



# The Student Learning Assistant Newsletter

## Summer 2016



# mdxSLA



**Middlesex  
University**  
London

Middlesex University, The Burroughs,  
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# WELCOME

## Welcome to the Summer 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.



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## Peer Assisted Learning Manager

### A message from Simbo...

Welcome to this edition of the SLA Newsletter. What a brilliant year this has been and you will find that this issue covers the SLA Awards ceremony which was a great event to round up all the hard work you have done since the beginning of the year. We were pleased to have the ceremony graced by the attendance of Andrea Dlaska,

Deputy Vice Chancellor, and Matthew Lawson (Deputy Director, Library and Learning Enhancement). Not only did their speeches at the event echo lecturers and students comments on pages 7 and 8+, they both expressed the uniqueness and value of the support SLAs contribute towards student learning and extended their gratitude and compliments to all the SLAs. I am proud to have worked with you, SLA cohort of 2015-2016 and join the rest of the university in congratulating you in your individual and team successes.

Wishing you the very best for the future!

Simbo Ajayi  
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# The Awards Ceremony

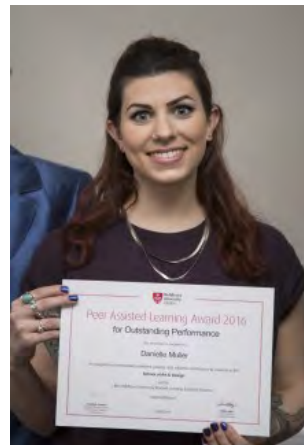




**The SLA Award Ceremony** brought together the PAL team, Senior SLAs and the SLA team to celebrate the excellence of the SLA Scheme, with people coming astonishingly well dressed for the event - all very Oscar's like! We all had a chance to network at the reception over drinks and appetisers, anxiously waiting for the awards to come and the according certificates. The SLA scheme distinguished SLAs and Senior SLAs over their work in specific categories and also allowed SLAs to nominate themselves for their extra mile work as SLAs. After the thrilling awards and certificates had been given, we were all keen to get to dinner as it smelt so deliciously, and ate with a piano playing in the background. Later on, we were given a karaoke to loosen up the party!...and we took some crazy pictures with fancy costumes that will one day remind us of the friends we made and how happy we were during this time! Thank you all that made such a beautiful party possible, it was a true honour to be part of it!



by Joao Tomas Dias  
(SLA Business  
Management)





# Health & Education

## SLAYear

As the SLAs for Complementary Health our main role was to support students during lab sessions, seminars and drop-in sessions. During lab sessions we were there to help students grasp the practical aspect of the module. The seminars were mainly for discussing questions related with the theory. We also held regular drop-in sessions where students could come and practice their diagnostic skills, needling or Tuina massage techniques, and in the same time ask any questions related with the theory content. We were always there to provide an alternative view of preparing for assessments by doing different quiz games and role-play activities during drop-in sessions. By going the extra mile in supporting our students we were there to facilitate them in developing approaches to study that best suits their style of learning. Thanks to the number of drop-in practical sessions we organised during the year, students were very well prepared for their final exams. They were inspired by our dedication and understanding of the module, and in hoping to become SLA's next year they were motivated and encouraged to put in extra effort.

by Vesna Manasieva  
(SSLA Health & Education)







## Lecturer comments

Question...

In what ways have you benefited from participating in the SLA programme?



SLAs have assisted by giving more individual help to students who need help to understand and apply theory to problem



Students who feel hesitant to approach an academic seem to find the SLAs more approachable



The involvement of the SLAs has significantly improved how students work in teams on practical work



My classes involve practical work and students require 1-2-1 attention to be able to carry out tasks



I love seeing the positive effect SLAs have on students in terms of confidence and effect on other modules they are currently doing



It is beneficial being able to give students another person who they can relate to and explain things in a different way, if they do not understand it from me





## Student comments

Question...

What did you find most helpful about your SLA?

