What is Supplemental Instruction?

Definition
Supplemental Instruction is a voluntary academic assistance program that utilizes peer-led group study to help students succeed in traditionally difficult courses—those with high unsuccessful completion rates (Ds, Fs, and Ws). SI targets tough courses, which over time have demonstrated their difficulty regardless of the faculty who teach them or the material that is used. These courses are difficult for many students and are deemed “traditionally difficult.”

The SI sessions are facilitated by SI Leaders, peer students who have previously completed the targeted course and have demonstrated competency. The SI sessions can be best described as “super group tutoring” wherein the SI Leader facilitates group study strategies and collaborative study techniques specific to the course.

SI and tutoring, however differ greatly. Whereas tutoring supports a general subject like Biology, SI supports specific courses and sections. Moreover, the SI Leader is paid to attend the targeted class and designs the SI sessions based on the lectures.

Each week, SI Leaders offer regularly scheduled SI sessions, which are held on campus in designated academic buildings. SI Leaders promote their sessions as “guaranteed study time” because by attending SI students have an opportunity to meet with classmates outside of class and engage themselves in the course material. During a typical SI session, students engage in collaborative learning, compare and clarify lecture notes, review textbook readings, and discuss key course concepts. SI also provides an opportunity to complete study activities while developing study skills specific to the course.

While it is important to know exactly what SI is, it is equally important to understand that SI is not a remedial program for three important reasons:

1) SI supports high-risk courses rather than high-risk students
2) All students enrolled in a targeted class are encouraged to attend SI—not just those struggling
3) SI starts with the first day of classes and continues to the end of the term
Purpose
Supplemental Instruction has a threefold purpose to:

1) Reduce rates of attrition within targeted historically difficult courses
2) Improve student understanding of concepts in targeted historically difficult courses (measured in terms of higher grades)
3) Increase the graduation rates of students

Goal and Objectives
The goal of SI is to help students become independent learners; objectives of such are to:

- Understand what to learn and how to learn
- Successfully complete the course by earning an A, B, or C
- Develop transferable study skills

With regular attendance, SI aims to help students improve their class standing by one-half to one full letter grade. To accomplish this, SI helps students to:

- Understand and plan for the demand of college-level courses
- Gain problem-solving experience through trial and error
- Become more actively involved in the course
- Develop more effective study skills

SI History
SI is the brainchild of Dr. Deanna Martin from the University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC). In 1973 Dr. Martin developed the SI Model in response to her university’s concern regarding the high failure rate among minorities in medical school. Initial SI evaluation results were so impressive, the program quickly spread to UMKC’s health and professional schools and soon after that throughout the entire university. Other schools started their own SI programs and by 1981 the U.S. Department of Education named SI an Exemplary Education Program. Very few post-secondary programs hold such a distinction. Today, over 1800 institutions in the United States and 27 countries have implemented SI on their campuses.
The Role of the SI Leader
SI Leaders serve as peer facilitators for SI session group study. This role requires SI Leaders to attend the targeted course (similar to auditing) to ensure constant and consistent knowledge of the lecture and classroom expectations. The SI Leader’s role in the classroom is to model effective classroom behavior and then transfer that knowledge to the SI session. To form the basis of their SI sessions, SI Leaders combine specific study skills with key course content, integrating what to learn with how to learn.

The SI Leader is not in the classroom to answer questions or serve any official capacity such as proctoring tests; however, he/she does have the following responsibilities:

1. Attend all lectures
2. Be a visible presence to the students in the class
3. Act as a model student during lectures—listen and take notes
4. Read assigned texts and supplementary materials
5. Develop and facilitate three hours of regular study sessions per week
6. Promote their SI sessions
7. Communication with students to encourage participation
8. Communicate with faculty to discuss SI session strategies and activities
9. Communicate with the Coordinator of SI and attend SI in-service training

During the First Two Week of Classes
During the first week of classes the SI Leader makes an introductory SI announcement about what it is and how it works. The SI Leader also announces his/her tentative SI session schedule for the term. Throughout the term, the SI Leader makes weekly SI announcements to remind students about SI and also encourage participation, as attendance in SI is voluntary.

