

THE STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANT

WELCOME

Welcome to the 10th 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

CONTRIBUTORS

Tricia Hague
Faith Warner
Jonas Silva
Asanka Dayananda
Adam McCarthy
Mikesh Vaghela
Ted Johansson
Simbo Ajayi

IN THIS ISSUE

Kingston Perspective	1
SLA Awards	2
Truman Brewery	2
With Academics	4
Alumni	4



SLA AWARDS : PAGE 2

“WE CANNOT TEACH PEOPLE ANYTHING; WE CAN ONLY HELP THEM DISCOVER IT WITHIN THEMSELVES.”

GALILEO GALILEI

KINGSTON PERSPECTIVE Two heads are better than one. And six are better than three. It is with this idea in mind that Simbo Ajayi, Magda Durka and Faith Warner of Middlesex University Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) team met with Jenny Stowar and David Eleftheriou of Kingston University this May. The aim of the visit was to compare the services offered to students by both universities and learn from each other. It was quite amazing what we discovered from our visit; that different people, from different universities, when pondering the same question of how to improve student academic experience seem to come up with very similar ideas, albeit with different names. We have ‘SLAs’ they have ‘academic mentors’, we have the StudyHub (and previously the Learning Lounge) offering help

with academic writing, maths and library services, they have SEC Academic Success Centre run by SEC (Science Engineering and Computing). It seemed both universities agreed on the benefit of employing students to provide guidance on a range of queries throughout the campus. Looking specifically at peer-assisted learning with Kingston University, known as ‘mentoring’, we were pleasantly surprised to find that the services offered by mentors to ‘mentees’ matched the services offered by SLAs almost exactly. Kingston implements an ‘opt in’ scheme for mentors to maximise the support for students using the services. Their mentoring involves supporting students during drop-in sessions with groups of around 5-10 mentees/students having their own assigned mentor who would

run session specifically tailored to their needs. The idea of an ‘opt in’ scheme may be something we wish to consider at Middlesex especially for first year students who will benefit from having access to a mentor. Middlesex provides broader training to include generic and subject specific aspects of the role, which Kingston would consider for the future, In conclusion, the whole experience was beneficial for both Kingston and Middlesex University and we hope to continue to push the quality of the scheme forward and to make a difference to academic excellence and students experience within the University.

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After a month of planning and organising it was fantastic to see the award ceremony come to life. There were moments where we thought that not everything was going to run as smoothly as we had hoped and on the day there were some technical difficulties that caused some stress for the planning team! However with the dedication and perseverance of the Senior SLAs, the evening ran smoothly without any issues. The board room and mezzanine were transformed by Soumya and the band did a beautiful job building an atmosphere. It was a welcomed change to see our SLAs in black tie attire, we've just had the official photographs back and everyone really did look incredible. Ted did a fantastic job running the busy green screen room, which was very

popular and provided endless entertainment! There are so many people to thank, whom all made the event so special: Simbo, for everything. To Magda, for always working so hard behind the scenes. Matthew Lawson for his endless support for the scheme. All the senior SLAs, whom did such a wonderful job planning the evenings events Our LDU colleagues, Selman and Nick. Our hosts for the evening, you did an fantastic job MDXSU President for taking time out to join us The band, you were fantastic! Thank you! To the chef - Vittorio for providing such delicious food To the photographer, Jack, for capturing the night so beautifully. and a special thank you to all of you who turned up, you made the night possible.

Senior SLA
Ted Johansson



**TRUE MAN
BREW A REE
ADAM
MCCARTHY
SCHOOL OF
ART & DESIGN**



The lead up to the night's events was very hectic, there were instants when things just weren't going our way and there was definitely a few 'all hands on deck' moments. Though teamwork with Ted's and the photographer Jack's expertise, we managed to pull things together and the event ran even better than we had hoped for. The food was great and the band was absolutely incredible, definitely helped create the atmosphere we were anticipating for. I was very shocked and honoured to be awarded a special mention from the PAL team, at first I thought Simbo was talking about someone else! It definitely made my night and it made my decision to leave my job with the PAL team that much more difficult. I hope everyone enjoyed the night as much as I did, it was a fantastic opportunity to 'let our hair down' and spend some time celebrating each other's achievements over the past year.

Senior SLA
School of Art and Design
Tricia Hague



I have just graduated from Middlesex University studying graphic design. This year I have been in the studios everyday because of the enjoyable environment and fantastic facility's MDX has to offer, plus the technicians go above and beyond to help out with every project and query you ask them. Being a SLA in my final year has helped my confidence build by helping me communicate with others and speak clearly about my projects to potential employers.

