

# THE STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANT

## WELCOME

- Welcome to the first issue of the Student Learning Assistant Newsletter. The Newsletter is aimed at all Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) and the wider university community of academic and administrative staff who are involved in the SLA scheme. The idea 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.
- All your comments and feedback are appreciated. Please email [s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.ajayi@mdx.ac.uk) for any contributions, feedback and comments. Deadline for contributions for Issue 2 is March 18, 2011.

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## Famous Quote

"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education"

Mark Twain

## SLA GET-TOGETHER, DEC 2010

**SLAs took time off their busy schedules to attend the Christmas Soiree on Tuesday December 7, 2010.**

The event began with a fantastic "Getting To Know You" session where SLAs introduced themselves to each other and found out what was happening in other courses and schools. This activity was one of the main highlights of the evening as the SLAs took to the floor, looking for new faces and making use of the opportunity to interact.

After the informal introductions, the SLAs sat in groups based on the modules they supported to reflect on the highs and lows of the autumn term. The four main themes discussed were: Format of SLA sessions; Good Practice; Areas to improve; Future Training. Each group provided feedback to the entire team. It was enlightening to note that SLAs were used in different ways across the university.



Cross-section of SLAs discussing highlights of the semester

Most SLAs worked in seminar, lab and workshop settings while some had a prominent presence during lectures. A number of SLAs ran their own PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) sessions or office hours. However some SLAs felt they had a lot more to offer and the brainstorming sessions provided SLAs with different ideas and options.

The latter part of the evening was spent tucking into the

Christmas Menu and having loads of fun in pleasant company.

The SLAs really enjoyed the meeting as many comments echoed Sadaf Khan's below:

"I found the Get-Together really good fun, as all SLAs came together and we shared our experience with each other."

## "MY SLAS ARE INVALUABLE EXTRA PAIRS OF HANDS" ZAINAB KAZIM

**Zainab Kazim, Senior Lecturer for Statistics modules talks to us about her SLAs:**

This academic year, I invited my best students from the previous year to become SLAs. In my large lectures my SLAs become invaluable extra pairs of hands. This is

particularly the case when the class is set exercises to attempt during class time. My SLAs are well-trained, enthusiastic and dedicated and most importantly, they use their initiative!

For students in general and in particular students who are struggling with the mod-

ule, the office hours of the SLAs provide an excellent opportunity to clarify issues on a one-to-one basis.

There's only one catch – last year my students would tell me what a wonderful lecturer I was ... this year they tell me how wonderful my SLAs are!



**Magdalena Firek**  
English Language SLA

My family and friends describe me as a high-spirited perfectionist who is always quick to grasp new ideas. I like being part of a successful and productive team, but I am also able to work well on my own initiative and can demonstrate the high levels of motivation required to meet the tightest of deadlines.

**Why I became an SLA**

I decided to join the SLA Scheme, because I thought it would be extremely important for new students to get the support, which I did not have when I was in my first year. The Scheme helps students improve their academic performance as well as their confidence and study habits. The fact that I was chosen and recommended by one of my professors to become an SLA makes me feel happy, but also proud and completed as a student. I do not want to lose this opportunity or disappoint the students, so I put my heart into this work to make the most out of it.



**Bola Oyedokun**  
Foundation Computing SLA

I am a very warm, friendly and sociable person. The fact that there is a success behind every hard work keeps me going. Even though sometimes, success doesn't seem possible, I never give up, I still remain focused, hoping that one day I will achieve my ultimate goal.

**My Success Formula**

Cooperation, Communication, Consciousness:(know where you are coming from and where you are going to) .

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SLAS.... (ADAPTED FROM SLA PROFILES)



**Zahra M. Rehman**  
Accounting SLA

Success motivates me the most, and the sheer satisfaction that is felt afterwards. I always give 100% in whatever I am committed to, and aim to never perform below that standard. I never do things by halves, and always give my all. I am predicted a First Class Honours in Accounting and Finance, and after graduation I would ideally like to work in a firm of Chartered Accountants in Central London, whilst studying with a professional board such as the ACCA or ACA.

**My Advice to new students**

Attend all lectures, labs and workshops, complete all work for seminars, attend any mock exams, and try and complete any extra work found on Oasis. Even though this is all very time consuming, it will all pay off in the future. Make sure to try your best to achieve good results, and not stress! And also make use of my services as an SLA, I am here to help.



**Adam English**  
Traditional Chinese Medicine SLA

I'm hard working at the best of times, and curious with an insatiable desire to learn at the worst. I can still remember a small amount of Welsh (Cymreig), as well as French and German from my GCSE studies. Prior to starting at Middlesex, I had learned about 500-600 Chinese characters (Hanzi), and could hold a good conversation in Mandarin. Although unpractised for a few years, I can still speak a little.

Due to my A-level grades, I was granted an Achievement Scholarship here at Middlesex, which I have kept since the first year. I am on track to achieving First Class Honours in my course of study. And will hopefully pursue a master afterwards.

**My Success Formula**

It pays to work hard, and the harder you work, the more achieved.



**Kylie Francis**  
Law SLA

I am an outgoing and bubbly person and always enjoy learning new things. The idea of attaining a successful career as a result of my hard work and dedication highly motivates me. My first and only language is English. I enjoy reading, sports and meeting new people. My dream job would be a barrister, helping to put away criminals.

**Why I became an SLA**

I became an SLA in order to encourage and assist students as much as I can. I also enjoy using my own knowledge to help others achieve. I also knew it would boost my confidence immensely and help me to do more public speaking. It is also a great asset to include on my CV.



