

The Student Learning Assistants Programme Job Description

Main purpose of the role:

What do Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) do?

The Student Learning Assistant programme is a student to student approach to improving academic skills and practice to enhance student employability. The intention of the role is to increase students' engagement with their programme and to help them develop the skills they need to make them effective independent learners, with the aim of improving grades and reducing student drop-out.

Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) will be required to work on a module that they have already successfully completed to help the current students practise academic skills, consolidate their knowledge, discuss ideas and find their own solutions to questions and problems.

In addition, SLAs will provide a point of contact for students with questions related to being a student at Middlesex University. On occasion they may also be involved in open days or other activities as representatives for the SLA programme and their programme of study.

The role of an SLA and the number of hours an SLA works may vary depending on the needs of the individual module, academics or student. Some SLAs will work in labs or seminars, supervised by academics, helping individuals or groups of students as they tackle the curriculum, assignments or to practice skills. In other cases, SLAs will meet with individuals or small groups of students to facilitate discussions about approaches to study and assignments or other needs identified by students and academics. They may also initiate on-line discussion groups or respond to queries by email. The standard agreement of working hours is capped at 6 hours per week but may be negotiated in certain cases. The role is based at Hendon campus and lasts one academic year usually from September to May. SLAs will be supervised by Simbo Ajayi, the Peer Assisted Learning Manager and mentored by the Senior SLA of the school.

What the role entails:

- To work with students, raise aspirations, build study skills and encourage them to continue with and complete their studies successfully.
- To share experience of life at university and of studying to help students understand what is required of them and how the learning and work on individual models fits into a broader programme context.
- To help students to find their own solutions to academic questions and problems, encouraging them to develop approaches to study and assignments that best suit their style of learning.
- To help students develop their understanding of the module content, working in a manner that facilitates students learning from each other and for themselves, without fostering dependence on the SLA.
- To create a safe and trusting environment where students are all encouraged to participate, free from judgment.
- To encourage students to prepare for and attend their classes and SLA sessions.
- To encourage students to speak out about their needs and to ask questions.

- To ensure that the students are referred appropriately to improve both their academic development and their wider student experience, including but not exclusive to the various service areas of Library and Student Support (LSS).
- To provide feedback to academics on issues brought to their attention concerning the academic programme.
- To complete reflective reports using the OU Blog at the end of each month and SLA evaluation forms as required.
- To complete timecards using Unitemps every week.
- To attend training and meetings as required for the role.
- To attend all SLA sessions for your assigned module.
- Maintain a professional attitude on issues such as confidentiality and student complaints.

The requirements to become an SLA:

- Must be a current student in Middlesex University.
- Must have achieved a minimum of Grade 8 in the module they will be supporting.
- Must have demonstrated good study and communication skills and a positive approach to working with others. Academics will identify SLAs based on a combination of these and other relevant factors.
- Must be punctual, reliable and have an excellent attendance record.
- Must have an understanding of the challenges faced by students at university and on their particular programme of study.
- Must be responsive to the learning needs of the students from a range of different backgrounds and experiences.
- Must be willing to share the benefits of their experience to help others maximise their own academic potential and get the most from their student life.
- Must have inter-personal skills and be able to communicate using effective listening and questioning skills to help autonomous learning.
- Must be a good team player able to demonstrate leadership and team building skills.
- Must have a positive attitude to higher education.
- Must be interested in working with people and in helping them to become independent learners, well equipped to meet the demands of their academic programmes.

An objective of the programme is to ensure that large numbers of students are given an opportunity to gain some experience as part of the University's employability agenda.

Eligibility: Normally 2nd, 3rd year undergraduate and postgraduate students who have met the requirements above would be appointed as SLAs.

Appointments are usually made for the academic year from September to May on hourly paid contracts.