

Supplemental Instruction Faculty Handbook



**Tutoring Center, Center for Student Success
Monmouth University**

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History of Supplemental Instruction

The Supplemental Instruction (SI) model is a peer-facilitated academic assistance program that was originally developed by Dr. Deanna Martin in 1973 at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, with the overall goal of identifying and supporting the most challenging courses for students. SI integrates how to learn with what to learn, incorporating collaborative learning strategies with course content. Because of its proven success in increasing student performance and retention, SI is now offered at over 1,500 academic institutions around the world. Studies show that students who attend SI sessions earn statistically higher final course grades than those students who do not attend, even among students who are under-prepared when they enter the course (Congos, Langsam, & Schoeps, 1997).

What Makes Supplemental Instruction Different?

- **SI Targets Subjects Rather Than Students**

The SI model targets traditionally difficult academic subjects—those that have a high rate of D or F grades and withdrawals—and provides regularly scheduled, out-of-class, peer-facilitated study sessions. SI does not identify high-risk students, but rather identifies historically difficult classes, thereby avoiding a remedial stigma. While all students may not take advantage of the voluntary service, it attracts an equal proportion of students from differing ability and cultural groups. Participating students receive higher measures of academic achievement in comparison to their nonparticipating counterparts.

- **SI Sessions Are Peer-Facilitated**

An SI leader is a student who has already done well in the targeted course and is recommended by the professor to facilitate the SI sessions. The SI leader neither re-lectures nor introduces new material; instead the SI leader's responsibility is to organize and add structure to the SI sessions, allowing students the opportunity to engage in their own learning. The SI leader typically attends all class sessions, takes notes, and reads all assigned material for the target course, as well as conducts two SI sessions per week. The SI leader is presented to the class as a model student with a mastery of the discipline. SI leaders attend a mandatory two-day training prior to the start of the semester and meet with the SI coordinator for evaluation regularly throughout the semester.

How Does Supplemental Instruction Differ from Tutoring?

For all intents and purposes, SI leaders *are* tutors. Both are peer students, playing the role of model student, exemplifying effective classroom behavior and modeling appropriate study skills. While tutoring sessions are usually one-on-one, SI sessions can be best described as “super group tutoring” wherein the SI leader facilitates collaborative learning techniques. The goal of both SI and tutoring is to help students become independent learners. Both SI and tutoring are important forms of academic assistance.

There are, however, some important distinctions between SI and tutoring. It is important to stress that one type of academic assistance is not better than another. Some students may prefer individual tutoring over SI and vice versa. We believe students greatly benefit from a learning environment that offers a cafeteria-style selection of academic assistance. The mainstay of such a learning environment would be centralized tutoring (one-on-one appointments and walk-in services) with the inclusion of SI-supported courses and online support, as well as academic counseling and a variety of study skills workshops. Developing such a learning environment allows students the opportunity to pick and choose the amount and level of help they feel they need depending on the course.

Is 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 students to participate in SI on a weekly basis.

What Goes on During SI Sessions?

A typical SI session is an hour-long meeting which 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.

Top Ten Positive Outcomes and Benefits of Supplemental Instruction

- Students earn higher subject grades while they learn effective study skills.
- SI provides an opportunity for students to develop relationships with other students and staff, an important factor in retention.
- SI places the responsibility of learning with the students.
- SI helps to develop self confidence and independence in students.
- SI is proactive and participatory rather than reactive and passive.
- SI provides peer collaborative learning experiences which promote assimilation into the campus culture.
- SI improves communication skills.
- SI accommodates various learning styles.
- SI provides students with team work experiences.
- SI enjoys a non-remedial image while offering academic support to all students enrolled in historically difficult subjects.

Faculty Member Involvement and Cooperation

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 will be in contact with you about the following aspects of the program:

- Assisting us in selecting and approving candidates for SI leaders for your subject;
- Assisting us by providing information for SI program evaluation: a copy of the official class roster, copy of grades after each exam and at the conclusion of the semester. *Note:* students' rights to privacy regarding this information will be fully protected.

The Faculty Member Should Agree to Cooperate with the Following:

1. The SI leader will attend class as often as possible. In addition, the SI coordinator might also attend some class sessions with the SI leader at the beginning of the term.
2. The faculty member will be asked to make grades from the exams available to the SI coordinator as a means of determining whether or not students coming to SI are performing at a higher level than those students not attending. Also for evaluation purposes, final course grades will be given to the SI coordinator at the end of the term by either the faculty member or the registrar.
3. The SI leader will occasionally be given a few minutes at the beginning of class to initiate and make announcements about the SI program.
4. The faculty member may ask to be given the names of students who do or do not attend SI sessions.
5. The SI leader and faculty member meet on a regular basis during the faculty member's office hours.
6. The faculty member is encouraged to share reactions to the SI program—oral or written.

What Should I Expect from the SI Leader?

The SI leader will 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.

The SI program will:

- cooperate with faculty in selecting candidates for SI leaders;
- train all SI leaders according to established guidelines and standards;
- monitor the activities and presentations of SI leaders for as long as necessary by helping plan sessions and supervising their performance;
- provide supplies, training, and consultations for SI leaders;
- provide cooperating faculty with an end-of-term comparative analysis of student performance.

The Supplemental Instruction Model

SI Administration—trained professionals responsible for identifying targeted courses, gaining faculty support, selecting and training SI leaders, and evaluating not only the SI leaders but the overall program as well.

Faculty—instructors from identified targeted courses invite and approve of SI support for their classes. SI faculty screen SI leaders for course competency and approve candidate selections. Faculty members also reinforce SI program support, advocating this academic assistance to all students.

SI Leaders—students deemed course competent, approved by the instructor, and trained in proactive learning and study skills strategies. A key component of the SI model is utilization of peer students (as opposed to TAs or GAs) for this position; doing so negates possible inference linking SI with final course grading

Students—the voluntary and anonymous participants in the SI sessions and—although mentioned last—*the* most crucial component of SI.

Note: SI leaders are mandated to keep faculty involved in the SI program with weekly 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 study aids, such as mock exams.

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.

Supplemental Instruction Leader Line of Communication

The SI leader should report to the SI Coordinator for the following:

- Hiring and related paperwork
- Payroll
- Training
- Evaluation
- Planning sessions
- Handling difficult students
- Absence
- Group attendance
- Resources
- Facilities issues

The SI leader should report to the faculty member for the following:

- Course syllabus
- Textbook information
- Class rosters
- Instructor goals / expectations
- eCampus access (if applicable)
- Questions about class material
- Planning sessions
- Handling difficult students
- Absence

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