SI Sessions and the Study Schedule
SI sessions are the perfect platform for SI Leaders to integrate what to learn with how to learn. As they review course material, students in SI not only develop study skills strategies specific to the course, they also learn to focus their study efforts. A helpful example is the student who struggles to write down every word the instructor says during lecture. SI can help the student to not only develop note-taking skills but also aid him/her to focus on important and key information.

Students attend SI on a voluntary basis and no effort is made to segregate them based on academic ability. Because of that, SI enjoys a non-remedial, non-threatening, non-punitive image. SI Leaders conduct three (one-hour) sessions per week, and because attendance in SI is voluntary, students can attend as often as they wish.
Management of SI Leaders
The Student Success Center will administer the program. The Coordinator of SI is responsible for training, monitoring, and supervising the SI Leaders, including their attendance to class and SI sessions. Additionally, three Graduate Assistants in the Student Success Center assist in the management process. If faculty members are concerned about something they see or hear regarding the SI Leader, they should alert Rachel Brunson, the Coordinator of SI by phone (803-777-8609) or email (brunsora@mailbox.sc.edu).

The Coordinator and Graduate Assistants monitor the on-the-job performance of SI Leaders, and provide feedback in a variety of ways: through SI session observations, SI session plan evaluations, mid-semester evaluations, and bi-weekly staff meetings.

At the end of each semester, the Coordinator evaluates the SI Leader’s progress and performance in a variety of ways:

- SI Participant Evaluations
- SI Faculty Surveys
- SI Leader Self-Assessments

SI and Academic Quality
Support of SI in no way suggests reducing the requirements of the course to make it easier for students to pass. SI attempts to help students figure out how to be successful in difficult courses. The SI Leader knows how to be successful because of his/her experience in the course and discipline. SI Leaders know the following:

- How and what to study
- What material to focus on
- How to interpret the instructor’s expectations

Moreover, the SI Leader knows which successful strategies will facilitate all of these things. In turn, the SI Leader will pass on his/her “know how” to students in the class so they can be successful as well.

Faculty Expectations
For SI to achieve its highest potential effectiveness, we ask faculty to provide assistance in a few areas, particularly a few minutes at the start of lecture for SI announcements. During the first week of classes, the SI Leader makes an announcement, introducing SI and describing the availability of SI sessions. Subsequent weekly announcements remind students of the SI schedule and encourage participation.

Faculty endorsement of SI for all students, not just those who struggle, also helps to eliminate the stigma that only those who are failing the course should attend. The combination of high and low performing students in SI provides a collaborative and less threatening environment where students learn from each other in a more intimate setting.
Lastly, faculty can support SI by mentioning the program every now and then during lecture. SI prompts from faculty remind students of its availability and encourage participation in a positive manner. The following are various ways faculty members can support and promote SI:

- Make announcements about SI (classroom, syllabus, Blackboard)
- Allow the SI Leader to make weekly class announcements and send emails
- Post the SI session schedule on Blackboard

SI Leaders are mandated to keep faculty involved in the SI Program with meetings. The purpose of these visits is to inform faculty of questions students are asking about particular content, point out areas where the students are struggling, discuss the level of class participation, and offer faculty advance review of SI session material.

**How is the SI Leader different from a GA or a TA?**

SI Leaders are different from graduate assistants or teaching assistants in a number of categories. The chart below emphasizes these differences and helps to explain why it's important to maintain this key element of the SI Model, which dictates use of peer students as SI Leaders.

**SI Leaders**

- Model students who do not profess to know it all – if an SI Leader doesn’t know the answer to a student’s question, he/she will model effective research methods and/or the importance of utilizing the instructor’s office hours
- Relate to students on their level
- Primary goal is to model to others in the class how to be successful by integrating specific study skills with course content, thus promoting transferable skills
- Encourage and elicit group participation with collaborative learning techniques
- Student-oriented—focused on areas of concerns from a student’s perspective
- Patient and willing to try various strategies to help students understand course material
- Do not lecture but direct collaborative learning exercises, encouraging students to take responsibility for the process and application of course material

