

# Anatomy PALs: a Student-led Learning Community

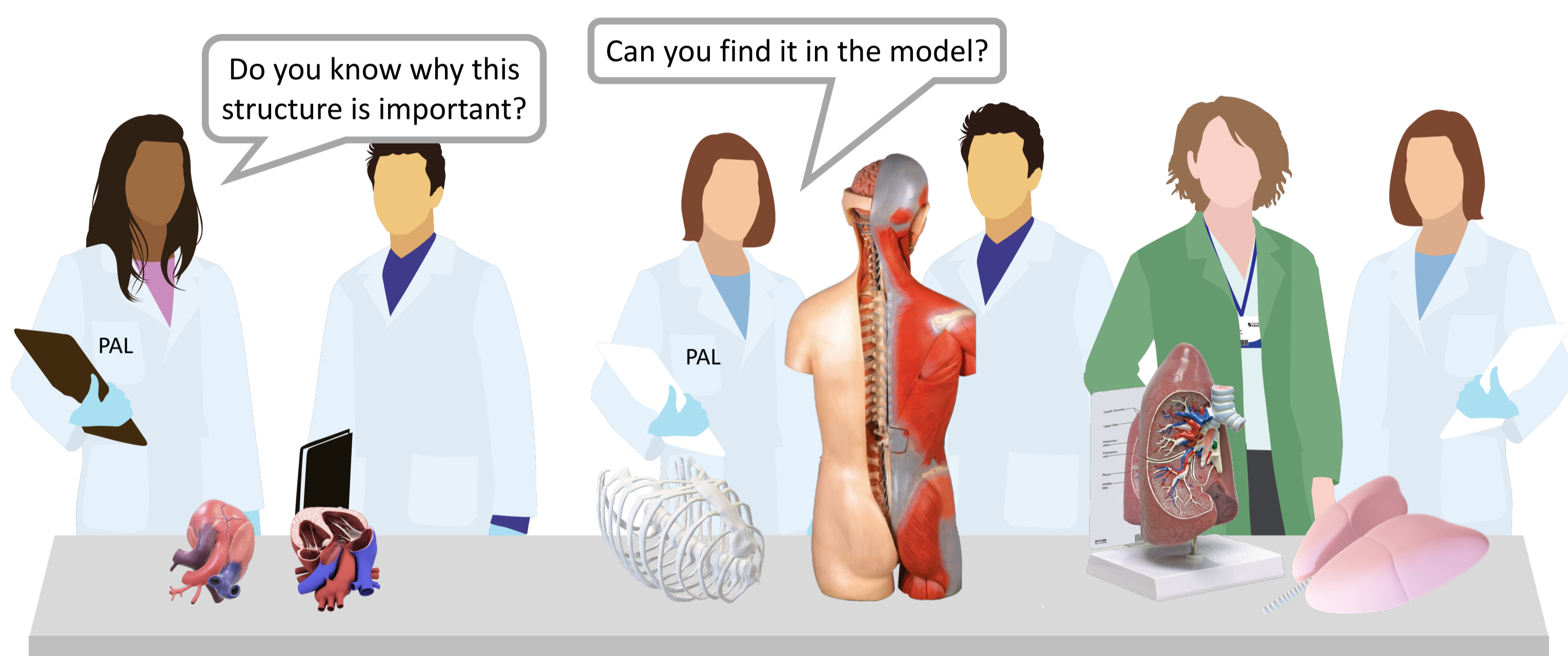
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## Introduction

Our PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) scheme is a student-led initiative to support Biomedical Sciences students on their compulsory 2<sup>nd</sup> year human anatomy courses. These courses are regarded as very challenging by many students (e.g. understanding complex spatial relationships and learning many new terms). The scheme was introduced in 2019/2020 following the success of a similar scheme for medical students.

