

THE STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANT

WELCOME

Welcome to the 9th issue of the Student Learning Assistant Newsletter. The newsletter is aimed at all Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) and also the wider university community of academic and administrative staff who are involved in the SLA scheme. The objective 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 do not hesitate to feedback your ideas to: s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk

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SLA CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year's SLA Christmas party was a big hit! It was a great opportunity for SLAs from different schools to come together and get to know each other. Featured were a pub quiz and a dance off, which were not only a lot of fun but a good chance to see Simbo show us her moves! Happy Holidays and a successful 2015.



“TELL ME AND I FORGET.
TEACH ME AND I REMEMBER.
INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

The other day I realised it has been ten years since I graduated. Apart from making me feel horrendously old, it also made me reflect on the changes in education between then and now. When I studied, the basic principle of student support was to make sure the library had automatic doors and a coffee machine. Needless to say, times have changed – and Middlesex University's SLA scheme is a perfect example of how much student support has improved in the last decade.

Working in the LDU, I have been lucky enough to work with a number of SLAs during staff Hours. I (and my colleagues) have consistently found them to be professional, organised, punctual and – crucially – approachable and friendly. Their input has helped innumerable students at Middlesex to improve their work, and has put a more

relatable face on a system that can, at times, seem strange and overwhelming. I was also lucky enough recently to observe two SLAs working in a classroom setting, and I was pleased (but unsurprised) to see that they continued to exemplify the same high standards of support and facilitation that I get to see in Office Hours.

I can't help but wonder how much more enjoyable, and manageable, my own time as an undergraduate would have been, had my university also had an SLA scheme. Still, we cannot change the past – but we can improve the future, something which I strongly believe the SLAs working at Middlesex continuously do for our students.

Faith Dillon-Lee
Lecturer in Academic Writing
and Language

SENIOR SLA ACCOUNTS

It's been a busy start to the New Year in the School of Art & Design. Third years are starting to feel the pressure as the realisation kicks in that it's this year, 2015, that they graduate. As a school, this academic year has been particularly successful for the SLA Scheme, awareness is at an all time high and the feedback from students and lecturers has been incredible. It's been a pleasure seeing a few of my students from last year become SLAs this year and it's clearly had a positive effect on their own work. Although this is a stressful time for you all, try to enjoy it as the time will fly past. I am looking forward to the graduate show at the Truman, in 2014 we had over 5,000 visitors and I believe that this year it will be even bigger.



Tricia Hague, 'I am Still Here', triciahague.com

Tricia Hague
School of Art and Design

Being a Senior SLA is a fantastic experience! The role of a senior is more behind the scenes in the office, assisting with the paperwork and organisation of the scheme alongside having to assist in seminar classes, and so there many roles and responsibilities to keep you going! I have developed many transferable skills that will be useful when placed in a working environment. Through my role I have been able to form strong relationships with students, Senior SLAs, SLAs and staff members and feel part of a very strong community at Middlesex. Being involved in the scheme has opened many opportunities for me- for which I will always be thankful!

Nadia Iqbal
School of Business

As the senior SLA for S&T, this year has been an exciting opportunity for me to meet new people from different programs and share experiences. With a new Biology program replacing the original biosciences course it has been interesting to see the changes put into practise. As I spent time working with the first year BIO/BMS students in the previous academic year, it has been great being able to follow those same students onto their second year and see the progress that they have made.

Lea Stundner
School of Science and Tech

The role of Senior SLA this year has been a fascinating experience, and allowed me to really see the wide variety of ways that different SLAs work within the different degree programmes. Its great to see how the connection that the students have with the SLAs can be useful and motivating for their approach to studying and learning, and to see the SLAs leading by example!

Selina Bansal
School of Health and Education

My name is Paraskevi Stavrou and I am currently working as a Senior SLA .I am a third year law student, studying an LLB degree. My biggest achievement as a Senior SLA, in terms of my personal goals, is that has given me self-confidence and encouraged me to believe in myself. This opportunity to work has made me a more dynamic, motivated and ambitious person. I have enjoyed mentoring new SLAs it has enhanced my ability to think on my feet and quickly pick up new ideas and concepts. The most challenging aspect of my work has been balancing my multitude of commitments, being my academic studies and extra curricular activities, as well as satisfying the requirements of the role. This has enabled me to develop time management and organisational skills.

Evi Stavrou
School of Law

Mikesh Vaghela
School of Art and Design



Being an SLA is a great responsibility, but most of all it is so much fun. You get to know loads of nice and warm hearted people. You get to know students on your course on a deeper level, they feel comfortable enough to come to you for advice on their work and you can tell them what they should consider, its so cool that you can be someone they look up to. Being an SLA has also given me a few opportunities that I would not have been able to get without the scheme, like designing this newsletter. I get to work on my craft whilst having fun. I enjoy being an SLA, and I hope my students can take something from our sessions.

Mira Van Nelson
School of Science and Tech

At first, it seemed that expectations of being an SLA stretched beyond my capabilities, but during the training I had a chance to talk to others, and it became apparent that I was not the only one having mixed feelings. The support from other SLAs increased my confidence. We came up with the idea to create a secret Facebook group, which became helpful in efficient exchange of information and gave us the opportunity to discuss topics related to the role. Helping the first year students tackle their challenges is extremely inspiring as the experiences they are having are very similar to those I had just a year ago. I find a great satisfaction in being able to work with students through a concept that they find difficult and see them gradually grasp it. I enjoy coming up with the new ways to explain things to others, this helps me strengthen my own abilities and knowledge.

