

PEER ASSISTED LEARNING

RECRUITING MENTORS FOR SEMESTER 1, 2016

Applications close Monday 2nd November, 2015

As a PAL mentor, you will facilitate peer learning in one ANU course. This could involve facilitating group study sessions for first years or working with lecturers to facilitate workshops in courses based around a flipped classroom.

Across all of these different implementations, the program has two main focuses:

- Building peer learning communities, to help students collaborate effectively and support each other during their university studies.
- Supporting students to learn in the most effective and efficient way for them, by highlighting and helping students apply effective study approaches when they are relevant and useful.

PAL mentors are given a high degree of autonomy in the way the sessions are run, in consultation with course coordinators and lecturers. Being a PAL mentor gives you the opportunity to improve PAL sessions and to make them as useful as possible for current students. You will be expected to improve on what happened in your course last year, by critically evaluating what did and didn't work in the previous years and working with other mentors and course staff to address the areas in need of improvement.

In addition, you will develop your capacity for educational leadership through your participation in the PAL mentor development program. The program takes a very practical approach to leadership development, focusing on identifying best practice in the different aspects of PAL mentoring. Mentors and the PAL coordinator then collaborate to determine how best to support other mentors to adopt these approaches, continually refining the support offered. Although the priority is helping you in your role as a PAL mentor, mentors have found they have developed many generic skills, such as collaboration, strategic planning, reflection, effective communication and evaluation through their involvement in the PAL program.

The PAL program is currently recruiting mentors for the following courses in semester 1, 2016:

- BIOL1003
- BIOL1008



- PSYC1003
- MATH1115
- COMP1100
- MATH1003

You will be paid for the time you spend facilitating and in preparation for sessions (the number of hours per week and pay rate is still being determined, may vary from course to course and will be confirmed when position offers are made).

Participation in the mentor development program is not paid, but will be recognized through the ANU Centre for Higher Education Learning and Teaching (CHELT). The mentor development program involves:

- Compulsory training sessions all day on the Thursday and Friday of O-Week, the 11th and 12th of February 2016
- Approximately one hour per week of support activities during semester (for example receiving feedback from a session observation, meeting with PAL mentors from other disciplines).
- Two written reflections (one due one week after the mid semester break, the other two weeks after the exam period).

Please note that training is compulsory. It involves planning your first PAL session with the help of experienced mentors and so is difficult to replace if you miss it. If you are considering two jobs with conflicting compulsory training, please accept only one. If you have a very good reason, it may be possible to catch you up on a small sub-section of training (max ½ day) – please contact us with your reasons. We will only make arrangements to catch people up on the full two days of training in the most unavoidable circumstances, for example illness or interruptions to travel.

Basic requirements to apply:

- Be enrolled as an ANU undergraduate in semester 1, 2016.
- Have time to run and prepare two PAL sessions each week of semester and participate in the mentor development program.
- Be available to attend the training workshop Thursday 11th and Friday 12th February.

For more information, please email science.pal@anu.edu.au

Application Process

The application process to become a PAL mentor is built of two stages. During the first stage, applicants are asked to fill out a form on the web, and to submit a series of documents. Based off

the applications, a set of students will be shortlisted and interviewed.

Stage 1: Applications

To apply, please fill out the web form found under 'Becoming a PAL Mentor'

You will need to upload all three documents detailed below in PDF format. LABEL YOUR FILES WITH YOUR NAME AND WHAT THE FILE CONTAINS (ie. Smith_reflection_PAL)

1. **CV/Resume (PDF)**

2. **Statement of Results (PDF)**

Please note that this does not need to be a formal academic transcript. The PDF available off ISIS is adequate.

3. **Reflection Response (PDF)**

Write a 1-2 page written application answering the following questions:

- *What challenges did you face when starting university as a first year, in general?*
- *What challenges did you face in the courses that you are applying to be a PAL mentor for?*
- *What strategies did you use to address the challenges above? Try to go into detail about when, why and how these strategies were useful. A good way to do this is imagining you're explaining your strategies to someone who doesn't know how to use them effectively.*

This is specifically meant to be a reflection task, so make sure you spend the time analyzing and reflecting on the challenges you raise rather than to tell a story. Focus on a smaller number of examples in the detail, rather than briefly mention every challenge encountered and strategy used. If your strategy involved getting help from other people, you should explain what you learnt from those people, not just that they were helpful.

Helpful Hint: *Don't just write 'I read the textbook'. For someone who doesn't know how to read a textbook effectively, they could easily think this means starting at page 1 and reading straight through to page 529 (that's how you read a novel after all). Simply telling this person to 'read the textbook' isn't going to be effective. Instead you might explain, 'Whenever I'm solving a problem and I'm not quite sure if I have a definition correct, I write down what I think it is and then go look it up in the text book. That way I'm constantly getting feedback on how well I've remembered the definitions.'*

Stage 2: Interviews

Shortlisted applicants who have not previously been involved in the PAL program at ANU will be asked to attend a group interview. The group interview will last one hour and will be conducted at some stage during the exam period. You will be asked to specify your availability when you are shortlisted.