

Student Leadership Accreditation

A Schools' Introduction

The Student Leadership Accreditation (SLA) is an innovative way of recognising students' leadership skills and the impact they have in the classroom, across the school and in the wider community.

Across the SSAT's network, students of all ages are all engaged in exciting, radical and challenging activities. Whilst many of these carry recognition in their own right, the SLA and skills of leadership encompass all activities students are engaged in. SSAT knows that when students have a voice, leadership has a real impact. Individual students learn more effectively, classroom relationships are strengthened, and school-wide transformation is made possible.

The SLA was developed by students, for students, in key partnership with teachers, HE and FE institutions and employers. Together they identified ten key skills that young people need to be successful leaders, and grouped them into three core themes:

- Developing myself
- Contributing to my community
- Working with others

These skills and themes are grouped into a self-assessment framework, which can be adapted to reflect the schools context and ethos. Students assess themselves against this framework and then actively seek opportunities to advance themselves and gather evidence to showcase their new skills in a portfolio. Students can work towards the SLA at three levels: bronze, silver and gold. Unlike other awards, students peer assess each other's portfolios as well as being externally moderated, ensuring the process both reinforces and rewards meaningful student leadership.

What are the benefits of the SLA?

For Students

The SLA was developed 'by students, for students', and it is the focus on the individual that makes the award so popular across many schools. As well as the prestige of accreditation, the process that students go through in becoming accredited is of great benefit. This process encourages students to:

- Critically self-reflect on their own skills as leaders
- Work collaboratively to plan how they will meet the criteria and evidence it
- Organise and structure their evidence
- Peer assess others' work against criteria
- Aspire to take on increasingly challenging leadership responsibilities

Many of the skills students use in this process, reinforce key learning competences in the classroom, building on work by Dylan William, Guy Claxton and David Hargreaves. The award itself provides valuable evidence of students' all round achievements when applying for colleges, universities or jobs.

For School

What the SLA strength is its flexibility for staff, allowing schools to adapt it to their needs. Schools can either use the pre-designed criteria, or develop their own school-specific criteria, with guidance for SSAT. Schools use the SLA to:

- Engage more students – engagement is the first step in the co-constructive cycle, allowing students to become autonomous learners
- Celebrate achievements beyond results – students outcomes shouldn't be limited to just levels and grades
- Provide recognition for students' leadership abilities - research shows that recognition of non-academic achievement is a 'hook' for underperforming students
- Give structure to the school's student voice and leadership programme – this programmes student voice and student leadership and school council, ensuring students are more holistically catered for and therefore improvements can be made in the classroom

What activities can be accredited?

There is no set of prescribed activities that are worthy of accreditation. Providing the students meet the criteria, as assessed by their peers (and staff initially), bronze, silver and gold awards can be achieved.

There are a number of student impact programmes led generically in most schools, other educational establishments and some bespoke Carr Hill activities. The SLA is not an alternative to these, but rather provides formal acknowledgment of the impact that these activities have for the students who are already engaged in them. Examples include:

- School Council
- Students as Learning Partners
- Peer Mentoring
- Student Department Representatives
- Sports and Games
- Charity / Volunteer Work
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Sports Leaders
- ASDAN
- The Prince's Trust
- Leadership in Extra-Curricular Clubs