A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises

MARCH 2018
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Institute Graduation Procedures

Note: When bishops and stake presidents are mentioned below, it also pertains to branch presidents and district presidents, respectively.

The Guidelines

- Annual graduation exercises provide one way to recognize the effort and accomplishments of institute students.
- Graduation should be held annually.
- Institute graduation should be held at the campus or stake program level. This also allows for stake programs to combine with campus programs and other stake programs for graduation ceremonies, as deemed appropriate by local administrators and leaders.
- If possible, graduation ceremonies should be held after the school year ends.
- If it is determined that graduation ceremonies will not be held, diplomas may be requested by endorsed students and printed by the institute program after the year has ended.
- Students who qualify for graduation must complete at least 14 credits of institute courses: 4 Cornerstone courses (8 total credits) and 3 elective courses (6 total credits).
- To complete a course, students must satisfy (1) attendance, (2) assigned course reading, and (3) Elevate Learning Experience (ELE) requirements. Makeup work is available for students who have not met these three requirements. Projected graduation applicants should be invited to apply for recognition at graduation.
- Projected graduation applicants must obtain an ecclesiastical endorsement to complete the graduation application.
- Only the preprinted signatures of the chairman of the Church Board of Education and the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) administrator appear on diplomas.
- If desired, at the annual graduation ceremony, institute programs may choose to recognize students who have earned a certificate of completion or certificate of attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

The stake president who is assigned to the current Institute Advisory Council (IAC) (see Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops [2010], 11.2.2) or his designee:

- Consults with the local institute director in preparation and planning of graduation.
- Approves the final graduation program.
- May speak at graduation and may assist in recognizing graduates and distributing diplomas.
All stake presidents or their designees:

- Ensure bishops understand the ecclesiastical endorsement requirement as explained by the institute director. Students are responsible for seeking an ecclesiastical endorsement to complete their graduation application.
- Should understand that they may receive multiple emails from multiple institute programs, depending on where the young adults in their stake are attending institute.
- Attend graduation, supporting stake members in their achievement.
- Are invited to sit on the stand if they have students participating in graduation.

The bishop or one of his counselors:

- Endorses projected graduation applicants as each student seeks an ecclesiastical endorsement.
- May, at his discretion, choose to endorse or not endorse each applicant. If the bishop or his counselor does not sign a student’s ecclesiastical endorsement on the graduation application, the application is not complete and the student will not be recognized at graduation.
- Is responsible to inform institute graduation applicants if and why the applicant is not endorsed.
- Is invited to attend graduation if he has students participating in graduation, supporting ward members in their achievement.

The Institute Ecclesiastical Endorsement

The institute director:

- Ensures that each stake president understands the ecclesiastical endorsement requirement to become an institute graduate.

The stake president or his designee:

- Ensures that each bishop also understands this requirement.

The bishop or one of his counselors:

- Meets with each applicant. The endorsement of a student for institute graduation signifies that the student understands and strives to apply the principles and doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ learned while in institute, “confirming that students are worthy and committed to live the standards outlined in For the Strength of Youth or similar standards for young adults” (Handbook 1, 11.2.3).
- May use regularly scheduled young adult interviews as the basis to endorse or not endorse a projected graduation applicant. It is not necessary to hold a separate ecclesiastical endorsement interview for institute graduation applicants.
- May, at his discretion, choose to endorse or not endorse each applicant. If the bishop or his counselor does not sign a student’s ecclesiastical endorsement on the graduation application, the application is not complete and the student will not be recognized at graduation.
- Is responsible to inform institute graduation applicants if and why the applicant is not endorsed.
Stake Seminary Graduation Guide

Note: When bishops, stake president, and wards are mentioned below, it also pertains to branch presidents, district presidents, and branches respectively.

The Guidelines

• Annual graduation exercises provide one way to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of all seminary students. They also provide an opportunity to encourage all youth to continue their religious education.

• Graduation should be held annually at the stake level.

• In most cases, students who qualify for seminary graduation must complete all four courses of seminary study, including Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants and Church History.

• To complete a course of study, students must satisfy (1) attendance, (2) assigned course reading, and (3) seminary learning assessment requirements. Students must attend 75 percent of class sessions and read 100 percent of assigned reading material. A minimum score of 75 percent is required to pass the seminary learning assessment. Makeup work is available for students who have not met these three requirements.