**Helena Kvepa**  
Sports SLA

I am a 25 years old student from a small but proud country in the Eastern Europe – Latvia. My mother tongue is Latvian; I am quite good at English and know a little bit of Russian and Ger-

man. It helps me to make new friends around the World! I am both studying and working in Middlesex University; you will see me arriving on my green bicycle – my “public transport” and hobby.

**Why I became an SLA**

I became an SLA because I received good support in my first year and wanted to give something back. I know how hard it is for the student from other countries to fit in, get used to other customs and study in a different language. I wanted to help students like me to get through their 1st year.

**My Advice to new students**

Always ask if you need help! I don't know a single person in Middlesex University who will refuse if they have at least a minute.



**Georgina Wright**  
Education SLA

I am a friendly, caring, motivated individual who enjoys helping others. I would consider myself hard working but also know how to have fun. Success motivates me and I love to feel I have achieved. My dream job is to become a teacher and make a positive difference in as many peoples lives as possible, no matter how big or small.

**My Success Formula**

What you put in = what you get out (whether it be a good grades or a deeper understanding).

# SLA EVENTS IN PICTURES



Law SLAs



SLAs in Management



Accounting SLAs



SLAs from Sports and Computing



SLAs pose for group photograph



Adi (CMT1314 SLA) feeds back to SLAs



LDU SLAs



"Getting to know more about you"



SLAs brainstorm in teams

*“ The gathering created an opportunity for us to brainstorm and to discuss issues affecting SLAs and also provided suggestions on how to resolve any concerns. “*

## REFLECTIONS.....

*“The Get-Together was very successful and I enjoyed every bit of it as it was possible to meet other SLAs from other schools across the campuses and other SLAs working at the LDU Learning Lounge.*

*The gathering created an opportunity for us to brainstorm and to discuss issues affecting SLAs and also pro-*

*vided suggestions on how to resolve any concerns. It also gave me the opportunity to learn from other SLAs on how they successfully deal with different situations, such as dealing with difficult students. Finally, it boosted my confidence as through the discussions, I have made it mandatory to implement some of the useful points raised, during my shifts or*



*even in my daily activities.”*

**Mary Lucy Abah (circled)  
LDU/Law SLA**



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.

To find out more about SLAs, visit <http://www.24-7.mdx.ac.uk/ldu/sla>

## TRAINING EVENT

Effective Writing and  
Communication

Wednesday, February

9, 2011, Hendon

16:00-20:00

### *Lest we forget...*

- *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://www.24-7.mdx.ac.uk/counsel/index.htm>*
- *SLAs are students and should keep on top of own workload*
- *SLAs work collaboratively with Academics*
- *SLAs are the best. Let this reflect in all aspects of our education.*

## TESTIMONIES

Having worked for the University previously in mentoring, I can definitely vouch for the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning. The SLAs from the School of Health and Social Sciences are recruited from the most talented and dedicated of students, their role to manage and facilitate learning as part of ongoing practices within sport. The SLA scheme at the School of Health and Social Sciences also aimed at increasing engagement and improving the student learning experience, through aiding retention, and encouraging autonomy through increased involvement and ownership of learning. What's more the SLAs lead by example, ensuring that they provide exemplary service to our students, through the use of applied knowledge and skills-based practice. In return they also receive development in leadership, teamwork, interpersonal, communication, facilitation and coaching skills highly valued by employers, with a chance to become a member of a community of practice that also receives on-going training and sharing experiences with other facilitators. The benefits to academic staff in providing regular feedback on how course content is being received and any issues raised by students.

By Luke Heath BA (Hons), BSc (Hons)

Academic Assistant, School of Health and Social Science and London Sports Institute

## Alumni News

My name is Arron Laverty and I am a Middlesex graduate. I graduated in July 2010 with a Degree in Law. I currently work for the university as an Academic Assistant in the Law department. I am also studying part time doing a Masters in Employment Law with the hope of progressing into either an academic or a barrister. During my final year of my degree I was one of the students assisting in the pilot of the SLA scheme. During my time as an SLA I would assist the lecturer in running workshops. This involved me taking a plan of the session which the lecturer provided and then preparing the session and running it. I had around 25 students a week and over the year I learnt new skills and enhanced so many other skills such as time keeping, preparation and being more of a listener. It enhanced my confidence and had a positive effect on my own degree as I was able to transpose those skills across. Being an SLA was an extremely enjoyable and beneficial role, and many of the skills I learnt I am now using everyday in my current role. I hope you are all enjoying and benefiting from being an SLA and finding the role is enhancing your skills as much as it did mine.

## HOW WE WORK—

### LEARNER DEVELOPMENT UNIT SLA TEAM

You will see us helping out in tutorials and seminars, or you can meet us in the Learning Lounge WG 23, (Monday-Friday, 11.00 – 14.00). We are here to give advice on writing skills, and we can also advise students on how to book Academic Writing and Language workshops and tutorials & how to get numeracy and dyslexia support.

LDU SLAs also offer drop-in sessions on presentation

skills, exam practice and time management. Students can find out about successful presentation skills, effective revision, and productive working habits (to check upcoming activities, please visit our website: <http://www.24-7.mdx.ac.uk/ldu/learninglounge/index.htm>).

REMEMBER! The Lounge can be used by other SLAs for any subject specific drop-in sessions. So if you feel you have problems with room



SLAs at work in the Learner Development Unit's Learning Lounge

bookings, just drop by and we will fit you in our timetable.