



# THE STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANT

## WELCOME

- Welcome to the **third** issue of the Student Learning Assistant Newsletter. The Newsletter is aimed at all Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) and the wider university community of academic and administrative staff who are involved in the SLA scheme. The idea is to create awareness regarding the SLA scheme and to provide a forum for discussions, suggestions and contributions by all currently involved and also those who have been involved in the past such as SLA Alumni and other members of staff.
- Thanks for all your feedback on the previous issues of the newsletter. All your comments and feedback are appreciated. Please email [s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk) for any contributions and comments. Deadline for contributions for **Issue 4 is 2nd March 2012.**

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## MOTIVATIONAL DIALOGUE TRAINING JANUARY 2012

### Rosina (English Literature SLA) gives an insight into the Motivational Dialogue training.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January Kathryn Budd-Brophy came to Middlesex to train a small group of Student Learning Assistants in Motivational Dialogue.

The day started with a much needed cup of tea and Kathryn explained what the training would entail.



Our first exercise was by far the most nerve wracking! All SLAs were asked to jot down one of their biggest secrets onto a piece of paper and to seal it inside an envelope with only their initials as a mark of ownership with the promise that we would find out why we were doing this after the exercise. Holding the envelopes felt risky enough so needless to say that our anxiety levels shot up when we had to pass them round – several times! Kate was quick to satisfy our curiosity as we retrieved our secrets and put them safely away. The point of it all was to feel the same uneasiness that students feel when they feel like they are out of their depth in class and by identifying with that feeling, as SLAs we will be able to understand them better and help more effectively. *Contd ....p3*

## SLA TRAINING SEPTEMBER 2011

Over 100 new SLAs attended the initial training day in September, 2011. The training day is an annual event which introduces the SLAs to the SLA scheme and offers training on how to work with students in various modules or subjects. Part of the highlights of the morning sessions included the lecture delivered by Dr Nick Endacott (Coordinator for Academic Writing and Language) where he gave the new SLAs an insight into how students learn and how to facilitate learning. Zainab Kazim Ali (Statistics Module Leader) gave a candid examination of the needs of new students and how the SLAs could be of assistance to other students. The SLAs put some of what they learnt in the morning into practice at the workshop sessions held in the afternoon.



*SLAs busy at workshop with Helen*

The workshops were led by John Hammond, Helen Villalobos, Luke Heath and Arron Laverty. Another important feature of the day were the inspiring talks given by senior SLAs, Luiza Rydlewska Dantas (Management) and Georgina Wright (Education) on what it was like being a Student Learning Assistant last year and how useful the programme was to the students, the SLAs and the lecturers.

According to Daniela Robu (Economics SLA), "The training not only helped me to meet other SLAs, but gave me a better insight into the programme especially on setting and maintaining boundaries". Ana Marinica (HRM SLA) also added, "The training and the SLA programme is a new experience that is going to help me develop my own skills and also help me provide support and advice to other students. Why not make a positive change to students' university life?!"

**“We think drop-in sessions are a very good idea. They help students in their assignments, and also allow SLAs to work together as a team and get to know each other and the students better.”**

**Famous Quote**

Learning without thought is labour lost. Thought without learning is intellectual death.

Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

## Conversations with Business Environment SLAs

Drop-in coursework surgery sessions for Management Students

“We are supporting Business Environment second year students and in the week beginning 5th December, we organised six drop-in sessions.

The aim was to help students with achieving better grades in their assignments.

We prepared a PowerPoint presentation with basic information about who SLAs are, how to structure work, analyse, reference and do research using E-resources available at the university. We also talked about help that is available from LDU.

We had different numbers of students who attended

the drop-in sessions, from just a few to over 30 students. Two or three SLAs were present during each session.

The challenge we faced was booking rooms at the university and in the library. We were only able to book two small group study rooms in the library. We managed to persuade the library staff to allow us to use a very nice room for librarians downstairs for two sessions ☺ but on the other days we had to use a room without a projector or screen.

Overall, we received very positive feedback. Students asked many questions and they were keen to come again ☺.

We emphasize the use of good resources and referencing and it seems to work.

We think drop-in sessions are a very good idea. They help students in their assignments, and also allow SLAs to work together as a team and get to know each other and the students better.”

*This is a brilliant initiative from Business Environment SLAs who normally support students in seminars..*

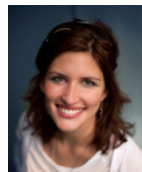
*If you have ideas on how to improve the student learning experience, please contact your module leader and share your ideas with us.*



Natalia Dziedzic



Rebecca Debono



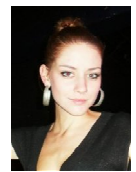
Lenka Zimkova



Luiza Rydlewska Dantas



Denisa Sanikova



Barbara Heribanova

## SLAs help to Re-refresh



**SLAs from different modules assisting at the stalls in the Quad during the Freshers and Re-Freshers events.**

*Thank you to all SLAs who have been promoting the scheme and other LDU activities.*

# SLA EVENTS IN PICTURES

## Christmas Party

The SLA Christmas party was a great way of meeting other SLAs as well as sharing our experiences in a nice relaxed atmosphere. Although we are assisting different modules on different levels, it was really interesting to hear how similar our experiences were. What I enjoyed the most was the passion and the desire to help students in the voices of the SLAs, it made me feel so proud of being part of the SLA team. Thank you SLA team for organizing it, it was lovely!

