

MdxSLA

Student Learning Assistants Summer Newsletter 2017



Welcome to the 2017 Summer Edition of Our SLA Newsletter!

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What's inside?

Student Success Festival.....	3
SLAs at Work.....	5
SLA Business Card.....	5
Outstanding SLAs	6
SLA Awards Ceremony.....	7
'Breaking News'.....	8
Do Not Forget!.....	8



Simbo's note

Welcome to this vibrant Summer Edition of the SLA Newsletter which truly captures the essence of the SLA role. Over the course of the year, SLAs from around the university have been busy with what they do best – helping others achieve, supporting learning and teaching, contributing to success, et cetera, et cetera.

What some of you may not be aware of is that SLAs volunteer to manage various SLA projects like the featured SLA Business card and marketing initiative. This edition showcases SLA involvement in partnering with staff and creating awareness about student success. Also featured are three outstanding SLAs who provide us with some insightful and inspiring news about what they have been doing outside of lectures and SLA support.... A definite must read!

..And not to forget the amazing SLA Awards ceremony which had the crème de la crème of MDX in attendance (Chancellor Dame Janet Ritterman, Andrea Dlaska our own DVC and SLAs of course!) Also look out for 'Breaking News'. From all the Editorial team to all SLAs, we wish you all the success in the world! Happy reading!

SLAs at Student Success Festival

For us SLAs, Student Success Festival is one of the most important events at Middlesex University. This year we approached learning in a variety of creative ways with a range of activities for students to complete. Based around games and fun these would help them realise the best ways to revise for exams and prepare for assessments. The activities were Finish the Story, Learning Models, Memory Castle and 3D Interactive Activities.

3D Interactive Activities

'There were 2 main activities both focused on problem solving and team building, the first one had 2 people tangled together with two pieces of rope who had to untangle themselves, there was only one way out. The second activity had 5 people stand on a plank and had to move along without falling off the plank.'

The rope activity was the most engaging task which drew a big crowd. It created a lot of excitement among the participants.

The physical nature of this activity made it fun to watch how some students were thinking outside the box while attempting to solve the problems in a creative way. - **Dhana Letchmanan (SSLA Health and Education)**

Finish the Story

'The Finish the Story activity was designed to help students improve their public speaking and presentation skills'

The activity involved using one or more course related prompt cards with words and images on them to tell a story. It was interesting to meet students from a range of courses, and witness people who said they were not confident public speakers, in the end use their imagination to create some great stories.

Students were not only able to showcase their skills and talents, develop strategies to cope with their nerves when speaking publicly, but also learn to challenge their abilities. - **Paige McNish (BA Education Studies)**



Even our LSS executives (above) seem to be having fun with problem solving.

Learning Models

'The Learning Models activity was about creative learning strategies with modelling clay and pipe cleaners, it allowed the students to channel their thinking, solve problems and remember information through making physical models'

It was super effective especially for those who were visual learners, since they could create tangible models of the subject they study to help them revise. This method helped highlight the importance of planning, revision, learning from your mistakes, and also to looking for extra help from SLAs.

The most memorable moments were when students became really competitive over a task, or when they got extremely creative. - **Andrea Enti (BA Business and Management)**

Memory Castle

'This was about memorising information in your own unique way. We created an advent calendar style board with pockets. These contained cards with text, symbols and images to associate information with.'

We made a simple memory game into a challenge between students and SLAs. We also participated in other activities alongside students testing our problem solving skills. - **Zainab Jivraj (BA Psychology with Counseling)**

The activity helped students explore different kinds of revision techniques. I enjoyed learning from students who demonstrated a variety of methods that they currently employ. - **Sonali Nakum (BSc Psychology)**

I started the day with a well handmade purple crown and an axe. Somehow, I managed to change into one of the most magical cloaks you could imagine and walked around the castle helping people train their memory, speak publicly and use logical thinking. SSF was an exhilarating experience not only for students but also staff. Filled with fun activities also a great place to calm your nerves from exams and coursework. If you did not manage to come this year, be on a lookout for the next one. - **Patricia Szoradova (BA Music Business)**



SLAs at Work

'This is an ongoing project showcasing the work of the SLAs in different faculties. As SLAs we are trained to support students to the best of our abilities. One of the main challenges is effective questioning. Working with so many different learning styles we gain valuable skills to best help everyone.'

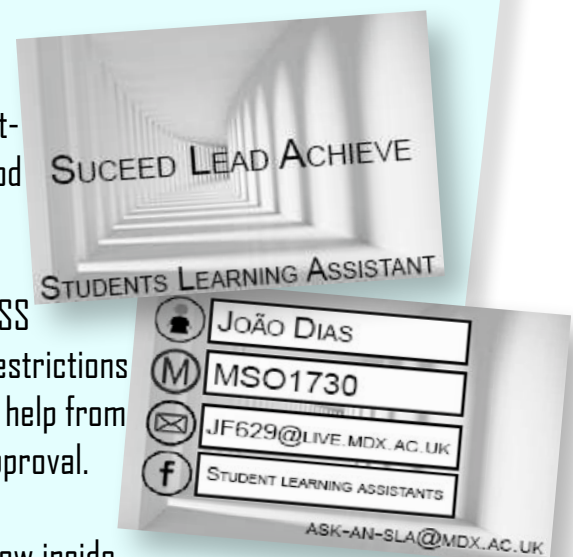


SLA Business Card Project

The idea came from student feedback highlighting their need for getting in contact with their SLA. The business card would also be a good marketing tool for the SLA scheme.

