

PASS: An example of integrated student support within an academic School

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Questions about Student Retention

- Why is this a hot issue in HE (along with the RAE)?
- Why is student transition to HE so important?
- What transitions are they making when they join us?
- When are students most vulnerable to dropping out of university?
- How can we help them adjust to HE?

Experiences and Expectations

School	University
Taught to a strict syllabus, to learn key phrases that they must remember and regurgitate, not to read widely	Want them to be open and exploratory in their thinking, to read widely, go beyond the basic syllabus
Resubmit coursework a number of times until they get high enough grades	Expect to receive completed coursework for assessment and don't allow resubmission
Retake modules to improve their marks and achieve higher A level grades	Module grades are final. Any resit is capped at a bare pass (40%). Can't repeat modules to raise average mark

How can we support students?

- Importance of good staff/student interactions
- Personal Tutors hold the key
- The need to nurture students
- Think of the “value added” to their lives

Personal & Academic Support System

- **Proactive, building relationships:** Staff – Student; Student – Student
- **Expectations:** Why am I here? What are my aims? How can I achieve them? PDP
- **Academic Support:** Study Skills, generic support
- **Feedback:** How am I doing? How can I improve?
- **Intervention:** Call students in, chase them up to get on task
- **Pastoral Care:** I have a problem... Non-academic issues: Money, Family, Housing, Illness, etc.
- **Referring on:** To PASS coordinator and thence to specialist help: Student Services, Students' Union Advice Centre

PASS Tutorial Programme

- 2005-6 and 2006-7: PASS was an additional activity providing support for students through tutorials that gave study skills instruction in support of coursework assignments but did not require students to prepare extra work or staff to mark it.
- 2007-8: PASS incorporated into a skills module, with 30% of the module mark coming from assignments set through PASS. This has improved staff and student engagement.
- PASS is becoming embedded in our Life Sciences culture.