*Jennifer Kouao (STX SLA)*



# MOTIVATIONAL DIALOGUE TRAINING

*Contd from p1*

The training consisted of two key elements: the Wheel of Change and Motivational Dialogue. The Wheel of Change is a tool that will be useful for helping students to make positive changes and addressing or recognising problematic behaviours depending on which stage of the wheel they are on.

Motivational Dialogue training on the other hand, is a way of listening and communicating that is supportive and encouraging for the recipient.

We played games that made us bond as a team of SLAs and I felt that I got to know my peers more intimately, which was a true perk of the day. Equally, spending time with Simbo and Celia was lovely. The personal questions that were asked and the games that we played made a point of expressing how important it is to communicate well.

Equipped with these new skills, we hope to better ourselves as students, SLAs and individuals. The training was invaluable and thoroughly enjoyable, although very tiring! Overall, the day was very much a success.

**Rosina Georgiou**



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Student Learning Assistants (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.

To find out more about SLAs, visit <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/study/ldu/SLA/index.aspx>

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### Lest we forget...

- *SLAs facilitate and do not teach*
- *SLAs are not counsellors—when in doubt refer to Academics, PAL Manager, or to the counselling service on [unihub.mdx.ac.uk/support/counselling/index.aspx](http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/support/counselling/index.aspx)*
- *SLAs are students and should keep on top of own workload*
- *SLAs work collaboratively with Academics*
- *SLAs are the best. Let this reflect in all aspects of our education.*

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at Sla Middlesex

## Alumni News



**Hi everyone. My name is Zahra M. Rehman and I am currently the Academic Assistant for the Accounting and Finance Department.**

I graduated in July 2011 from Middlesex with a First Class Honours result in BA Accounting and Finance.

I was an SLA for Financial Accounting, a Student Ambassador and a member of the Bright Futures Society in my final year of study.

In 2012 I will be commencing with the professional Accountancy qualification ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), as well as the academic qualification PG Cert HE.

During the final year of my degree I was one of eight Accounting and Finance students selected from 250 to participate in the SLA scheme.

During this time I assisted and worked alongside academics in lectures, seminars and induction days.

In preparation for seminars I studied each topic thoroughly enabling me to successfully provide 1:1 tutoring and mentoring to students or groups of 3 to 5 at a time. I composed a 3000 word weekly session log detailing the events of each seminar or lecture in which I acted as an SLA. As a result I was awarded a Certificate of Outstanding Performance in recognition of valuable contribution to the SLA scheme.

The experience I gained as an SLA is invaluable and was one which provided me with new skills.

I learnt how to tailor information for students with different levels of understanding, a skill that I now use frequently in my current job. My time as an SLA also boosted my confidence

and refined my public speaking skills. I was able to effectively transfer skills like these into my own academic life then as a student and now as an Academic Assistant.

Acting as an SLA was one of the highlights of being a student at Middlesex, and certainly worked in my favour when being selected as an Academic Assistant. It was a tremendously enjoyable and satisfying role, which opened my eyes to the possibility of a teaching career. My advice to current SLAs would be to embrace the role as it is one that will reap rewards and good times to come.

**Zahra M.Rehman BA (Hons)  
Academic Assistant,  
Accounting and Finance  
Dept, Business School**

### Anna Maria Zola talks about her experience as an SLA and her new job

Being an SLA was a great experience because it helped me to boost my confidence and increased my motivation to work harder. Sharing knowledge with other students made me feel important and happy that I could actually make a difference. Although it was full of challenges, I found it really satisfying at the same time, especially when students responded in a positive way. That was the best reward that I could ever get.

Also, being an SLA helped me to develop communication and interpersonal skills, adaptability and the ability to juggle many different tasks, real-life professional experience and an understanding of the need to make a positive contribution quickly. It was not easy but I believe that perseverance and determination put me at a competitive advantage. Therefore, be prepared to take knock-backs and make the most of being an SLA; learn from negative as well as positive experiences.

If you already have a chance to be an SLA, do your best to help your students to form strong ideas which will be a foundation of their future life. As it was written in 'The Diary of Anne Frank': "Everyone has inside them a piece of good news. The good news is you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is."

So encourage your students whenever it's possible because you have no idea what they are truly capable of.

My degree was in BA Law and Business. After graduation, I decided to do my masters degree in LLM International Business Law and European Union Law part-time.

I am also working full-time at Harrow Council in the Procurement/Finance Department as a Trainee Buyer. I am assisting with tendering processes and savings projects. Furthermore, I am responsible for contacting vendors and evaluating bids offered by suppliers as well as determining purchasing needs, analyzing quotes and bids for suitability, cost and product availability.

Everyone at work is older than me but I really enjoy working there. I have met great people who have been so helpful and friendly. They all make my each day happier but they also make me a better person. The more people I get to know, the more I realize how lucky I am. The most important is that I have learnt that I can make mistakes. Therefore, I do not treat any of my failures as the enemy of success. We can be discouraged by failure or we can learn from it. So I go ahead and question things and make mistakes. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success.

**Anna Maria Zola**