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## **Building a community of peer support in mathematics**

Day 1 – Parallel III (16.00-16.30)

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) was introduced to the School of Mathematics at the University of Leeds in 2010, as a successor to the pastorally-focussed peer mentoring. Over the past four years, PAL has become a key feature of the school, and is often positively highlighted by students in surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the University's Undergraduate Programme Survey.

The benefits to the school have been multi-faceted. The transition to PAL has meant that first year students have had the benefit of both pastoral support from their more senior peers, in terms of orientation at university and integration into the life of the school. However, PAL has gone beyond supporting induction to provide students with guidance on all aspects of university study, such as making the most of lectures, tackling coursework, making module choices for future years and seeing the connections between the various aspects of the syllabus.

Of equal importance are the benefits for the students who act as mentors. They develop a wide range of skills, such as communication, organisation, and leadership. They also visibly grow in confidence during their time as a mentor. Revisiting first year material also helps them to understand their own course material more deeply.

Student demand led to the extension of PAL to students beyond year one. PAL for year 2 has been successfully implemented and largely managed by the students themselves. This has, in turn, led to better engagement, enhanced relationships with staff and, an increased sense of ownership for the students.

Finally, the school and faculty benefit from a much greater sense of community between year groups within the school, and between students and faculty, as they discuss the outcomes of the PAL sessions, allowing faculty to receive relevant and real-time feedback on their course as it progresses.