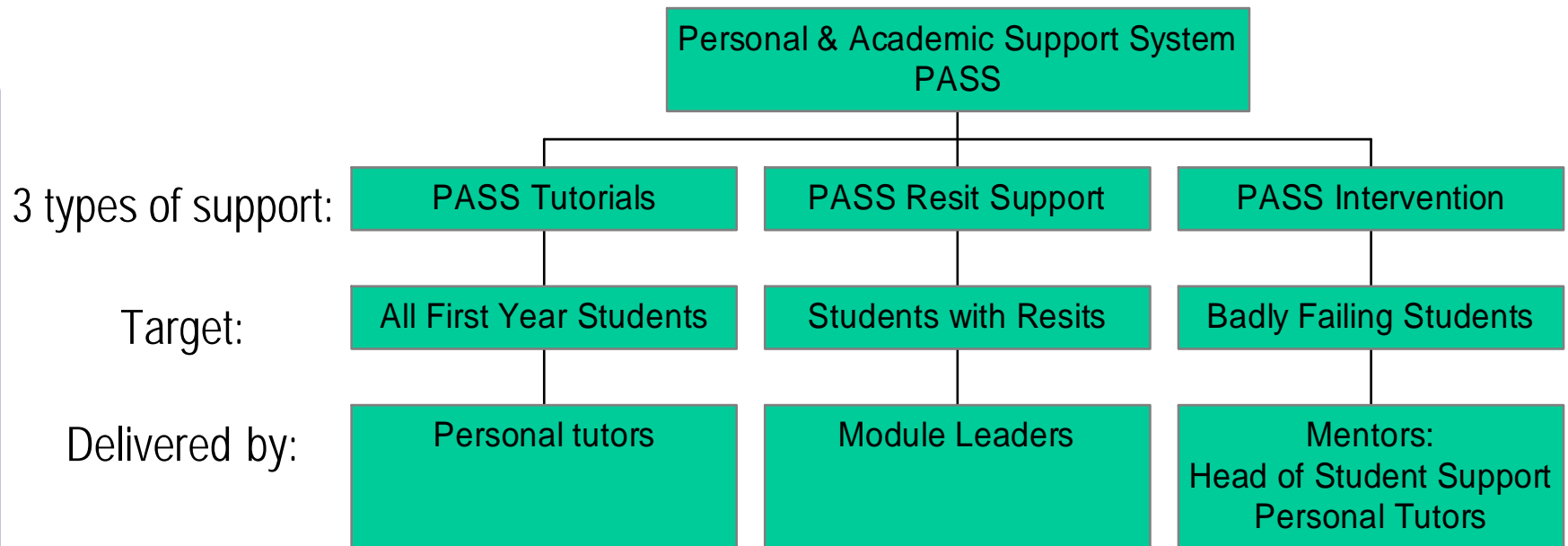
Semester 1 PASS Programme

- **Week 0 Induction:** One-to-one meeting between Tutor and new Tutee: Introductions; Understanding timetables; Ask tutees to look at My PDP
- **Week 3 Tutorial 1:** Time & task management; PDP; Medical Certificates; Taking notes in lectures; Making notes from written sources; Review choice of essay
- **Week 5 Tutorial 2:** Academic Standards and Regulations; Good academic practice and referencing; Essay structure; Requirements for annotated bibliography and essay plan
- **Week 7 Tutorial 3:** Assessment and grading criteria; How much time to spend on assignments; Receive feedback on annotated bibliography and essay plan
- **Week 10 Tutorial 4:** Making the most of feedback on coursework; Review of time & task management: Revising for exams; Submitting essays *via* Turnitin and paper copy

Semester 2 PASS Programme

- **Week 1 or 2: One-to-one meetings:** Review of Semester 1: How are you getting on? Are you on target? PDP statement; Give feedback on essay-writing assignment
- **Week 3 Tutorial 5:** Engaging with Groupwork; How to design an academic poster;
- **Week 5 Tutorial 6:** Putting together your Stage 2 programme
- **Week 7 Tutorial 7:** Check Stage 2 programmes; check poster groups are on task
- **Week 10:** Peer assessment of posters
- **Week 11 or 12: One-to-one meetings:** Give feedback on poster; review of year; PDP; feedback from students
- **End of Year:** Review: Receive Student and Tutor feedback

Under the PASS Umbrella



Future Plans:

Stage 1: PASS Tutorials: Introduce Peer Mentors (Stage 2 students) to assist PTs (Sept 2008);

Stage 2: PASS Seminars: Bespoke programme to deliver Personal Development, Careers and Bioethics

PASS Intervention: Train PTs or team to assist with mentoring students (2008)

PASS Resit Support

First year module leaders: Prepare an individual personalised email for each student on their module with a resit (30-39%):

- Written in letter form: Dear X..... and signed at the end
- Say something positive about their work
- Outline specific area that needs improvement
- Optional: invitation to a resit tutorial
- Give a word of encouragement to prepare for the resit
- Emails entered in excel spreadsheet
- Mailed out on the morning that module results are published

- I also send an email to all resit students encouraging them to take up this opportunity to redeem their position

