

# A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises

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It is a privilege to be associated with the development of the faith and testimonies of the youth in this dispensation and to assist in carrying out the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Seminary and institute of religion programs play an important part in this sacred effort by providing religious education. The capstone of each year should be the graduation exercises, which provide an opportunity to honor the youth who have met the academic and worthiness requirements to graduate or receive a certificate of achievement from seminary or institute.

Graduation exercises should be such that students, family members, future students, and friends are eager to attend. The program should properly recognize the efforts of the youth being honored and at the same time encourage other students to complete the requirements for graduation.

This guide has been prepared to assist in the planning, conducting, and subsequent evaluation of seminary and institute graduation exercises. It contains the principles and directives approved by Seminaries and Institutes of Religion for use in all such exercises.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

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The following guidelines can assist you as you plan your graduation exercises:

- Seminary and institute graduation exercises may be held separately or may be combined into one exercise.
- When seminary graduation is held separately, it should be done on a stake or district level.
- When institute graduation is held separately, it may be done on a stake, district, multistake, or individual institute level, or it may be combined with other institutes in the area.
- The facility selected for the exercises should be a Church-owned facility with the capacity to accommodate family members and others who desire to attend. Any costs associated with using other facilities should be minimal and paid by the stake or district.
- A member of the stake or district presidency should preside at graduation exercises.
- Bishops or branch presidents or one of their counselors should attend and be personally involved in the exercises for all students in their units.
- A well-organized graduation should not exceed one and one-half hours, including the time for presentation of graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement.

- The exercises should help instill in the minds of younger members the desire to attend and successfully complete seminary and institute classes.
- While traditions are important, each year's program should be carefully evaluated and adjustments made in future programs as needed.

## **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

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Priesthood leaders, in consultation with an S&I representative, should determine the date, time, and place of the graduation exercise. When seminary and institute exercises are held separately, the dates should be coordinated so that conflicts for families, priesthood leaders, and S&I personnel are avoided. The graduation dates should be included in stake or district and in ward or branch yearly calendars. (As a courtesy, this information may be given to the adjoining high school or university.) The facility to be used for the exercises should be scheduled as soon as a member of the stake or district presidency has approved the date and place.

A list of candidates for graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement should be sent by S&I administrators to the appropriate priesthood leaders for worthiness approval. This should be done early enough so a list of the approved candidates can be included in the printed program. Some priesthood leaders may wish to have a preliminary list early in the school year in order to allow them time to work with those who may need encouragement in meeting academic or worthiness requirements.

Stakes or districts should budget for any anticipated costs (such as printed programs, flowers, refreshments, or facility charges). The seminary or institute will provide diplomas, certificates, and covers.

## **PLANNING GRADUATION EXERCISES**

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Plans for the graduation exercises should be made under the direction of a member of the presiding stake or district presidency or a high councilor, assisted by an S&I representative. The following guidelines will help in planning your graduation exercises:

- It is recommended that students be involved in the planning process.
- Consideration should be given to involve a variety of students in the exercises—not just members of student councils or students in other leadership positions.
- Assist students who are participating in the exercises.
  - Make assignments well in advance.
  - Encourage students to speak from the heart and to avoid lengthy readings.
- Schedule rehearsals for all presentations, including musical numbers.
- Ensure that all music is appropriate for the occasion. This includes prelude and postlude music, selections for congregational singing, special numbers, and the background music played during the presentation of diplomas and certificates.

Music should be well rehearsed (excluding congregational singing) so that it invites the Spirit during the exercises.

- If a seminary exercise is held separately, it could include a brief presentation on the institute of religion program. Whether or not this is done by an institute representative is optional.
- To clarify who is graduating and who is receiving a certificate of achievement, prepare accurate and attractive printed programs for those who attend. A member of the presiding stake or district presidency should approve the final program before it is printed.

## **INVITING LEADERS AND GUESTS**

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Invitations to attend the graduation exercises should be made to the appropriate priesthood, S&I, and school leaders.

## **GIVING PROPER INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS**

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Students receiving graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement should understand the proper dress standards and the appropriate personal conduct for the exercises. Students should understand the procedures for receiving their diplomas and certificates. This should be rehearsed if necessary.

