

# FACULTY GUIDE

---

## The Essential Elements of Supplemental Instruction

The Supplemental Instruction model has proven to be successful with institutions of varying size, location, and organizational structure. The SI model can be adapted to reflect the individual needs and differences of each campus but there are certain elements of the model, which must be present to ensure the integrity of the program. They are as follows:

### **1. SI Sessions Are Peer-Facilitated**

The ideal SI leader is a student who has recently taken the class from the same instructor and received a high final subject grade (A or B). All SI leaders should be approved by the class professor for content competency. The SI leader neither relectures nor introduces new material, instead the SI leader's responsibility is to organize and add structure to the SI sessions. The responsibility for processing class material and answering questions generated by the students remains with the students. The primary function of the SI leader is to facilitate discussion among SI participants and model successful learning strategies at key moments in the SI sessions.

### **2. The SI Leader Serves as a Model Student**

The SI leader functions as "model student" of the discipline rather than an authority figure. SI leaders help students formulate and answer their own questions. This process helps students develop a more sophisticated approach to learning while maintaining the focus on content mastery.

### **3. SI Sessions Integrate Content and Learning Skills**

The SI sessions integrate the review of lecture notes, textbook readings, outside supplemental readings along with appropriate modeling of learning strategies. "*How to learn*" is embedded into SI sessions along with "*what to learn*." Through practice and mastery of effective learning strategies, students can adopt and transfer these strategies to other subjects and content areas. Collaborative learning strategies are used in SI sessions as a means of creating a more active learning environment for student participants.

### **4. The SI Leader Attends the Targeted Class Lectures**

When the SI leader attends all lecture sessions, the SI leader is knowledgeable about what is occurring in the class sessions and has an opportunity to model "good student" behavior in the subject. The SI leader's presence in the classroom also serves to market the SI program to students. The SI leader's priority during class time is to observe and review content material for sessions. Leaders should refrain from taking an authority role during class, i.e. grading/proctoring, as students need to perceive the leader as a peer.

### **5. SI Leader Receives Training**

The SI leader receives training prior to the beginning of the term. In-service training continues throughout the academic term. These training sessions include specific teaching/learning theory and strategies for facilitating group collaborative learning.

### **6. The SI Program Is Supervised**

A trained professional staff member supervises the SI leader and the SI program. Among other duties, the campus SI supervisor periodically attends SI sessions throughout the academic term and provides helpful feedback for the improvement of the program. To assure the success of the SI program, the professional staff member should have attended a SI Supervisor workshop conducted by a staff member from UMKC or another Certified Trainer.

## **7. Faculty Support the Program**

The instructor of the targeted class should both understand the SI program and support its attachment to his or her class. Faculty members generally are encouraged to find ways to fully integrate SI into the overall subject but should be allowed to choose their level of involvement with the SI program. Faculty are encouraged to play a role in selecting and screening SI leaders for content competency. Faculty should also consider how their mentoring of leaders and promotion of SI to students can support students' attendance at sessions.

## **8. Regularly Scheduled Sessions**

SI is in place from the beginning of the academic term, starting the second week of classes and running through the last day of class. Generally, two or three sessions are offered each week but the number of weekly sessions will vary depending on student demand or specific issues related to the subject. Students attend SI sessions on a voluntary basis and sessions are exclusive to peer-to-peer learning. Attendance should not be incentivized nor monitored by the course instructor to ensure students' voluntary participation. Sessions should not be attended by faculty nor mandated for student attendance to maintain a productive and peer-led learning space.

## **9. Program Evaluation**

There are two reasons to evaluate the SI program each academic term: (1) to continuously improve the overall quality of the program by gathering information about its strengths and weaknesses and, (2) to inform college administrators about the overall impact of the program. The SI program is evaluated by assessing institutional outcome measures (e.g., final subject grades, subject withdrawal rates, institutional dropout rates, institutional graduation rates). Assessment is an increasingly important issue in academic life and sometimes has a direct link to funding.