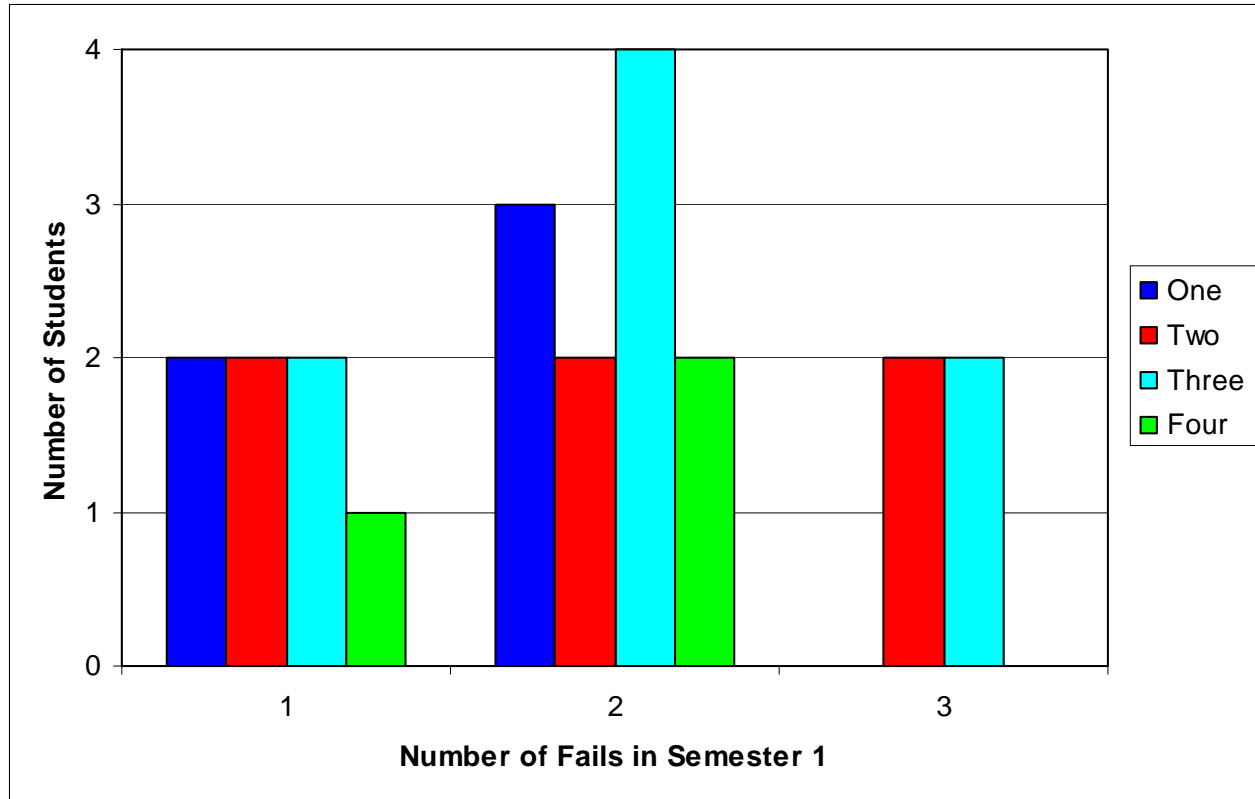
PASS Intervention

- Identify students with poor performance in semester 1 assessments and classify into groups
- Put in place intervention measures and additional support for their studies.
- Working with badly failing students to try and turn their performance round
- Aim is to reverse the downward spiral

PASS Intervention

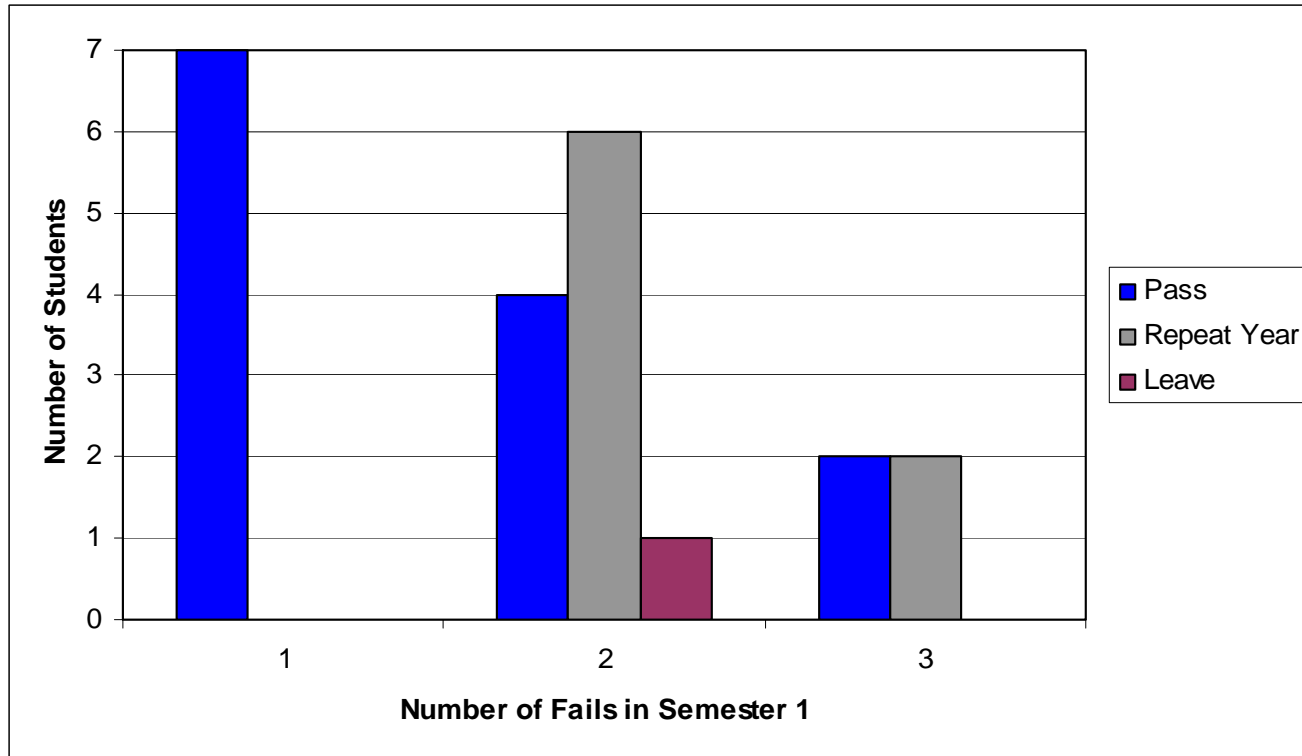
- Email students with a single module resit, copied to their Personal Tutor (see Resit Support)
- All other failing students were sent appointments for individual interviews to discuss their results and offer extra support.
- Support available was 1:1 study skills and/or maths tutorials, and counselling.
- Mentoring through follow up interviews

