

# A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises

February 2021

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# A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises

Published by  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Salt Lake City, Utah

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S&I Version 2: 2/20

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Version: 8/20

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# Stake Seminary Graduation Guide

## Graduation Guidelines

- Graduation exercises provide one way to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of all seminary students.
- Seminary graduation should be held annually on a stake level.
- To qualify for seminary graduation, a student must complete eight semesters of seminary and receive an ecclesiastical endorsement.
  - To complete a course of study, students must attend at least 75 percent of class sessions, read in the book of scripture for the course of study at least 75 percent of semester calendar days, and complete the course learning assessment with at least 75 percent.
  - Makeup work is available for students who have not met these requirements.
- Only the preprinted signatures of the chairman of the Church Board of Education and the administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion appear on seminary diplomas.
- If possible, seminary graduation should not be held prior to the end of the school year so that diplomas can be awarded at the graduation ceremony. The diplomas are given to the stake representative (usually an assigned high councilor) to be distributed at stake seminary graduation.
- If seminary graduation is held prior to the end of the school year, graduates can be presented with an empty diploma cover. When diplomas are available, they can be mailed to graduates or delivered to stake or ward leaders to distribute.
- Diplomas of 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.

## Certificates of Completion

Certificates of completion can be awarded to students when they complete a semester of seminary by attending at least 75 percent of the class sessions held, reading in the book of scripture for the course of study for at least 75 percent of semester calendar days, and completing the learning assessment with at least 75 percent.

Depending on stake need, local seminary program administrators, in consultation with stake leaders, determine if, when, and where certificates of completion are printed and awarded. Certificates of completion can be printed and distributed each semester, at the end of every year, or not at all. Certificates can be distributed at seminary graduation, in seminary classes, or by some other means.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The stake president:**

- Consults with the stake's assigned seminary principal or coordinator to prepare and plan the stake seminary graduation.
- Oversees the ecclesiastical endorsement of projected graduates.
- Assigns the stake seminary supervisor or high councilor to coordinate the stake seminary graduation program.

### **The bishop:**

- Determines whether to endorse each potential seminary graduate. The endorsement status of students should not be shared with seminary programs.
- Informs a seminary student who is not endorsed as to the reasons why. The bishop should take special care to inform the student's parents or guardians if the student will not participate in the seminary graduation program.
- Provides the stake president a list of endorsed students to be added to the stake graduation program.

## **The Seminary Ecclesiastical Endorsement**

### **For stake presidents and bishops:**

- The bishop's endorsement of a student for seminary graduation "verifies that a student is worthy and committed to living the standards of the gospel" (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [2020], 15.1.5, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- The bishop or one of his counselors may use regularly scheduled youth interviews as the basis to determine whether to endorse a student who is projected to graduate. It is not necessary to hold a separate ecclesiastical endorsement interview for these students.
- It is left to the bishop's discretion whether to endorse each potential graduate.
- Seminary principals or coordinators ensure that each stake president understands the ecclesiastical endorsement requirement to become a seminary graduate.
- The stake president ensures that each bishop or branch president understands the ecclesiastical endorsement requirement to become a seminary graduate.
- Only endorsed students who have academically qualified for a diploma should be recognized at stake seminary graduation.

## Sample Seminary Graduation Program

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[Name of stake]

Seminary Graduation

[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 a member of the stake presidency:

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 presidency
- Bishoprics or branch presidencies
- 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
- Region director for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion



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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 *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 14.1.2, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org); Stake Institute, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org)) 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" (*General Handbook*, 31.1.7).
- 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.



