UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Learning Center

Supplemental Instruction (SI) Faculty Guide

This guide was adapted for the Learning Center

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 difficulty regardless of the faculty who teach them or the material that is used. These courses are challenging for many students and are deemed "high-risk."

SI Sessions are facilitated by SI Leaders, undergraduate students who have previously completed the targeted course and have demonstrated competency. SI Sessions can be described as "super group tutoring" wherein the SI Leader facilitates group study strategies and collaborative learning techniques specific to the course.

Each week, SI Leaders offer regularly-scheduled SI Sessions, which are commonly held on campus in designated academic buildings. SI Leaders promote their sessions as "guaranteed study time" because by attending, students have an opportunity to meet with classmates outside of class and actively engage themselves in 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 activities that develop course-specific study skills.

Purpose Supplemental Instruction has a threefold purpose, to:	1. Reduce rates of attrition within targeted high-risk courses
	2. Improve student understanding of concepts (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; correlating objectives 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
Outcomes 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, throughout the entire university. Other institutions 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 30 countries have implemented SI. More information can be found on the International Center for Supplemental Instruction's website here: http://info.umkc.edu/si/

The Role of the SI Leader

SI Leaders serve as peer educators. This role requires them to attend all class meetings of the targeted course to ensure they have 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 SI Sessions. 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.*

SI Leaders are not in the classroom to answer questions or serve in any official capacity such as proctoring tests or grading; however, they do 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 2-3 hours of regular study sessions per week
6. Promote their SI Sessions
7. Communicate with students to encouragement participation
8. Communicate with faculty to discuss SI Session strategies and activities
9. Communicate with SI Staff and attend SI in-service training

Beginning of the Semester

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 their tentative SI Session schedule for the term and/or polls for student availability. 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.

Learn

Lead   Succeed
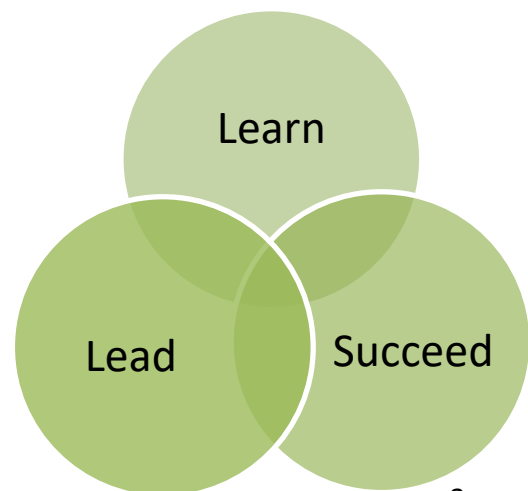
SI Sessions and the Study Schedule

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, but also learn to focus their study efforts. Students attend SI on a voluntary basis and no effort is made to segregate them based on academic ability. Because of that, SI participants enjoy a non-remedial, non-threatening, and non-punitive experience.

Management of SI Leaders

The Learning Center administers the program. SI Staff is responsible for training, monitoring, and supervising SI Leaders, including their attendance to class and SI Sessions. If faculty members are concerned about something they see or hear regarding their assigned SI Leader, they should alert *Khulan Zagd, Learning Center Assistant Director*.

Mid-Semester Evaluations

At the mid-point of each semester, SI Staff evaluate the SI Leader's progress and performance in a variety of ways:
- SI Participant Evaluations
- SI Faculty Evaluation
- SI Leader Self-Assessments

Contact Information

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any additional questions, concerns, or feedback throughout the semester:

Khulan Zagd
Assistant Director
The Learning Center
(415) 422-2518
kzagd@usfca.edu

SI Staff monitor the on-the-job performance of SI Leaders and provide feedback in a variety of ways throughout the course of the semester:
- SI Session Observations
- SI Session Plan Evaluations
- Mid-Semester Evaluations
- Bi-weekly Staff Meetings

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 *self-regulate* how to be successful in difficult courses. The SI Leader knows how to be successful because of their experience in the course and their demonstrated skills and discipline with:
- 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 their "know how" to students in the class so they can be successful, as well.

Faculty Expectations

SI Leaders are required to keep faculty involved in the SI Program with regular meetings and communication. 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 identify ways to work together to promote attendance and offer faculty advanced review of SI Session materials.

SI Leader Guidebook

During training the Learning Center provides each SI Leader with a guidebook (serves as a training manual for the position), which contains information about building positive relationships with professors and how to maintain communication throughout the semester.

Building a Positive Relationship with Your Professor

What does my professor need?
- ✓ An understanding of the SI Program
- ✓ An understanding of the SI Leader role

What is my professor's role with SI?
- ✓ To encourage students to attend my SI Sessions on a regular basis
- ✓ To be available to answer questions and support me in my SI Leader role

What steps can I take to build a positive relationship with my professor?
- ✓ Introduce myself to my professor during the first week of classes and explain my role in the class
  - o *Note: The Learning Center Assistant Director has communicated with your professors prior to the first day of classes*
  - o All SI Leaders will be required to complete a **mutual expectations form** with their professor during the first week of classes (provided during SI Leader Training)
- ✓ Ask my professor when he/she is available to meet during the semester.
- ✓ Ask my professor to review handouts, practice quizzes, etc. to make sure I am highlighting the concepts that the professor sees as most important for students to understand

Why is regular professor communication important?
- ✓ It ensures you are being the best resource for your students
- ✓ It involves the professor in the SI Program
- ✓ It ensures that you are meeting the professor's expectations for his/her course goals

NOTE: Please let your supervisor know if you have any concerns regarding professor communication. This is one of the most important aspects of your SI leader position and we are here to provide you with support.
Keep in mind that each professor has his/her own preferences on how much involvement he/she would like to have with the SI Program, and therefore these conversation topics are merely suggestions.