Rugare Maruzani
School of Science and Tech

My experiences as an SLA have been positive and pleasant. I have enjoyed developing my communication, teamwork and organisation skills to help students in the Molecular and Metabolic Biochemistry module. As a student who has already experienced the demands of second year and this module particularly, it is natural to empathise with students' concerns. I have enjoyed using the knowledge and experiences I have gained as a student last year to help this year's students. What makes the SLA role rewarding is students' feedback on how helpful the scheme has been and hope my students become SLA's in the future.

Cem Ahmet
School of Health and Education

Since becoming a Student Learning Assistant in October 2014, I have never thought that in such a short space of time, I would have become a confident, creative and a collaborative individual. But also, not forgetting the invaluable experience I have gained becoming an SLA, from liaising with departmental staff to planning and executing academic workshops. But I have to say the best skill I have gained is my development of my reflective skills. I am one who does not see the point of reflecting on experiences. Consequently, I saw the importance of this and how reflective practice has helped me to identify my achievements, strengths and weaknesses when at work. It has helped me to become a more effective, yet reliable SLA and because of this, it has helped me to reach my ultimate goal of reaching my up-most potential in being an SLA for the Department of Education.

Rachel Gaon
School of Art and Design



As an SLA for Photography I am there to help the students understand, comprehend and appreciate what they study. As a Masters Student, only graduating from my undergraduate degree last year I can relate to the students in a different way to the tutors. For me, I am someone who loves to be involved with education therefore it has been a privilege to have been given this chance to facilitate the seminars and tutorials. As an SLA, I am given a chance to share comments, techniques and advice on how to achieve the top potential that the student has from reaching their goal. I have to engage with each student and adjust the way I structure my comments to their personal creative ability. Having a part in the students achievement and personal growth is an amazing opportunity to have. The undergraduate students put on a final exhibition at the Truman Brewery that is open to the public later on in the year. This becomes their main focus throughout the final year of their studies, and I am there to keep them determined to get there!

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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.

DON'T FORGET

Session Logs

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.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK
AT SLA MIDDLESEX

TWEET AND
INSTA WITH
#MDXSLA

Your #MDXSLA pictures will be used in the next SLA newsletter.

FEEDBACK

SLA GOODIES BAGS ARE GREAT-
THE PENS ARE SUCH A ATTRACTION!

MORE NETWORKING EVENTS
SHOULD TAKE PLACE

THE REFLECTIONS CAN BE
TIME CONSUMING, HOWEVER
ULTIMATELY THEY ARE HELPFUL

ALUMNI NEWS

The Student Learning Assistant (SLA) position is a very good job opportunity for students who wish to gain valuable employability skills while getting their degree at Middlesex University. Moreover, it gives the chance to communicate with other students from the years below and to understand what an academic is doing to prepare for the class. The experience that I have gained from being an SLA has helped me a lot after graduation in fulfilling the duties of my current job.

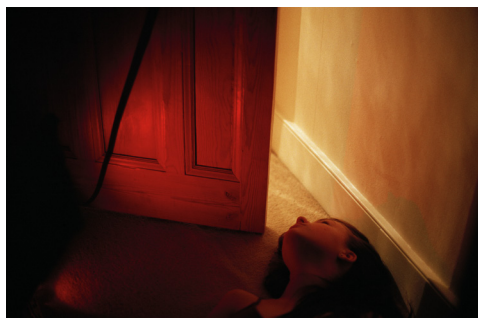
When I started working for the Learner Development Unit (LDU) as an SLA, I was pleased to find that the job was better than I expected. During training and when working with students, I developed skills such as coaching, facilitation, time-management, prioritisation, pro-activity, critical thinking, etc. Since I worked constantly with different people, I developed excellent communication skills. I also had opportunities to link with students and lecturers which repaid further down the road. The job was perfect in the sense

that it was flexible - my studies or social life were not impaired by the job. Even though I was helping students with their work I also learned few things from them - it was a two way process. Currently, I work as a Graduate Academic Assistant (GAA) at Middlesex which seemed the logical continuation from the SLA position with regards to building a career in academia. The role of SLA has provided the base of many of the duties that I do currently. Sometimes being a GAA feels like a full time version of the SLA position but with a bit more responsibilities included. I never felt a gap that is generally felt when you start working in academic environment shortly after being a student. My previous role has taught me how to work with academics and how to help them which is one of my responsibilities now. Many of the students recognise me from working with them before and come for help with their studies which makes it easy to increase their independence as learners and thus fulfilling my job. I work

with 4-5 modules across different courses which have different deadlines and students with various needs. Prioritising and time management help a lot to build an adequate timetable and provide the optimal quality of your services to the students. Some of the modules that I work on I have never heard of before. However, my experience as an SLA has provided me with the skills to overcome the hurdle by thinking critically and being proactive.

To conclude, I believe being an SLA is one of the best job opportunities provided in Middlesex. It gives flexibility, applicable skills and does not impair your study. Working with the LDU has prepared me well enough to feel comfortable and confident that I can apply my knowledge and have the skills to succeed in my current job as a GAA.

Ivan Punev
Graduate Academic Assistant
Natural Sciences Department
School of Science and Tech.



Hannah Nagle, from the series "Unrequited", hannahnagle.4format.com/

Hannah will be exhibiting along with our third year Art and Design SLAs this June at the Truman Brewery Graduate show. Look out for dates and come show your support.