

Wartburg Supplemental Instruction

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between SI leaders, tutors and teaching assistants?

Competency	SI Leader	Teaching Assistant	Tutor
Disposition	Model student, has demonstrated course competence, does not claim to be expert, attends courses	Content specialist, expert knowledge in field of study, often attends courses and assists instructor	Has demonstrated competence in the course, does not attend course
Role	Peer student, relate to students on their level	Academic elite, serve as an authority	Peer student with demonstrated course competency
Style	Encourages group participation and collaborative learning	More in line with instructors course format	Adapts teaching style to individual needs of group
Expected Capabilities	Facilitates group learning, leaves teaching to instructor	Capable of re-lecturing or presenting new material	Focuses on active learning to walk students through detailed concepts
Participants	Typically work with larger group, no formal commitment required, anonymous	Often class participants are required to attend, attendance often shared with instructor	Typically work with smaller groups, student seek out additional support

2. What is the instructor's role in Supplemental Instruction?

Faculty play an integral role in the SI program because they are involved throughout the entire process of recommending the SI leaders to working directly with them throughout the term. On average, this involvement includes:

- **Student Recommendation:** The SI Supervisor connects with faculty members in February to begin collecting recommendations. In an ideal situation, all students will be required to interview for the position and learn more information before they leave for May Term.
- **Class Announcement:** Since SI wouldn't exist without high student attendance, it is important to allow SI leaders to make occasional announcements during class time. SI leaders also utilize the first class meeting as an opportunity to gauge interest and determine scheduling details for the session.
- **Endorsement:** Include SI program information on syllabus, verbally endorse the program and encourage advisees to attend.

- **Anonymous:** The SI model stresses the importance of anonymity of student attendance to curvify any potential for unintended bias. This and interrupting the laid back environment of the session are two fundamental reasons faculty are not invited to personally attend SI sessions.
- **Meet with SI leader:** Briefly discuss with the SI leader how the sessions are going and tips about the course.

3. Why a course is considered “historically difficult”?

There are several contributing factors when classifying a course as “historically difficult”. We look at course grades to determine if the D/F/W rate is 30% or above. We also consider the content and if this is something that students have not learned about previously. It is important to note that this classification has no reflection on the instructor or the manner in which a course is taught.

4. Can the instructor offer extra credit to students who participate in SI?

It is important to us that students do not receive academic credit (i.e., extra credit) simply for participating in SI sessions. SI is a voluntary program and due to busy schedules of the students, we know that it is not equitably accessible to all students. Offering extra credit for participating in SI risks increasing our session attendance with students who are less interested in the learning experience and more interested in earning easy grades. This compromises SI session effectiveness.

5. What is the instructor time commitment?

We don’t expect the instructor to be involved any more than they wish to be. Minimally, we would prefer the SI leaders and instructor meet at least in the beginning of the term to set goals and expectations with continued open communication throughout the term. Otherwise, the amount of mentoring and coaching to the SI leader is up to the instructor’s discretion.

6. What is the class time commitment?

With permission from the instructor, the SI leader would ideally use time during class for the following:

- During first class meeting: SI leader introduces SI program and surveys the class to determine the best times to meet for the session
- Throughout the term: SI leader promotes SI sessions by verbal announcements, writing reminders on the chalk/white board.

7. What happens at SI sessions?

SI sessions vary greatly throughout different disciplines, however the ultimate end goals to encourage collaborative learning remain the same. The SI leader plans and facilitates activities (referred to as “session strategies”) to encourage students to participate and develop critical

thinking skills about the course content. Though the material is covered in-depth, the goal of SI is to encourage students to learn *how* to study the material instead of simply *what* to know for the test. The SI leader is not to be re-lecturing the material, instead they are to facilitate conversations and encourage the student participants to essentially lead the discussion with their insight and questions. The SI leader is also encouraged to challenge session participants to answer each other's questions, rather than answering all questions at first chance.

8. *How does an instructor request a SI leader for their course?*

While we would like to offer SI for every course that is requested, we are unfortunately limited to how many courses we can support. To accommodate these requests, we have a set criteria that we adhere to when deciding to support a new course. This criteria includes:

- 30 or more students enrolled in the course
- Historically difficult course, new content and/or D/F/W rate of 30% or above
- High percentage of first-year student enrollment
- Required Liberal Arts Core or Required Pre-Requisite
- Faculty and Department support of SI program
- High student attendance, 30% students attend at least once (determined in first 2 years of SI sessions)
- Qualified SI leader recommendation (determined by faculty/department)

If you are interested in requesting a SI leader for your course, please contact the SI Supervisor, Whitney Baker at whitney.baker@wartburg.edu.