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Faculty Involvement

For SI to achieve its highest potential effectiveness, we ask faculty to provide assistance in a few areas:

-Make announcements about SI and encourage students to attend sessions "early and often" (utilize the classroom, syllabus, Canvas, etc.)
-Allow the SI Leader to make weekly class announcements and send emails
-Meet regularly with the SI Leader based on a schedule that works for both of you

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.

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 is important to maintain this key element of the SI Model, which dictates the use of peer educators as SI Leaders.

	SI Leader	**GA/TA**
Characteristic	Model Student	Content Specialist
Status	Peer	Academic Elite
Goal	Helps students to be successful	Teaches subject matter only
Mode	Group Participation/ Collaborative Learning	Passive learning in response to instructor's queries
Orientation	Student-Oriented	Professor-Oriented
Instructional Duties	Leads group—leaves teaching to professor	Re-lectures or re-teaches group

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, they will model effective research methods and/or the importance of utilizing the instructor's office hours
- Relate to students on their level
- Have the primary goal of modeling how to be successful to enrolled students in the course, by integrating specific study skills with course content and promoting transferable skills
- Encourage and elicit group participation with collaborative learning techniques
- Focus on areas of concerns from a student's perspective
- Demonstrate patience and are 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 a specific field
- Often considered academic elite
- Primary goal is to teach the subject matter
- Commonly professor-oriented rather than student-oriented
- Typically charged with re-lecturing or re-teaching classroom material

How does SI differ from the traditional study group?

The chart below includes numerous things to examine when comparing SI to what most consider when they think of traditional study groups.

	SI	**NON-SI**
Attendance	Mandatory class attendance	No class attendance
Study Leader	Model Student	Expert/Authority
Training	Extensive training	Little or no training
Orientation	Content *and* Process	Content-oriented only
Evaluation	Rigorous evaluation	No formal evaluation
Focus	Students ask and answer questions	Leaders ask and answer questions
Member Selection	Open to all students enrolled in the targeted course	Restricted to select students in the course

Attendance

Unlike traditional study groups, SI Leaders are required to attend all classes and to familiarize themselves with all assigned texts and course materials.

Leadership

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 in an effective and engaging way.

Training

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

- Group facilitation processes
- Collaborative learning techniques
- Study skills/strategies and creative session activities
- Designing and organizing SI Session Plans
- Working with faculty members

Frequently Asked Questions

Why my course?

SI typically supports 100- and 200-level introductory, core curriculum courses. SI is part of a course for several reasons, none of which have to do with faculty members' abilities to teach. The primary reason is because the class is a high-risk 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 was taught differently, in high school. For others, the depth and breadth of the course make it challenging for students to organize; the material may be too conceptual when they are accustomed to working with concepts on a more concrete level. 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 support from SI?

SI is completely maintained and coordinated by the Learning Center. All we ask of faculty in SI-supported courses is that they provide the following:

- A few minutes at the beginning of class for SI Leaders to make announcements
- Time to meet with the SI Leader, to allow them to communicate what's happening in the SI Sessions and to work together to identify ways to promote session attendance
- If needed, provide test/exam scores for the students enrolled in the course to compare attendees v. non-attendees

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 similar 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 happens 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.

Is SI simply a test preparation study group?

Definitely not, and this is a common myth to dispel. While some students may attend SI prior to an exam, national data suggests that students who regularly attend SI Sessions 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.

How can students find SI Sessions?

SI Leaders make announcements reminding students of the session schedule and offering "teasers" about SI Session activities. Students can also seek additional information about SI (session locations, days, and times) in the following ways:
1) Visiting the SI website: https://myusf.usfca.edu/lwsc/supplemental-instruction
2) Reaching out to their SI Leader

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 may provide you with student feedback on a weekly basis. Because they meet regularly with enrolled students in smaller groups, 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.

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 is happening in the classroom.
2) The information the SI Leader gathers helps them gain a sense of what you expect from your students regarding the concepts and ideas you emphasize in lectures. It also helps the SI Leader to process the information they will use during SI Sessions.

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 is important for the SI Leader to maintain their 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. Additionally, the SI Leader is NOT permitted to lecture for you, help you in constructing exam items, or participate in determining a student's grade. To assume that they could fill in for you would place them in a teaching role and that is not where they are intended 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 is the difference between an SI Leader and a tutor?

Essentially, SI Leaders *are* tutors. However, there are a number of factors that differentiate the two roles within our Learning Center:

- Instead of working one-on-one within a particular subject (i.e., Biology), SI Leaders support a specific section (or sections) of a course
- SI Leaders attend class alongside enrolled students and develop SI Sessions that support or supplement the most difficult course content of the curriculum
- Whereas students attend tutoring with particular questions in mind, SI Leaders design their SI Session plan in advance to focus on key course concepts

Is the Learning Center interested in SI Leader recommendations?

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 quite possibly our most important and valuable source for applicants.