In order to develop it, PAL team and I met with Mark Shilingis from LSS Communications. Our first step was to discuss design and branding restrictions set by the university's regulations. After a few design trials and with help from a fellow SLA Jose Carvalho, the final design was ready and set for approval.

Working across different departments made me realise how ideas flow inside an institution and how complex cross-functional teams and matrix management works. An idea needs to be shaped according to the institution's requirements before getting to the stage when it is implemented. This also takes a long time. Perseverance is a key skill needed to be successful. Now I understood how important it is to keep insisting and contacting people for things to move on. - **Tom Dias (SSLA Business)**



Outstanding SLAs

SLA success's on a path to progress their careers

Emmanuel Keboh
(BSc Computer Networks)

Emmanuel is an SLA who earned a prestigious **placement at Goldman Sachs.**

"I started by identifying the kind of company I would want to work at and the kind of role I'd want to take on. The next step was putting together a good CV. Then finally, I started scrawling through internship job boards on the internet and selectively applying to places I felt matched my criteria. Three technical interviews, two behavioural interviews and one test later (all for one position) I was offered a place at Goldman Sachs as an Analyst in the Technology Division.

Working as an SLA sincerely helped sharpen a lot of skills I currently utilize in my current day job. One of those skills include my ability to effectively communicate specific matters about a subject to groups and individuals.

The SLA role also ensured I didn't slow down in my pursuit for more knowledge and always stayed ahead of my classes. There's always a small number of students I support who also stay ahead and always look up to me to help them better understand some topics. Being an SLA certainly helped nurturing this character.

A piece of advice for students going on a work placement would be to learn to ask the right questions. At Goldman Sachs, I've discovered that people are always happy to meet with you over a meal or a drink. **The key is to ask the right questions."**



Povilas Urbonas
(BSc Computer Science)

Povilas is an SLA who got a **placement at Rolls-Royce.**

"During the second year I did several projects. First and most challenging project was to design a robot from scratch for "EUROBOT 2017 UK" competition.

Working in a team with my wife (Rimma Chepik, First year Computer Science), we managed to reach the semi-quarter final and became the best MDX team competing against other UK teams.

While I worked as an SLA I shared my experiences with students and encouraged them to work in groups. **The role gave me an invaluable experience and improved my self-confidence which helped me a lot during my search for a work placement.**

It was quite challenging to do everything on time: hard studying, SLA job, Eurobot UK, interviews with companies for placements. I also supervised the project of first-year students for The First Year Challenge Award in Computing for 2017 and "Student of the Year". It all paid off as I now have a placement at Rolls-Royce,



Matt Lade (SSLA Art & Design)

Matt is a Senior SLA for Art & Design and an SLA for 3D Animation and Games and has showcased work at a major gaming event.

"For my Final Major Project during my last year of BA 3D Animation & Games I knew I wanted to work with virtual reality. As the university bought a lot of VR headsets for the course, I immediately realised the potential of this technology, not only within gaming but also entertainment and education industries.

An opportunity came up for MDX students working with games to show at EGX Rezzed, one of the largest gaming events in the UK. I hadn't made a full game before and I had just two weeks to do it. **Thanks to my role as SSLA, I have improved my scheduling skills and managed to get a fully working build of the game in time.**

The game, **SolVR**, was incredibly well received by everyone who played it at the event. I was interviewed multiple times, given business cards for future work and VR consultation. **The most exciting part was when HTC and Oculus Product Managers approached me and took copies of my game.** I have been given free VR hardware to implement into my game and develop future games and experiences on.

Thanks to being an SLA for 2 years I was able to practise and develop my subject specific skills. Also thanks to the university for getting VR headsets, I was able to research its possibilities so early on a gave me knowledge that is heavily sought after in the industry now." - **Matt Lade (SSLA Art & Design)**



Awards Ceremony To celebrate the amazing work of all the SLAs

This year, the SLA Awards Ceremony was a masquerade themed event inspired by the 16th century Renaissance particularly popular in Venice. "An evening to remember" bringing together all the SLAs, a night of delicious and exotic food choice, acoustic resonance - modern jazz performances, great VR experiences pulling you into a whole new immersive world. I had fun with my fellow SLAs and truly enjoyed such an inspiring keynote address that evening from Dame Ritterman (The Chancellor of Middlesex University). I will always remember this experience even beyond life at Middlesex University! At the same time, I am glad and proud to be part of the SLA scheme.- **Dhana Letchmanan (SSLA Health and Education)**



Breaking News!

Due to our hard work and efforts, SLAs contributed to the Silver Medal awarded by TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework). The SLA scheme has been highlighted as a key factor to student engagement. Well done us!

For the full breakdown of the award, **click our TEF Silver Medal below.**



Do Not Forget

- Reflective Practice
- Use Effective Communication Skills
- Refer Students to Other Student Support Services
- SLAs Facilitate and Do Not Teach
- SLAs Are Not Counsellors
- SLAs Are Students and Should Keep on Top of Their Workload
- SLAs Work Collaboratively with Academics
- SLAs Are the Best!



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