

mdxSLA

The Student Learning Assistant Newsletter
Winter 2016



Middlesex
University
London

Middlesex University, The Burroughs,
Hendon, London, NW4 4BT

Welcome to the Winter 2016 edition of MdxSLA

The newsletter is published online biannually, written by SLAs and is aimed at the SLA community and wider audiences including academic, administrative staff and professional staff. The objective is to create awareness regarding the SLA scheme and to provide a forum for discussions, suggestions and contributions.



MdxSLA Newsletter Team

Melissa Murphy	SLA Diagnostic Skills
Robyn Foreman	SLA Illustration
Joao Tomas Ferreira Dias	SLA Business
Andreia Cardoso	SLA Criminology

Contributors

Tolu Oni	SLA Economics
Denislava Hristova	SLA Business Management
Pedro De Godoy	SSLA Business
Chloe De Castro Leon	SLA Marketing
Alex Eftime	SLA Acupuncture and Tuina Techniques
Julia George	SSLA School of Law
Matt Annecharico	SSLA School of Media and Performing Arts
Robyn Foreman	SLA Illustration
Angelina Karaivanova	GAA Business

What's Inside...

The Christmas Party	3
Motivational Meetings	3
How to Write Reflectively about Reflecting on Reflective Writing	4
The Study Hub	4
Expanding across Music	4
The Register	5
SLA Alumni	5

Peer Assisted Learning Manager

A message from Simbo...

Welcome to this edition of the SLA News. We have a new newsletter team who have brought in fresh ideas on what the newsletter should look like as you can see from the design. They have worked together in gathering exciting articles from other SLAs, SLA alumni and lecturers and I hope it makes interesting reading for you as it did for me.

Feedback from staff, students and the HEA about the work that SLAs are doing across the university has been really encouraging. Keep it up! We all need to keep improving so the suggestions given during SLA observations, Senior SLA meetings, training sessions and reviews are vital to our success as a team and should be taken seriously to progress further in our practices.

Thanks for the contributions and all the feedback we have received so far. If you have further comments on our work and the SLA newsletter do not hesitate to contact me. Enjoy and keep up the good work!

Simbo Ajayi

s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk



by Tolu (SLA Economics)

The christmas party was very good, I was very happy to be able to have a laugh and chill out with everyone I worked with. I thought it was well organised and the hosts made a conscious effort to get everybody involved.



The Christmas Party



by Denislava Hristova
(SLA Business Management)

Being an SLA is a fantastic opportunity for students wishing to develop in many aspects. It gives you the chance to meet and work with incredible professional teams. For me, facilitating students' learning is challenging sometimes, but I have never been worried as I have always received useful advice when needed. Working as a SLA provides you with the opportunity to expand your knowledge and skills by taking part in a variety of projects. I took advantage of that and was part of the team who organized and hosted the SLA Christmas Party. The party was more than wonderful with a room full of smiling happy faces, tasty food and loads of fun going on. This was all thanks to the incredible team in charge of the organization and all my colleagues who attended. For the ones who could not join us, I have to say ...

“Do not miss our next party!”

Motivational Meetings

As the Senior SLA for the Business School I have been involved with a wide array of projects! It was fantastic to see a great percentage of people turning-up and participating in our discussions and it was very enjoyable to connect and bond with SLAs on a personal level while also understanding how well they are getting on in their modules.

We shared experiences and perspectives for our futures and we even had prize awards that honoured both our successes and failures – after all owning up to our mistakes is the best way to keep them from happening again (off the records, it was incredibly funny too, I must confess). The idea of sharing both our successful and unsuccessful experiences sprung from a video interview where I saw a manager from an American company saying how he had re-invented his team culture by having weekly meetings where they would share all the failures and things that went wrong. It made me wonder how I could do something similar in my SLA meetings – something that would not ‘impose’ an internal team philosophy but rather shape our culture according to our true selves. I hope it worked well and I plan on carrying on with my experiments to ensure we’ll keep bonding as a team!

“owning up to our mistakes is the best way to keep them from happening again”.



by Pedro De Godoy
(Senior SLA Business School)

and an SLAs view...

It was really great to get together with other Business SLAs to share our experiences so far. The atmosphere that was created felt very open and calm, which made me feel more at ease when discussing some of our mistakes! It helped us bond together, but also it provided a moment for us to consider how we can improve and avoid making the same mistakes again. The meeting was useful to gain information from our Senior SLA. He gave us advice on how to approach Mahara reflections which can be tricky! After the meeting I felt more confident as an SLA and felt closer to other SLAs who were also assisting on the same module as me.

by Chloe De Castro Leon (SLA Marketing)

How to Write Reflectively about Reflecting on Reflective Writing

Easy, right? First, you open a word processing software. You then stare blankly at the word count while memories of Christmas turkeys and NYE fireworks come flooding. You reach for the cup of tea as you shake those away and try to focus on some less exciting memories – things that happened around uni. There's one that pops right out as it bothered you enough to stay on your mind. Write about it.

Stepping into this role brings some of us in very unfamiliar waters, as all of a sudden, instead of writing about something external and distant to us, we need to start writing about ourselves. It takes a bit of courage to do it. It takes a lot more courage to read it (I realised that when I was going through some of my earlier 'pieces') and I can't even begin to imagine how traumatic it is to read the reflective writing of over two hundred students. The therapy costs alone...