## **PREPARING THE FACILITIES**

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The person in charge of the physical facilities should complete the following:

- Check ventilation and air conditioning or heating; test the sound system; and ensure proper lighting.
- Provide proper seating for invited guests, and label the seats accordingly.
- Make any necessary parking or traffic control arrangements.
- Make arrangements for those who have disabilities.

S&I personnel should offer their assistance in preparing for and cleaning up after the exercises.

## **PRESENTING THE STUDENTS WITH THEIR GRADUATION DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES OF ACHIEVEMENT**

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The primary purpose of graduation exercises is to recognize the students. Therefore, the following guidelines may be of assistance in presenting the graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement:

- Diplomas and certificates should be arranged beforehand in the order of their presentation.

- An appropriate S&I representative should formally present the students, as a group, to a member of the stake or district presidency and indicate that each student has completed the academic requirements for receiving a diploma or a certificate.
- A member of the stake or district presidency should then accept the students and indicate that each has met the worthiness qualifications for receiving a diploma or a certificate.
- Students should be clearly introduced by name with sufficient time between names to recognize the students individually as they receive their diplomas or certificates.
- A member of the stake or district presidency should present the diplomas or certificates to the students.
- Each student's bishop or branch president may also be present to congratulate the students from his unit who receive a diploma or certificate.
- During the graduation exercises, it is not appropriate to embrace the students.

## **SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR THE PRINTED PROGRAM**

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The following outline contains suggestions for graduation exercises. It may be adapted according to local needs and desires. Normally a member of the stake or district presidency presides and conducts.

- Prelude music
- Welcome by a member of the stake or district presidency
- Opening hymn
- Invocation
- Remarks on the institute of religion program (for seminary exercises only)
- Student speaker (one or more)
- Musical number
- Student speaker (one or more)
- Presentation of those receiving graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement by an S&I representative
- Acceptance and remarks by a member of the stake or district presidency
- Awarding of graduation diplomas and certificates of achievement by a member of the stake or district presidency
- Closing hymn
- Benediction
- Postlude music

## *Listing of Priesthood, S&I, and Student Leaders*

The following is a suggestion of those whose names could be included in the printed program:

### **Priesthood Leaders**

- Area Presidency (if applicable)
- Mission President (if applicable)
- Stake or District Presidencies
- Bishoprics or Branch Presidencies

### **S&I Leaders**

- Church Board of Education
- Commissioner of Education
- Administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion
- Area Director
- Seminary Principals or Institute Directors or Coordinators (as applicable)
- Seminary and Institute Teachers (as applicable)

### **Student Leaders**

- Seminary and Institute Student Council Members (as applicable)

## *Students Receiving Diplomas and Certificates*

The names of students receiving graduation diplomas or certificates of achievement should be included in the printed program.

## **AWARDS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS**

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The following awards are available and can be obtained by contacting your local S&I representative or through Church Distribution Services:

### *Seminary*

- **Diploma.** Awarded to students who graduate by completing four years of seminary with credit.
- **Certificate of Achievement.** Awarded to high school seniors who complete seminary their senior year but have less than four years of seminary credit. If a student, parent, or bishop requests that a student who did not complete the senior year of seminary be awarded a certificate, this is permitted if the student has full seminary credit from prior years and receives a worthiness clearance. This certificate may also be awarded to students who graduate from school after their junior year if they have full-year seminary credit from prior years and receive a worthiness clearance.
- **Certificate of Course Completion.** May be awarded to students on a yearly basis for each seminary course completed with credit.

## *Institute*

- **Diploma.** Awarded to students who graduate by completing 14 semester hours (21 quarter hours) of approved institute courses with credit.
- **Certificate of Achievement.** Awarded to students who complete 8 semester hours (12 quarter hours) of approved institute courses with credit.
- **Certificate of Advanced Achievement.** Awarded to students who complete an additional 8 semester hours (12 quarter hours) of institute credit after receiving a diploma.
- **Certificate of Course Completion.** May be awarded to students for each approved course of study completed with credit.

For further information or clarification, contact your local S&I representative or:

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