

SOME SENIOR COMMON ROOM CONVENTIONS (Approved by the SCR 18/10/23)

The Senior Common Room has no formal rules and is guided largely by conventions. For the benefit of incoming members some of these, relating to SCR meals and the entertainment of guests, are listed below.

1. Names of guests are entered when you sign up online. Optionally, some indication of their current appointment or academic interests can also be entered – for dinner on SCR guest nights this gives the Steward or senior fellow help in making out a suitable seating plan where relevant.
2. Members may normally invite one guest to SCR lunches or dinners. The norm for Wednesday guest nights (except in 1st and 7th Weeks – see below) is that one academic or professional guest may be invited. If, for exceptional reasons, two guests are proposed, hosts should, before inviting them, consult the Director of Accommodation, Conferences & Catering (for lunch or dinner) and the Steward of the SCR (for Common Room dessert) to make sure that there is no overcrowding. The norm for Wednesday of 1st Week is that no guests are invited as this is a domestic evening at which academic achievements of SCR members are celebrated. The norm for Wednesday of 7th Week and Friday guest nights is that up to three guests (of any type) may be invited.
3. In order to ensure an orderly transition in moving from the Lower SCR to Hall, it would be appreciated if SCR members with guests cross over before those members who have no guests. In Hall normally the guest of the most senior member present sits on the right of the Principal (or senior fellow presiding), or on the left, should the Principal or senior fellow her/himself have a guest.
4. On guest nights the Steward of the SCR, or senior fellow attending, organises the seating for dessert in the Common Room, following the convention that guests at this second stage of the proceedings will not normally sit next to their host. Gowns are not worn for dessert.
5. At dessert the Steward, or senior fellow attending, presides. It is customary for the Principal (if attending) to take a 'seat of honour': in the Peter North Room this is normally at the opposite end of the main table, or (when relevant) at the head of the far small table adjacent to the silver cabinet; in the Mansell Room this is normally in the middle of the outer side of the right-hand arm of the U-shaped table.
6. At dessert the Steward, or senior fellow presiding, may ask one or two other members present to assist with the circulation of the fruit, nuts and drinks. Usually, this involves no more than pushing stationary dishes around, but, sometimes, there will be a need to carry them around. **It will be much appreciated if members assist in this fashion.** Guests and emeritus fellows are not called on for this task.
7. During dessert the wines will normally be circulated to the left up to three times, though this matter is at the discretion of the Steward or senior fellow presiding. When dessert takes place in the Mansell Room there are separate circulations around the left- and right-hand arms of the U-shaped table. Towards the end of dessert the Steward or senior fellow presiding will offer snuff to all in attendance.
8. After dessert, it is customary for whisky, liqueurs, etc., to be served in the Upper Senior Common Room. It is ESSENTIAL that all drinks consumed at this stage should be signed for on the list provided. Hosts should use the spirit measures provided.

If members are in doubt about any of these conventions, the Steward would be glad to clarify.

Philip Burrows
Steward of the Senior Common Room