



## Welcome...

...to the 7th 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 the feedback we have received so far. If you have further comments on our work and the SLA Newsletter, please email to [s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk).

### Quote of the Month

"The more I read, the more I acquire, the more certain I am that I know nothing."

Voltaire

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## Welcome Back

First of all, a huge welcome back to all of our Student Learning Assistants, and a very Happy New Year. We hope you had a great holiday and wish you all the best for the year approaching.

We would like to start off by thanking all of the SLAs who attended the training in September (or any time afterwards). It was great to see everyone there engaging and bettering their skills to become outstanding SLAs. It was pleasant and very beneficial for all of the SLAs to learn more about topics such as Unihelp and the LDU services. Training took place over three days and the SLAs took part in several workshops to further their understanding of the role and better their working skills.



SLAs at training

### Lessons from training; reflective practice

SLAs have been writing their reflections each month to reflect on their SLA role and their experience; how it was and what they learnt for the past month. Simbo has mentioned that she has seen some great reflections and would like to say well done to all the SLAs for completing them each month; it is great to know about what each SLA has been up to and how they are enjoying the role (You can see an excerpt that caught the PAL teams eyes on page 2).

— well done!



**Gloria Titilayo**

## Stars in the making

Our SLA star in the making is a multi-talented individual who really enjoys helping other people. Meet 19 year old Gloria Titilayo, who is currently in her second year of study, pursuing a degree in Business & Marketing.

At the moment she holds one-to-one, out of hours sessions with students and meets with them in the library regularly. However, in her spare time she is also a Talent Show events organiser who has a great passion for music and an extraordinary ability to sing.

The group which Gloria works with have organised and held a number of shows and events within their community and the South East of London. Our SLA star in the making was recognised by the 'Jack Petchley Achievers Network Foundation 2013-2014', so much did her work impress, that they featured her on their website under the heading 'Stories We Are Proud Of.' 'Live and Love Talent (LLT)' is the group that Gloria works with, their slogan "You bring the talent, we provide the stage" provides opportunities for young people to embrace their talents, entertain and do positive things within their community.

LLT are a well loved part of the community, even backed by MP Simon Hughes who has attended events and given the young talent some encouragement to keep going.

Well done Gloria! Keep up the good work.



**Nadia Iqbal**

## Excerpts from Nadia Iqbal's reflections

### **Session Overview**

10/12/2013- ... the seminar task was an online practice test to be conducted as a group. The group were relatively quick in making their decisions and thus more time was spent on the discussion of the questions after the test was marked and the grade given...  
12/12/2013- ... I thought another approach would be best. I thought it would be better to show the students the question they got wrong, and the possible answers leaving them to have another discussion about the answer they thought would now be correct, and after showing the actual answer. This did lengthen the seminar, however proved to be helpful. The online score for the test was quite high and both the lecturer and me were pleased with the class's performance...

### **What went well**

12/12/2013 This seminar activity proved to be very successful as it really stimulated students thinking further, allowing them to critique their answers and think in more logical manner. This is a helpful technique that will assist them further throughout the course.

### **What might you do differently in future?**

10/12/2013- Even though the class finished the practice online test quickly, the lecturer and myself both felt that a group effort was missing. The class did not engage in discussions with each other but would raise their opinion singularly and then would vote as a class on the final answer. The lecturer and I tried to prompt the class in working together and even gave them the example of our last seminar, however they continued to work singularly. In the future we agreed that it may be beneficial to encourage students to sit together to create a group atmosphere than have left the students to sit where they pleased, being away from each other.

## An interview with:

### *Socrates Economou*

Program Leader of BA Marketing

We started off the interview by discussing what the Senior Lecturer thought about the SLAs and the SLA scheme. This is what Socrates had to say:

"I find SLAs very beneficial because they have been through the previous year's work themselves. The students can relate to them- there is less distance between the SLA and the students, they are like the 'Middle-Man'."

On further discussion, Socrates pointed out that because the SLAs have had their own experience, they would be able to predict what help is needed by the students and as a result students feel less embarrassed to ask an SLA for support.

For our Senior Lecturer, the SLA Scheme is also a learning experience for the SLAs: "The SLAs enhance their own learning experience as being in the role refreshes their memory of the module, this assists them with their own studies; they also gain communication skills which enrich their ability to tackle different scenarios from day-to-day, as well as enhancing organisational skills."