**Graduate Assistants or Teaching Assistants**

- Content specialists who have excelled in that field
- Considered academic elite
- Primary goal is to teach the subject matter
- Professor-oriented
- Re-lecture or re-teach classroom material
FACULTY GUIDE TO SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION (SI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>SI Leader</th>
<th>GA/TA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Model Student</td>
<td>Content Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Helps students to be successful</td>
<td>Teaches subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matter only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Group Participation/</td>
<td>Passive learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>in response to instructor’s queries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Student-Oriented</td>
<td>Professor-Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Duties</td>
<td>Leads group—Leaves teaching to professor</td>
<td>Re-lectures or re-teaches group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How does SI differ from the traditional study group?**

There are numerous things to examine when comparing SI to what most consider when they think of traditional study groups. The chart and data below highlight several areas and explain the preference for SI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NON-SI</th>
<th>SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>No class attendance</td>
<td>Mandatory class attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Leader</td>
<td>Expert/Authority</td>
<td>Model Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Little or no training</td>
<td>Extensive Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Content-oriented only</td>
<td>Content <em>and</em> Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>No formal evaluation</td>
<td>Rigorous evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Leaders ask and answer questions</td>
<td>Students ask and answer questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Selection</td>
<td>Restricted to select students in the course</td>
<td>Open to all students enrolled in the targeted course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attendance
Unlike traditional study groups, SI Leaders are required to attend all classes and read all assigned text.

Study Leader
While SI Leaders demonstrate proficiency in the content area, they also model the learning processes necessary for content mastery. SI Leaders function as model students rather than authority figures. They are trained to integrate specific study skills with the course content.

Training
SI Leaders must meet the following qualifications:

- Freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior standing (no transfer or AP credit counted)
- 3.0 GPA minimum
- Grade of A in the selected course
- Completion of SI Leader application
- References from faculty
- Group and individual interviews
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Completion of SI training

In addition to exhibiting course competency, all SI Leaders must complete an intensive two-day training in the following areas:

- Group facilitation processes
- Collaborative learning techniques
- Assessment techniques
- Study skills strategies and creative session activities
- Implementation of Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Designing and organizing SI session plans
- Working with faculty
Frequently Asked Questions and Concerns

Why my course?
SI typically supports 100- and 200-level introductory, core curriculum courses. SI is part of a class for several reasons, none of which have anything to do with faculty ability to teach. The primary reason is because the class is a historically difficult course wherein many students struggle and fail, thus producing a high DFW rate for the course. The focus of SI is the difficulty inherent within the course material and concepts.

Why do students struggle?
There are a number of factors to consider. Some students have difficulty in certain courses because the subject was not taught, or it was taught differently, in high school. For others, the depth and breadth of the course make it difficult for students to organize; the material may be too conceptual when they are used to dealing with things on a more concrete level. Still others may have difficulty with the class size, sensing anonymity and obscurity with a new classroom format and structure. The rigors of college-level courses often catch students off-guard. And lastly, some students may have poor study skills.

How much work will it be for me to have SI support?
SI is completely maintained and coordinated through the Student Success Center. All we ask of faculty in SI-supported classes is that they provide the following:

- A few minutes at the beginning of class for the SI Leader to make announcements
- Time to meet with the SI Leader, allowing him/her to keep faculty apprised of what’s happening in the SI sessions
- If needed, test/exam scores for the students enrolled in the course

Will I have to change my teaching style?
SI attempts to help students learn how to be successful in the course, regardless of the way you teach. It is not our intention to dictate how you should teach your class. SI will support your teaching.

The SI Leader will provide you with student feedback on a weekly basis. Because they regularly meet with the students in smaller groups, the SI Leaders may have insight into concepts that are troubling students, misunderstood test questions, or unclear assignments. If you would like, your SI Leader can share this information with you. Understand, however, this information is not intended to be a criticism of your teaching.

Will SI Leaders just help students complete their homework?
SI Leaders do not facilitate the study groups so students can complete homework together, write group papers, or complete take-home exams. On the contrary, the purpose of SI is to help students become successful and independent learners. By doing their work for them, SI Leaders run the risk of making the students believe that it is not necessary for them to understand the work or how to go about completing their assignments. Instead, SI Leaders may discuss typical problems, create new problems, or work problems that were not assigned. SI Leaders may discuss how to organize material, how to prepare for assignments or exams, and how to develop problem-solving abilities.
SI is intended to supplement what the students do on their own time. After attending SI sessions, students should be better prepared to work problems alone, write a clear paper, or prepare for an exam. SI supports students, not by doing the work for them, but by helping them figure out how to do it successfully on their own.