“ They were very helpful in class and in drop-in sessions, showing knowledge and interest in the subject ”

“ They encouraged me to find time and manage time better ”

“ Guidance given if confused and also encouragement to learn ”

“ They understood what I was concerned with as they had experience in it and were able to offer support and advice ”

“ They were able to answer my questions, making sure I understood using relevant examples and demonstrations ”

“ They explained OSCE's in-depth and providing ways to gain optimum marks ”

“ They provided new ways of learning and new techniques ”







Question...

## SLA comments

What did you find most valuable about your SLA experience?

“ It helped me to learn about the different learning styles and has also greatly improved my inter-personal skills ”

“ I love every single day working as an SLA. Based on my experience, I am strongly considering doing PhD degree as even my students recommended me to do so. I fell in love with the job ”

“ I have learned how to engage students to succeed, as well as improving my own learning ”

“ Getting to interact and help other students in their studies was a wonderful experience ”

“ I have achieved skills which will help me increase my employability portfolio providing me with better career opportunities in the future ”

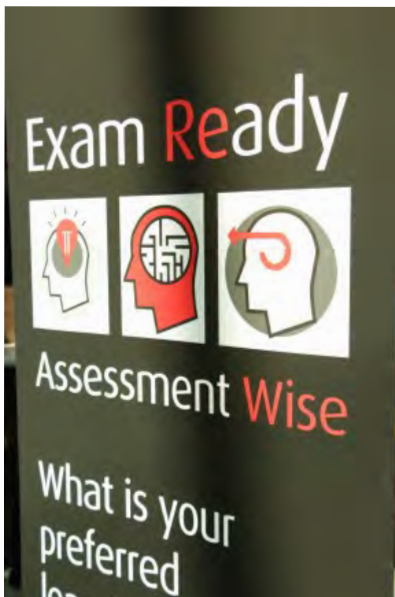
“ Being able to apply my skills of describing complex techniques to students with varying levels of English language knowledge. ”



by  
Dhana Letchmanan  
(SLA Foundation Year)

# Rewise Campaign

Everyone feels stressed during exams. The ReWise week was introduced as part of helping Middlesex University students to help with exam anxiety issues, tips and techniques to improve revision and/or study skills. As part of the SLA team I was involved in ReWise workshops, and I partnered with my colleague Iva to conduct a workshop on 'Tackling Exam Anxiety'. The aim of our workshop was to help fellow students tackle the anxiety issues and equip them with the necessary weapons to combat stress. Overall, it was an amazing experience to be part of the ReWise Fair, and to join with other services such as LET, Employability Service, Student Achievement, Registry, Disability and Dyslexia, MDXSU Advice, Counselling and Mental Health. Staying involved in such outside classroom activities contributes to student learning. Being involved with fellow students and SLAs helps to make friends with those who have similar interests. This reinforces our own interest and ideas, which leads to great self-satisfaction and feelings of purpose.





# SLA Alumni

by Shazad Ali (GAA Law)

**"the role allows students to develop their potential and gain valuable experience"**

I would very much recommend the Student Learning Assistant role to any of the students studying here at Middlesex University. Not only does the job give you a chance to gain valuable employability skills, but the role also allows students to develop their potential and gain valuable experience. I was not only able to communicate with students, but I was also able to obtain ideas from colleagues doing similar roles so that I could make the experience much easier and less stressful for students. Moreover, being an SLA helped me to understand how lecturers prepare for class and what happens behind the scenes. In my opinion, being a SLA has very much helped me and in a way has made my current role more straightforward in the sense that I know what is expected of me in fulfilling my duties as a GAA. I cannot stress the skills that I gained from this role. Leadership skills, interpersonal skills, time management and critical thinking were among the skills that I gained, and also to become more confident. Being an SLA for two years really did prepare me to become a GAA in the field of Law by giving me the relevant skills which I often now undertake in my new role.

**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.**



## Don't Forget...

- Mahara reflections
- Effective communication tips
- Referrals to other support services
- SLAs facilitate and do not teach
- SLAs are not counsellors
- SLAs are students and should keep on top of their own workload
- SLAs work collaboratively with academics
- SLAs are the best!

When in doubt refer to Academics, PAL manager, or the counselling service at: <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/support/counselling/index.aspx>

Let this reflect in all aspects of our education