When I asked Socrates to rate the SLA scheme on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest), he said: "8 out of 10, because the SLA Scheme helps to prevent lecturers and tutors from being overloaded with issues such as referencing. Having an SLA can support with these kind of things and allow the lecturers and tutors to focus on the core subject."

Interview by: Reem Iskandarani

## Win an iPad

We are compiling outstanding reflections and the best reflection will win an iPad at the end of the year. To find out more go to the SLA page on Moodle or OasisPlus

## SLAs with Festive Cheer!

Before we broke up for the holidays, the SLA team decided to throw a Christmas Party so that all of the SLAs could enjoy some festive time together. It was great seeing so many SLAs come together and share their experiences of the past few months, and interesting to see how the facilitating compares and contrasts across different modules and programs.



**Sharing highlights of our experiences**



**SLAs pose at the tea party**

The Christmas party was a huge success with games and prizes being won. Those who attended really enjoyed themselves and had a great time!



**SLAs having fun at the Claddagh Inn, Hendon**



## The SLA Newsletter

The Burroughs  
Hendon  
London  
NW4 4BT

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/index.aspx>

## Contributions

Reem Iskandarani  
Gloria Titilayo  
Simbo Ajayi  
Aleksandra Podsiadlik  
Amy Laker  
Lucian Achiricioaei

## Lest we forget...

- SLAs facilitate and do not teach
- SLAs are not counselors- when in doubt, refer to Academics, PAL Manager, or the counseling service on <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.

### Reminders

REWISE 10th & 11th March  
Remember to submit your reflections and PAFIS by the 5th of the month



## Putting our SLAs on the spot

### Natalia Loizou

#### *"A brief overview/scenario of your life/role as an SLA"*

My role as an SLA mainly involves me attending 1st and 2nd year seminars, as well as offering one-to-one tutorials. The aim is to be there to offer students help and/or advice in general regarding their studies. Along with my fellow BA English Language SLAs we try our best to help them have a better understanding of their course (mainly their assignments) while also being there for them as their fellow classmates and friends

#### *What do you like about being an SLA?*

I like how versatile this role has been. From attending seminars and offering tutorials to attending the various training sessions scheduled for us, this has been both an educating and challenging, but also fun, role! Also, students are so different from one another, not only in terms of their personality and/or character but also in terms of their study and revision ways which makes things a lot more interesting. I also find this role very fulfilling - such a great feeling every time I am able to help a student with even the smallest problem or question they might have had.

#### *What is your greatest achievement since becoming an SLA?*

My greatest achievement? I'd have to say winning at the specially adapted bingo game at one of the SLA Christmas get-togethers. No, that was a joke!!! Erm, I guess being able to help people in their work is already a great achievement on its own!

#### *Have you got any regrets? What are your worst/best moments?*

No regrets. Though not to lie, Pebblepad is the bane of my life! haha Positives? I think all the training sessions we've had as well as the Christmas celebrations were a great way of meeting other SLAs and getting to make new friends. Great fun! But also, this is a great experience for me in general! Added work experience to go on that much-feared CV of mine!

#### *Do you have any advice for new SLAs?*

Just be yourself! Do try getting to know other SLAs as when you're not quite sure how to do things, it's a great help having a friend to ask! Also, do get to know the SLA team! They're all lovely people that will most definitely put a smile on your face when things go wrong, especially on the technical side of things! And do try your best to be friends with the students you interact with! After all, they're students just like you!

#### *Would you like to be an SLA again in the future? Or perhaps a GTA?*

I'd love to be an SLA again, though this being my final year might make that impossible?! haha I have heard of the GTA scheme but if I'm honest I don't really know much about it which is disappointing considering I am interested in trying to get a position for next year? Perhaps the SLA team could organise a meeting for us to discuss this further?

English language SLA Natalia Loizou interviewed by Gloria Titilayo



## Succes stories of our SLA Alumni.

### Steven Denslow

Steven Denslow's journey is an inspiring one.

It is extremely important for SLAs to learn about the steps they are able to take after being an SLA in university. Steven's journey is one that shows what an SLA is capable of doing after becoming an SLA and how the SLA scheme helps to enhance skills and better the individual. Here is a brief timeline of Steven's steps:

- Steven worked in retail for 18 years
- He then started a degree in university
- He became an SLA in his second year supporting Human Resource module
- In his second year of university he also started an online business
- In his third year he also became an SLA supporting the Business Environment module
- After his third year of study he got a job in the summer school
- After summer school he was successful in his application as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

Steve's quote:

*You learn better when you do!*