I remember somebody who compared the mind to a monkey – left alone it would run unrestrained. Our task as students is to tame that monkey and turn it into our ally. As SLA, we (hopefully) think a lot (not me though, as the modules that I cover are very physical, leaving my mind well rested, which is why they asked me to write this bit). We actually over-think a lot, and that is why we need to train. Reflective writing is an exercise and a tool to transform over-thinking into critical thinking. Done properly, it is much more than a diary – it becomes a way for us to audit our own thoughts and processes, a way to constructively assess our shortcomings and improve ourselves.

Try it!

The Study Hub



by Julia George
(Senior SLA School of Law)

The Studyhub is a helpful resource for all students and acts as a first port of call. It is on the 1st floor of the Sheppard Library, where drop-in sessions are held from 12-3, Monday to Friday. Students are able to come in and get their work viewed by an Academic Writing and Language tutor. SLA's help students get booked into extra sessions, 1-2-1 tutorials and workshops, all run by Learning Enhancement Team (LET) lecturers.

Working with the Studyhub is such an awarding experience. It can be a bit tiring, but I've learnt lots of valuable time management and interpersonal skills that will last me a lifetime. The Studyhub can also be a creative outlet, where I am able to envision changes and make them. I have developed a strong team of SLAs who have excelled in their roles. The best thing about working with the Studyhub, and as an SLA is that I am thoroughly aware of all the support offered at university.

Look out for the teal shirts on the 1st floor of the Sheppard Library!

Expanding Across Music

by Matt Annecharico (Senior SLA School of Media & Performing Arts)

Adding a job to the already complex student lifestyle, although quite common, can be a difficult decision. If done wisely, however, it could have a positive effect on your studies. Little did I know at the time that my role as an SLA would prove to be a driving factor in the direction I would take during my studies and in my career. I ended up being the sound engineer in the recording studio on campus for the Popular Music program. After learning that students in prior years were having issues booking time in the studio due to a lack of availability, I proposed to the music department to allow me to try and fill in the gap. Not only was my proposal accepted but it was encouraged which, as a student, felt like the department really cared about my personal goals and development. Before I knew it, I had a waiting list of students wanting to book time to record with me. Having this opportunity allowed me to grow and learn as a sound engineer.

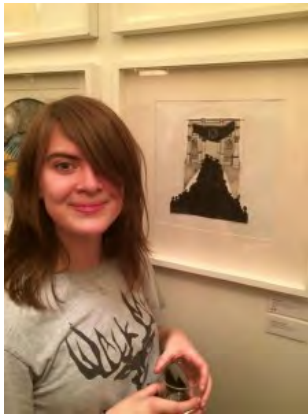
Now, as the Senior SLA for Media and Performing Arts, I get the opportunity to not only carry on with the SLA Popular Music recording sessions but I also get to work with students from across Media and Performing Arts and encourage them to think creatively in their role as SLAs. It's also given me time to reflect on my experiences and has really made me grateful for the opportunities. It's scary to put yourself out there, but a tiny splash can still create many waves.



by Alex Eftime
(SLA for Acupuncture
and Tuina Techniques)

**"Compare the mind
to a monkey - left
alone it would
run unrestrained"**

**"It's scary to put
yourself out there.
But a tiny splash
can still create
many waves."**



by Robyn Foreman
(SLA for Illustration)

The Register

The Illustration Student Run Magazine

Each year the second year illustration students run a collaborative magazine which takes submissions from all years of the course and aims to raise money for the end of year show in East London. 'The Register' is an extra curricular publication which encourages students to submit illustrations or pieces of writing or just anything they think may be interesting.

As an SLA I found it difficult at first to connect with the students. One of my solutions to this was to join the magazine team as the SLA. This was a great way for me to see what the students are up to, as well as for the students to connect with me should they need help, and will hopefully lead to greater confidence within their module.

To see more, please go to: <https://www.facebook.com/TheMDXRegister/>

SLA Alumni

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."

An effective way to gain valuable experience while getting a degree is by allowing students to put their knowledge into practice. The SLA job allowed me to interact with students and academics on a daily basis as an integral part of the learning process. All activities I undertook as a SLA helped me to test and validate my skills and knowledge. It provided me with the chance to learn more about my professional level of communication, adaptation, presentation, team-work, and decision-making. I believe my experience as SLA gave me a good basis for the GAA role.

Being a GAA is like being a full time SLA but with wider responsibilities. I felt comfortable performing my duties from day one since I was familiar with the academics and the requirements of the job. I loved the fact that I was awarded with certificates of SLA Achievement and Excellence, this makes a big difference when it is on your CV or LinkedIn! Being an SLA was an incredible opportunity, which motivated me to achieve the best in my academic studies – acquiring a 1st Class Degree and a Prize for the Best Overall Performance in BA International Business. It has helped me to grow as a person and later got me here at this position!

by Angelina Karaivanova (GAA Business)

SLAs are Middlesex University students who have been identified by their academic tutors as being highly motivated and capable individuals.

SLAs work collaboratively with academics in lectures, labs, seminars, workshops and small group sessions to support other students in their learning.

Coming soon...

- SLAs @ ReWise Fair
14th & 15th March
- SLA ReWise Workshops
21st March-15th April

Don't Forget...



- Mahara reflections
- Effective Communication Tips
- Referrals to other Student support Services
- Communication Tips
- Referrals
- SLAs facilitate and do not teach
- SLAs are not counsellors –
when in doubt refer to Academics, PAL manager, or to the counselling service on:
<http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/support/counselling/index.aspx>
- SLAs are students and should keep on top of their own workload
- SLAs work collaboratively with Academics
- SLAs are the best!
Let this reflect in all aspects of our education