We have just had are degree show at the Truman Brewery, on the Friday we had people from industry come in and talk to us, I had interest from several company's about my work. A couple of them said I should pitch my restaurant branding project to a chain restaurant owner. The career I am looking for at the moment is within the branding and packaging design industry.



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY SLA NEWSLETTER

Middlesex University
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.

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.

WORKING WITH ACADEMICS

Adding the student touch to the employability e-portfolio.

Working in partnership with staff from Criminology and Sociology, Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement and the Employability Service a team of SLAs introduced the Employability e-portfolio to 1st year students.

Drawing on their e-portfolio experience SLAs created Mahara e-portfolio pages and LinkedIn profiles to show 1st year student how to create their own portfolios. Over the summer SLA are leading a number of projects including:

The skills matrix project. The project lead Lea Stundner, Senior SLA, Science and Technology says "the skills matrix is a great tool to easily identify a student's skillset. It will help students to record evidence of how they acquired/used skills and function to prepare students to answer standard interview questions".

Tricia Hague, Senior SLA, Arts and Design, is leading a project to create 'day in the life' practitioner/alumni experience videos. She says the project 'aims to motivate students by helping them to visualise their lives post-study'. She plans to give a few criminology and sociology alumni a Go-pro camera to record reflection of their day. These are used to create a series of vlogs and videos demonstrating different employability options and career avenues.

How do we capture student attention and encourage regular portfolio updates? Oliver Garner, SLA, Arts and Design, leads a project that attempts to use visual prompts to highlight skills and remind students to update their portfolios.

Both Oliver and Trisha have started to capture student stories in two minute bite size videos and digital stories. Currently they are interviewing students with work placement and voluntary experience. Students asked to share how they secured these posts and tips for making the most out of work opportunities available at the university and in the local area.

Tricia and Oliver are keen to develop an EmployMe App to link the different aspects of the employability e-portfolio together and prompt students to keep a monthly record of the skills they develop.

Yusaf Ejaz Mohiuddin, SLA, Criminology and Sociology, recently joined the portfolio team. Yusaf leads a project that looks at organising work experience for students interested in a teaching career.

A big thank you from the e-Portfolio Project Team to the SLAs for their hard work on this project.

Asanka Dayananda
Senior Academic Developer

ALUMNI

It was always going to be a challenge, landing a job as a digital forensic investigator - but that has been my career ambition ever since I first became aware of this specialised area of work and the battle against cybercrime in the late 1990s.

Having successfully completed my degree in Computer Forensics in 2012 and being invited to be part of the Student Learning Assistant Team, the road to employment in a position where I could demonstrate and hone my skills in the real world has been a long and often fruitless one.

How many CV's did I write? How many job applications? How many times did I receive those words no one wants to hear? Too many.

But persistence and a cool head is all part of being a digital forensic examiner - thus I knew that one day, if I persevered, someone, somewhere would see the potential in me and give me the one chance I needed to shine. I would like to highlight that my experience as a Student Learning Assistant was crucial and determinant in my life. After

that memorable experience, I have never doubted my ability, self-confidence has never been lacking...but when you apply for hundreds of positions and are only met with rejection it is sometimes a bitter pill to swallow. So...

You can imagine my huge, unbridled joy when told that Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) had decided to go where no other firm had yet gone and offered me a position within their hallowed walls! Such feelings of dizzy happiness do not come around very often but that one moment of sheer delight swamped me for days after...and I am pleased to say I still feel that sense of joy.

It didn't take me long to realise that working for the FCA would be a fantastic opportunity and it is one I am happy to say has not disappointed in any way since I joined; working for FCA was always going to be an honour and privilege to me and still is. Training & Development therefore was always going to be a defining factor but I was quickly swayed on learning that the FCA invests a lot of time and care in training their employees and providing a regular basis to develop their skills. Since I joined the FCA in

March 2014 I am delighted to say that I have received training during each of the past five months and in July last year I was awarded a certification in Digital Forensics following training that FCA covered the expenses for. It is not surprising actually that training is high on the FCA priority list because it is vital all employees receive continued updating of skills to hone their professionalism in their roles in the ever-changing financial industry sector.

My team members are amazing, and this makes for a great environment to work in since we are continually learning from each other. Above of all there is a very strong team spirit within the group, it is definitely "One for all and all for one!"

It has been the best year of my life in so many ways - landing my first real job in digital forensics, being given the chance to hone my skills and develop them on an on-going basis, working on real cases with a great set of colleagues; it all adds up to a fantastic experience and exciting times ahead.

In fact, for me, hopefully, it could even be a case of FCA - Full Career Ahead!

Jonas Silva
PAL Assistant