benefits

- 50% (n=40) students completed questionnaire
- 57.5% of these students attended 4 or more sessions
- Students agreed that PAL helped with:
 - “learning with others”
 - “enjoyment of learning”
 - “understanding course matter”
 - “gaining others perspective”

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Stage 3 Implementation

- Sessions timetabled more closely with assessment planning and revision
- PAL groups linked to personal tutor for monitoring / facilitation
- PAL handbook (all students/ staff)
 - guidance on how to structure sessions
 - guidance on how to facilitate group work
- PAL in year 2 and 3 with less structure

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Future evaluation

- Re-evaluate student satisfaction 2004/05
- Peer evaluation of the learning experiences in a PAL session
 - Qualitative research
- Evaluate 2nd and 3rd year experience
- Consider compare attend vs non-attend course marks / critical thinking



Conclusions

Based on our experience students require:

- Clear aims of the sessions
- Timetabled sessions
- Guidance / direction on how to structure PAL sessions
- Guidance / direction in selecting roles and facilitating group/ team work
- Regular monitoring by support staff
- Regular evaluation/ feedback to students
(fits with Goodlad (2002) "Golden Rules of Implementation")



Acknowledgements

- **Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund**
(Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE))
- **All students who contributed to the research**
- **The teaching team:**

Lester Jones	Chris Bithell	Deborah Roche
Linda King	Fiona Jones	Claire Robertson
Teresa Horgan	Chris Manning	Ahmed Younis
Fiona Cowieson	Rachel Garrod	Karla Du Toit
Dimitra Nikolettou	Sally Hogarth	Jo Sorsby
- **Other collaborators**
David Hodgson, Tony McNeil, Penny Bidgood, Steve May