• Potential graduates must obtain an ecclesiastical endorsement to earn their seminary diploma and be recognized at stake graduation.

• Students must also obtain an ecclesiastical endorsement each year to earn that year’s certificate of completion and be recognized at stake graduation.

• Only the preprinted signatures of the chairman of the Church Board of Education and the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) administrator appear on seminary diplomas and certificates of completion.

• If possible, graduation ceremonies should be held after the school year ends. If graduation is held after the school year ends, all diplomas and certificates of completion are given to the stake representative with a seminary assignment (usually a high councilor) to be distributed at stake seminary graduation.

• Seminary graduations held prior to the end of the school year may still recognize projected graduates by presenting them with an empty diploma cover. If graduations are held prior to the end of the school year, seminary diplomas and certificates of completion can be mailed to those students who appeared on each stake graduation program or can be delivered to stake or ward leaders to distribute after the school year has been closed in WISE.

• Awards for students who are not ecclesiastically endorsed are given to bishops to award to those students at a later time. Unendorsed seminary students are not recognized at graduation.
Roles and Responsibilities

The stake president or his designee:

• Consults with the stake’s assigned seminary principal or coordinator to prepare and plan the stake seminary graduation program. *Note:* Stakes are responsible for creating their own stake seminary graduation ceremony program.

• Oversees ecclesiastical endorsement of projected graduates and those who have earned a certificate of completion.

• Assigns the stake seminary supervisor or high councilor assigned to seminary to coordinate the stake seminary graduation program.

The bishop or one of his counselors:

• Endorses potential seminary graduates and those earning a certificate of completion.

• May, at his discretion, choose to endorse or not endorse each student.

• Is responsible to inform seminary students if and why the student is not endorsed. The bishop or his counselor also informs the student’s parents or guardians if the student will not participate in seminary graduation ceremonies.

• Reports to the stake president a list of endorsed students to be added to the stake graduation program. *Note:* Seminary programs should never know any student’s endorsement status.

The Seminary Ecclesiastical Endorsement

The seminary principal or coordinator:

• Ensures that each stake president understands the ecclesiastical endorsement requirement to become a seminary graduate or to complete a seminary year.

The stake president or his designee:

• Ensures that each bishop also understands this requirement.

The bishop or one of his counselors:

• Meets with each applicant. The endorsement of a student for seminary graduation signifies that the student understands and strives to apply the principles and doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ learned while in seminary, “confirming that students are worthy and committed to live the standards outlined in *For the Strength of Youth* or similar standards for young adults” (*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 11.2.3).

• May use regularly scheduled youth interviews as the basis to endorse or not endorse a student who is projected to graduate or complete a seminary year. It is not necessary to hold a separate ecclesiastical endorsement interview for these students.

• May, at his discretion, choose to endorse or not endorse each student.
• Is responsible to inform seminary students if and why the student is not endorsed. The bishop or his counselor also informs the student's parents or guardians if the student will not participate in seminary graduation ceremonies.

• Uses the list of projected graduates (which includes students earning an award for completing the seminary year) to report to the stake president endorsed students from his ward to be included on the stake seminary graduation program. Note: Only endorsed students who have qualified for a diploma or certificate of completion should be recognized at stake seminary graduation.

Sample Seminary Graduation Program

Seminary Graduation

Name of stake

Date/time (recommended length: 1 hour)

Place

Presiding:
Conducting:
Pianist:
Chorister:

Welcome:
Opening hymn:
Invocation:

Remarks on participating in the seminary program:
Student speaker (one or more):
Musical presentation:
Student speaker (one or more):
Brief remarks by S&I representative:
Remarks by member of presiding stake presidency:
Recognition of students receiving certificates of attendance or completion:
Awarding of seminary diplomas:

Closing hymn:
Benediction:
The following is a suggested list of names to include in the printed program:

- Area presidency (as applicable)
- Mission presidency (as applicable)
- Stake presidencies
- Bishoprics
- Church Board of Education*
- Commissioner of the Church Educational System*
- Administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*
- Area director for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion*
- Seminary principals, institute directors, or coordinators (as applicable)*
- Seminary or institute teachers (as applicable)*
- Seminary or institute student council members (as applicable)*
- Each student earning a diploma or certificate of completion,* organized by stake and ward

*The S&I representative will provide these names.