**What goes on during SI sessions?**
A typical SI session is an hour-long meeting in a classroom on campus and might include a review of lecture and assigned readings, group work and discussion, problem-solving and critical thinking activities, or a mock exam. The SI Leader’s primary focus is to assist students in understanding the course material while helping them to develop effective study skills that are applicable to the content. The SI Leaders will never structure SI sessions as a forum to re-lecture to students who missed class.

**Isn’t SI simply a test preparation study group?**
No. While some students may attend SI prior to an exam, national data suggests that students who regularly attend SI improve their class standing by one-half to one whole letter grade. With this understanding, SI Leaders constantly promote SI as guaranteed study time, encouraging student to participate in SI on a weekly basis.

**What does the SI Leader do in my class?**
The SI Leader’s class attendance has a twofold purpose:

1) To model effective classroom behavior by arriving on time, listening, taking copious lecture notes, reading assigned chapters prior to lecture, completing required assignments, and observing what’s happening in the classroom.
2) The information the SI Leader gathers helps him/her gain a sense of what you expect from your students regarding the concepts and ideas you emphasize in lecture. It also helps the SI Leader to process the information he/she will use during SI.

**What is the SI Leader NOT permitted to do?**
The SI Leader is NOT available for grading exams or papers, or to proctor exams. As a rule, we request that you not ask SI Leaders to run copies and errands or to distribute exams, graded papers, and other class literature. It’s important for the SI Leader to maintain his/her peer status among the students in the class. SI Leaders are paid to attend class, keep up with the material, and run study group sessions.

SI Leaders typically do not answer questions you ask the class; they are not there as a student. The SI Leader is in class to get a better sense of the areas emphasized during lectures so that they can design and develop more focused SI sessions.

The SI Leader is NOT permitted to lecture for you, help you in constructing exam items, or participate in determining a student’s grade. The SI Leader is not a teacher. To assume that they could fill in would place them in a teaching role and that is not where they need to be.
Can I give extra credit for SI attendance?
We do not support providing extra credit to students for attending an SI session for the following three reasons:

1) Some students may not be able to attend SI because of schedule conflicts. As a result these students would have no way to participate in the extra credit.
2) Asking the SI Leaders to police the sign-in sheet gives conflicting messages. For example, if a person attends the SI session for five minutes—signs in and then leaves—should the SI Leader report or ignore it? Having to monitor attendance in such a way takes the SI Leader’s attention away from the purpose of SI.
3) In an attempt to analyze the effects of SI participation, it would be undesirable to have a student’s grade artificially enhanced by “bonus points” given for merely having a name show up on an attendance sheet. If there is any effect to be gained through SI attendance, we would like to be able to say with greater confidence that it was the result of what was experienced during SI.

What’s the difference between SI Leaders and tutors?
For all intents and purposes, SI Leaders are tutors; however, there are a number of things that differentiate the two:

- Instead of working one-on-one within a particular subject (e.g., biology), SI Leaders support a specific course
- SI Leaders also attend class with the students and then develop SI sessions that support or supplement the lectures for that course
- Whereas students go for tutoring with particular questions in mind, SI Leaders design and facilitate their SI session agenda, focusing on key course concepts

How can students find SI sessions?
SI support is promoted in a variety of ways: SI Leaders make announcements reminding students of the session schedule and offering “teasers” about SI session activities. Additionally, the master SI session schedule is always posted on the SI website. Students can also seek additional information about SI (session locations, days, and times) in the following ways:

1) Visit the Student Success Center
2) Visit the SSC website: http://www.sa.sc.edu/ssc/
3) Contact the Coordinator of SI: brunsora@mailbox.sc.edu

Is the Student Success Center SI program interested in SI Leader referrals?
Absolutely! We use a variety of publicity methods to attract qualified students for SI Leader positions, but we need help from faculty members. Faculty recommendations and referrals are our most important and valuable source of applicants.
Contact Information

Please contact the Coordinator of Supplemental Instruction with any questions, concerns, or feedback throughout the semester.

Rachel Brunson
Coordinator of Supplemental Instruction
Student Success Center | Thomas Cooper Library
brunsora@mailbox.sc.edu | (830) 777-8609