## **10. SI Targets Subjects Rather Than Students**

While education has historically created academic improvement programs that follow the medical model of attempting to diagnose students *who* may have academic difficulty, the SI program serves classes *where* a large portion of students will experience academic difficulty. SI avoids a remedial stigma by focusing on classes rather than individual students. The SI program provides systemic change in the learning environment for all students enrolled in the targeted subject. While not all students may take advantage of the voluntary service, it attracts an equal proportion of students from differing ability and cultural groups. SI does not segregate students based on prior academic performance or predictions of academic success. SI sessions work best with heterogeneous groupings of students. Participating students receive higher measures of academic achievement in comparison to their nonparticipating counterparts.

# Frequently Asked Questions by Faculty

## **What is Supplemental Instruction?**

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a learning enhancement program. SI is designed to organize and improve the ways in which students prepare for class outside of class. SI is attached to subject to provide students with a systematic and disciplined approach for processing the subject material assigned by the professor.

Through this program an SI leader is assigned to a course. This is a student who has demonstrated proficiency in a targeted subject and undergoes SI training. The SI leader attends the subject to keep up with the subject content being presented and to model effective student practices and attitudes. The SI leader schedules and conducts from two to three group meetings a week at times convenient to members of the class. During these sessions, the SI leader uses interactive learning strategies that encourage involvement, comprehension and synthesis of subject content. In addition, the SI leader will incorporate demonstrations of effective study techniques.

## **Why was my subject selected for SI?**

SI targets historically difficult subjects. In other words, this subject contains content that students consider to be challenging. SI is designed to support faculty teaching and is assigned to a subject because of *what* is being taught, *not* because of the manner in which it is being taught.

## **What will I be required to do?**

SI is not intended to create additional work for faculty. You can support SI by granting time for occasional in-class announcements and be supportive of the program by encouraging students to take advantage of SI. Faculty should avoid the suggestion that only those who do poorly will benefit. Additionally, we encourage you to:

- Assist us in selecting and approving candidates for SI leaders for your subject
- Mentor your SI leader through weekly meetings/checking-in about content competency and session planning
- Respect the non-disclosure of session participants by not asking your leader for attendance records nor attend sessions
- Avoid offering incentives for SI participation
- Communicate with the CSA regarding concerns and questions about SI leaders' performance and SI sessions

## **Why can't SI participation be disclosed to course instructors?**

SI is set up to be a voluntary program that supports students' out-of-class learning. By design, students should participate based on their own motivation to enhance their course understanding. Disclosing student participation to course instructors may inhibit students' intrinsic desire to seek support, may alternatively lead students to perceive SI as an incentivized opportunity for grade improvement, and inadvertently bias instructors' evaluation of students' course performance. In each of these instances, the productive learning environment SI strives to foster can be compromised and the overall effectiveness of SI can be negatively impacted.

## **What should I expect from the SI Leader?**

The SI leader will attend all class meetings; maintain a professional attitude about matters such as class standards, grades, and student complaints; discourage students from attending SI as a substitute for class; share SI materials with the cooperating faculty member before use, if possible; and provide feedback to the cooperating faculty member if requested to do so. Instructors are encouraged to ask leaders for general feedback on student usage throughout the semester, but requests for attendance lists and/or session visits should be avoided.

## **What should I expect from the SI Program?**

The SI coordinator(s) will cooperate with faculty in selecting candidates for SI leaders and place leaders only with the approval of the cooperating faculty member. We train all SI leaders according to established guidelines and standards; monitor the activities and presentations of SI leaders, help plan sessions and supervise their performance; provide supplies, training, in-service experiences, and consultations for SI leaders. We also provide guidance and support for faculty working with SI leaders. At any time an instructor has questions about the program, please contact the Center for Student Achievement at 410-677-4865 or visit us in the Academic Commons, Room 270.