

SSSG Organizational Guidelines

SSSG is a great opportunity to learn what your fellow students are doing and to practice presenting your work to a diverse audience of software engineering faculty and students. To make SSSG interesting for all participants, we should follow a few rules.

Timing

A typical 80 minutes SSSG class allows for two presentations, coordinated by a session chair.

Each SSSG presenter should limit their talk to no more than 25 minutes, preferably 20 minutes (exceptions may be granted on a well-argued request, e.g., job practice talk or a conference keynote). The time limit is strictly enforced by the session chair. An additional 15 minutes is available to allow for answering audience questions and to receive feedback. Please practice your presentation beforehand to ensure you will not run over.

The time limit on talks leaves plenty of time for questions and feedback, a key function of SSSG. Attendees should reserve their questions as much as possible for after the talk. Questions raised during the talk should focus on issues important for understanding the content (e.g., what is meant by a specific term). A good practice is to write down your remaining questions for the discussion after the talk and to share these questions with the presenter offline. The session chair reserves the right to stop excessive interruptions and discussions that arise during the talk. If there is no discussion after a talk, SSSG ends early. Alternative formats can be requested by the presenter.

Please arrive on time. SSSG starts on time at 3:30. If you are presenting, please be there a few minutes early to setup and to synchronize with the session chair.

Format, Goals, and Announcement

Historically, SSSG allows for different kinds of presentations that convey different messages and serve different goals. Examples are surveys or area overviews, reports on your practical experiences, reports on an emerging research result, and practice conference talks. Survey's and experience reports tend to be more common for students in the first years of a PhD, whereas research results and conference talks are more common in subsequent years.

Similarly, SSSG presentations can have different goals. Examples include: (1) getting technical feedback and additional ideas on a new research direction; (2) getting feedback on the effectiveness of a conference presentation or tutorial's logic, layout and form; and (3) encouraging others to try a tool or investigate a research method.

Presenters should think about what kind of presentation they are giving, the main message of their presentation, and their goal they want to achieve with their presentation upfront. Presenters should align the presentation to convey that message and meet that goal.

The presentation will be announced upfront with a title and abstract several days before the session. The session chair will introduce the presentation during the session. Both announcements should identify the kind of presentation and its goals.

Feedback

Feedback during SSSG has the goal of coaching and should avoid evaluation. It should provide encouragement to improve the work and the presentation style. Presenters are encouraged to actively seek feedback by asking the audience to focus on specific points. Presenters should include slide numbers in their presentations to allow detailed feedback.

All audience members (students, faculty, and guests) are encouraged to take notes and hand them to the presenter at the end of the session. Presenters are encouraged to discuss the feedback with their peers and advisor.

Feedback is useful on many different facets of the talk's content and presentation (try to provide feedback on multiple of them):

- **Technical content:** Was the context and the problem clear? Was there a novel contribution? Was the argument sufficiently supported? Were the conclusions clear and plausible? Are there suggestions additional literature or for future work?
- **Clarity:** Was the purpose of the talk clear? Did the presenter give sufficient context to understand the talk? Were all definitions clear? Were examples used adequately?
- **Visual style:** Were the slides visually appealing? Were visualizations adequate? Were fonts and figures legible?
- **Organization:** Was the structure of the talk clear and well chosen to support a point? Were the transitions between topics clear and effective? Was there an effective opening and closing to the presentation? Was the time well managed?
- **Delivery:** Was the delivery natural, enthusiastic? Did the presenter engage with or activate the audience, at least through eye contact? Was the speech clear, loud enough, and adequately paced? Were appropriate gestures, posture, expressions used? Does the presenter have habits that should be avoided?
- **Discussion:** Were questions evaded or answered satisfactory, clearly, correctly, efficiently?

All feedback should be constructive: suggest improvement instead of pointing out faults. Comment on the the presentation, not the presenter (e.g., “the slide design lacked ...” instead of “you didn’t...”). Providers of feedback are not necessarily authoritative sources with respect to the content or public speaking; their feedback provides their own *honest opinions* and does not necessarily represent other audience members (e.g., “hard to understand for me” or “I was

impressed with” instead of “the audience did not get it” or “one must”). Presenters may need to distill the relevant feedback, sometimes even from inconsistent or contradictory opinions.

Presenters are additionally encouraged to ask somebody in the audience to act as their scribe. The other presenter that day may be a natural candidate. The scribe writes down questions and comments from the audience during and after the talk and passes those notes to the presenter. This frees the presenter from having to remember the feedback in an already stressful situation.

Use the opportunity that the presentations are recorded. Although sometimes painful, it can be instructive to watch your own performance. This is also a good way of remembering questions asked during the presentation.

Organizational Issues

Using laptops or smartphones, reading papers, or doing homework during SSSG is frowned upon. Please use the time to provide feedback instead. Presenters can encourage an atmosphere where such distractions are not needed in the first place by giving great talks.

The first presenter is expected to bring cookies or other snacks. Expenses can be reimbursed.

Session Chair

The primary tasks of the session chair are (1) introducing the speakers and setting the context for their talks and (2) keeping the time. The session chair should arrive 5 minutes ahead of time and ask the speakers about the kind of talk they are giving and their goals -- and potentially specific kinds of feedback they are seeking. The session chair should briefly introduce the talk and its goals to the audience and encourage the audience to provide written feedback. The session chair is responsible for keeping the time. The session chair ensures that SSSG starts and ends on time. She/he may give the presenter a five minute warning and is encouraged to stop the presentation when the time limit is reached (if necessary by disconnecting the laptop's VGA plug).

The session chair should also have an eye on the audience and limit questions during the talk to essential clarification questions. Regarding discussions, it's the session chair's job to jump start the discussion after the talk with an initial question (if necessary) and to mediate between audience and presenter (if necessary), but otherwise she/he should try not to participate in the discussion to preserve a neutral and authoritative role.

SSSG Feedback Form

Your name: _____ Speaker: _____

Summarize the talk's key message in one sentence:

Name one thing you learned from this talk (content):

Name one thing that you think worked especially well in this presentation (form or delivery):

Suggest one *specific* change how the presenter can improve her/his presentation:

On a scale from 1 (well, this was really embarrassing) over 5 (average for SSSG) to 10 (exceptionally good, best presentation of this decade), with typically ratings from 3 to 8:

Please rate the presentation's **technical content**: _____

Please rate the presentation's **form** (structure, slides, ...): _____

Please rate the presentation's **delivery** (voice, pace, ...): _____

Please provide additional feedback on the back of the page. You may want to consider the following categories and questions:

- **Technical content:** Was the context and the problem clear? Was there a novel contribution? Was the argument sufficiently supported? Were the conclusions clear and plausible? Are there suggestions additional literature or for future work?
- **Clarity:** Did the presenter give sufficient context to understand the talk? Was the purpose of the talk clear? Were all definitions clear? Were examples used adequately?
- **Visual style:** Were the slides visually appealing? Were visualizations adequate? Were fonts and figures legible?
- **Organization:** Was the structure of the talk clear and well chosen to support a point? Were the transitions between topics clear and effective? Was there an effective opening and closing to the presentation?
- **Delivery:** Was the delivery natural, enthusiastic? Did the presenter engage with or activate the audience? Was the speech clear, loud enough, and adequately paced? Were appropriate gestures, posture, expressions used? Does the presenter have habits that should be avoided?
- **Discussion:** Were questions evaded or answered satisfactory (clearly, correctly, efficiently)?

Remember: Coaching over evaluation; be constructive; discuss the presentation, not the presenter.