Uptake of Support



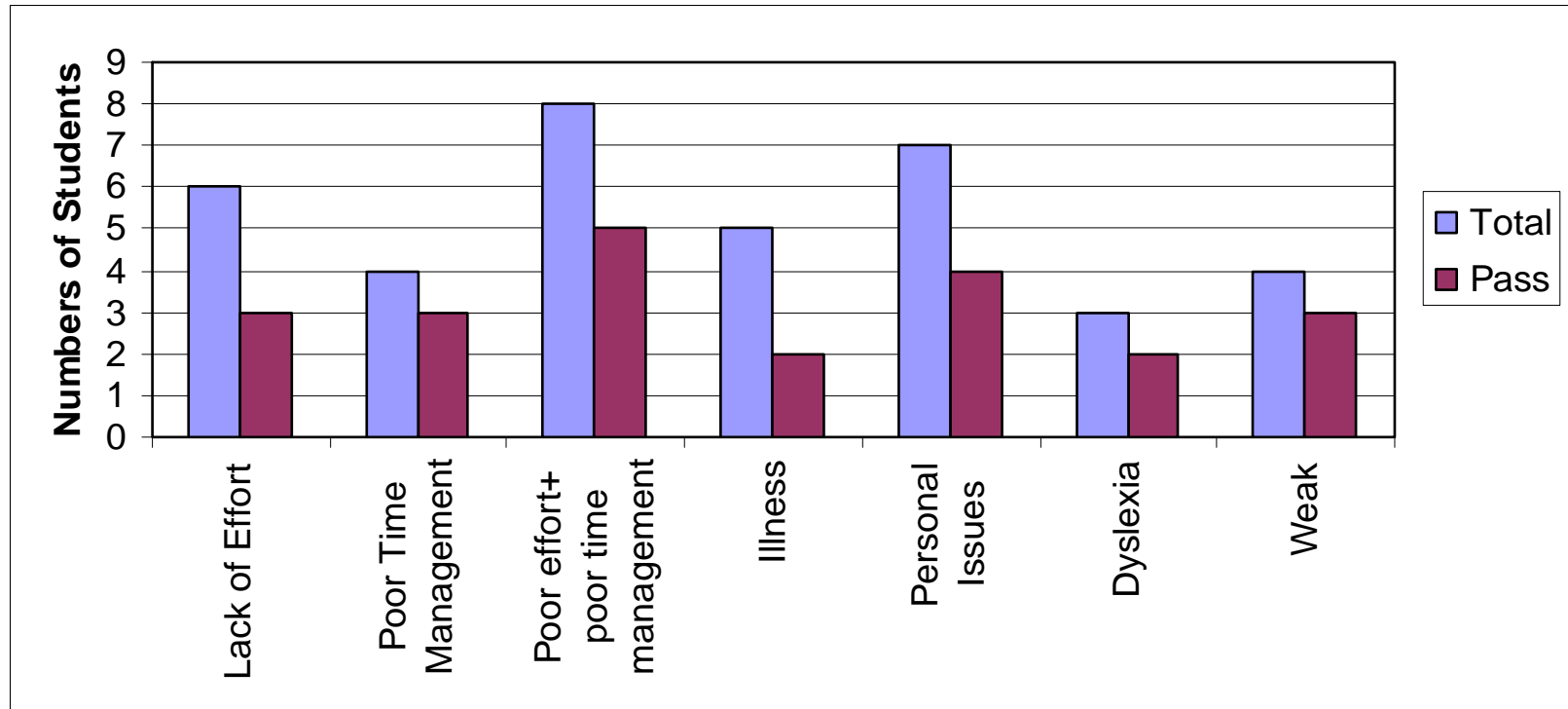
22 out of 24 failing students participated in support

Academic Outcomes



13 out of 22 students progress to Stage 2

Reasons given for Sem 1 failure and end of year outcomes



Most students had more than one contributing factor

Discussion

- Students responded to personal contact
- Put in place individual study plan
- Picked up 3 unregistered dyslexic students
- Prevented total despair and drop-out
- Students held accountable
- Analyse outcomes of intervention

Benefits

Evidence that monitoring progress and early intervention produced:

- Improved student morale and sense of worth
- Improved performance in Semester 2 assessments
- (Improved student retention for the School)
- (Savings of approx £15-20k per student retained)

Acknowledgements

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- Upgrade: Providing extra study skills support
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