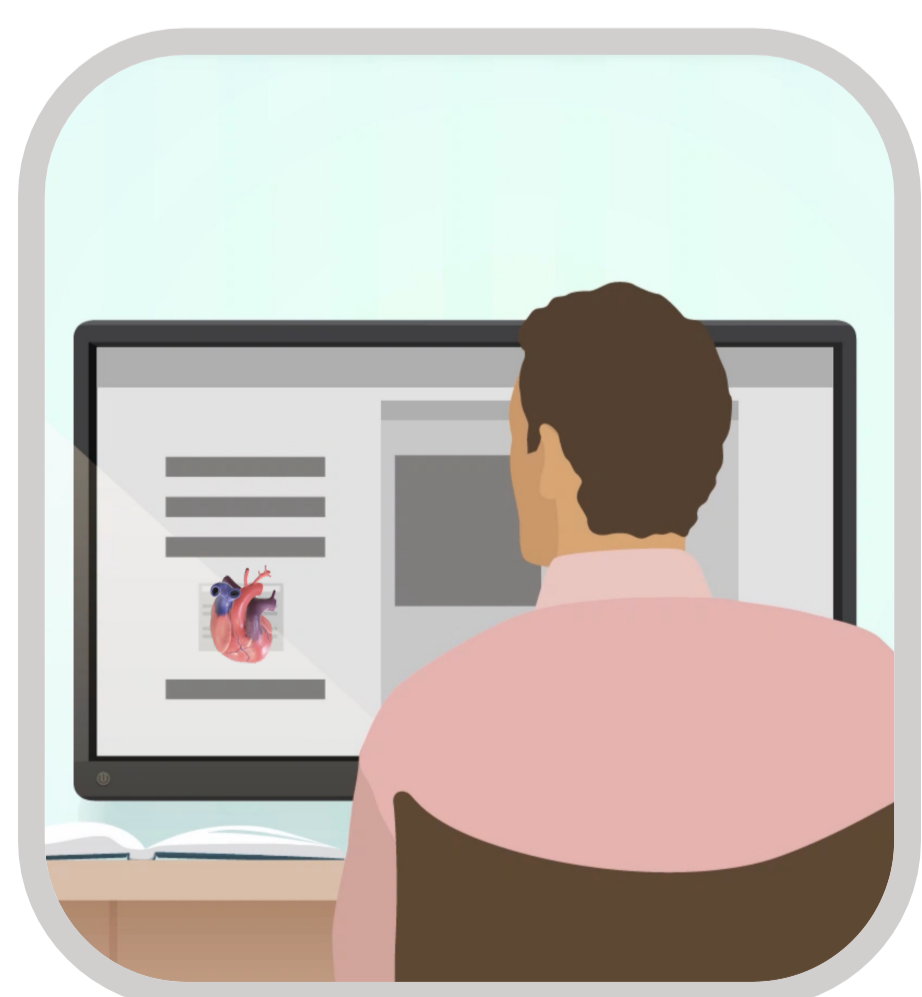
## How does it work?

The PAL scheme is organised by student volunteers and is open to all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Biomedical Sciences students. Following their induction, PAL tutors sign up for practical classes using a Google spreadsheet. We aim for 2-3 PAL tutors per class in addition to 2 staff members (class size ≈ 40 students). PAL tutors do not replace staff members, but provide additional assistance for students.



## Our Covid-19 response

To facilitate online learning, PAL tutors provided additional online material for self-study. In addition, a 'buddy scheme' was introduced, where each PAL tutor is looking after 2-3 students. The PAL tutors have informal meetings with their 'buddies' to share their experiences and give advice and individual support.



Online quizzes for self-assessment



Individual support via a 'buddy scheme'

## Student feedback

In their course feedback, Students have provided very positive responses on the support from PAL tutors and the resources created by these tutors. Students also appreciated the 'buddy scheme'.

**SCEF 2022:** How effective was each component for your learning? (in %)

### Support from PAL tutors



### Online quizzes



Totally 4 3 2 Not at all

I really appreciated all the learning resources this course had to offer: workbook, practice questions and spotter quizzes and PAL tutors!

I found the PAL tutor scheme really helpful, and my buddy was so motivating and encouraging throughout the whole term!

It was great to know we could talk to someone who had already been through the course through the buddy scheme.

## Benefits of the scheme

### 2<sup>nd</sup> year students

- Can ask questions in a 'safe space' if they do not feel comfortable asking a member of staff
- Connect with more advanced students and receive study tips and advice from them and thus become part of a larger learning community including students from different levels, countries and cultures
- Receive continuous individual support and can build resilience via the 'buddy scheme'

### PAL tutors

- Reinforce their own learning and can continue with anatomy even if it is not their main degree programme
- Gain teaching experience
- Develop transferrable skills
- Receive a certificate and enhance their CV

### Teaching staff

- Gain time as they do not have to create all online resources themselves
- Obtain an additional source of student feedback via the PAL tutors
- Gain inspirations from PAL tutors by learning about popular resources and students' study techniques

**Acknowledgements:** We are grateful to the individuals who facilitate our teaching by their generous body donations. We also thank all PAL tutors for making this scheme a success and the Toolkit Team for the provision of images.