



School of Medicine

PAL Information Sheet

Welcome to Peer Assisted Learning! PAL is a peer tutoring program designed to help anyone who feels they need extra help or simply wants an edge when studying for courses, clerkships, or board exams. It's flexible and easy to sign up!

Who are the tutors?

- M4s who are interested in teaching and approved by the curriculum office

How do I Sign Up?

- Please see the document on the PAL e-board labeled "How to Sign Up." There are both written instructions and a short video you can watch! Basically, you will sign up through SignUp Genius or directly contact a tutor.

Why should I sign up?

M1 & M2s

- You are worried about passing
- You don't understand a specific concept from class
- You are having trouble figuring out your study plan
- You are overwhelmed with the amount of material and don't know if that's normal
- You are trying to balance USMLE Step 1 Studying with class studying
- You want to talk to someone about their experience applying into a specific specialty

M3s

- You are starting a new clerkship and want to learn both clinical and nonclinical pearls that will help you succeed on day 1
- You are having trouble passing shelf exams
- You want to talk out loud about common scenarios and how to manage them
- You want to talk to someone about their experience applying into a specific specialty
- You need a Step 2 CS practice partner

What if I'm afraid I'm not going to pass my test?

- In this case, we prefer you email Dr. Brinegar so she can set you up with a "tier 2 tutor," or someone specifically trained to help you pass the course. You will remain with the same tutor for the whole course or clerkship. All tutoring sessions will remain confidential. There is no judgement – our goal is to help you succeed!

How will step 1 review sessions work?

- These will be group sessions for now. While each tutor will run groups differently, we ask that one of the tutees offers to use their Qbank (whether UWorld or Rx) and go over questions together. Another tutor may go over First Aid for the course you are in, relate it to class as much as possible, and fill in any gaps. We are working on getting a shared Qbank for tutors so we don't have to use yours.

How do I know which Tutor is right for me?

- Take a look at the tutor profiles on e-Board to see which content each tutor is comfortable with. Also, learn about their background, hobbies, specialty choice!

How often will I meet with my tutor?

- This is up to you! Do one session and never return or maybe you go weekly.
- However, if you feel you *need* to *individually* meet with a tutor >2 hours a week to keep up with class content, the tutor will refer you to the curriculum office or division of academic success to help figure out the best academic plan for you given we don't want students to become dependent on tutors. The 2 hours/week limit does not include generic group sessions.

Will I always meet with the same tutor?

- If you use tutors regularly, you will most probably meet with different tutors given M4 availabilities and what content tutors are comfortable teaching.
- You are welcome to email the same tutor to see if they are available.

Do sessions have to be in person?

- This is up to you and the tutor. If a phone call or video call works better (ex. for clerkship or specialty advice), you are more than welcome to! M4s who are away will specify on SignUp genius that they can only meet through video chat or phone.
- We again ask you to still log this through SignUp Genius to help us make the program better.

How can you give your tutor feedback on the session?

- The tutor will email Dr. Brinegar with the name and email of the tutee within 24 hours of the session. Dr. Brinegar will then send the tutee a google form to evaluate the session. Tutors will receive their feedback periodically.

Will the curriculum office know if I use this program?

- The curriculum office will generally be aware of who is signing up because they will be sending feedback forms to tutees (to evaluate their tutors) and they will also periodically look at SignUp Genius as a whole to see how many people are using it from each class. This is mainly for us to quantify the wants and help expand the program accordingly.

Are the sessions confidential?

- Yes! Tutors are expected to keep all sessions confidential. However, if a tutor feels that they are unable to help you and that you may need more assistance, they will let you know and encourage you to contact the Curriculum Office or the Division of Academic Success.

How do I become a Tutor?

- Please see the separate document on the PAL e-board labeled "How to Become a Tutor."

Who can I contact with my questions?

- Komal Safdar [safdark@vcu.edu] – PAL Student Coordinator (M4)
- Dr. Lelia Brineagr [lelia.brineagar@vcuhealth.org] – Assistant Dean of Curriculum