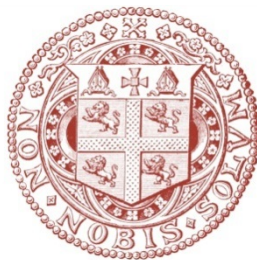


# UNIVERSITY COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

*Inveni portum. Spes et fortuna valete.*



University College  
Durham Castle  
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Durham  
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Updated 06/07/2016

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## **Everything You Need to Know About Formals**

Formals are an incredibly fun social event that you should definitely make the most of during your time at Castle. They can, however, seem bizarre before you get used to them, but don't let this put you off! Hopefully this document will clarify the rules and traditions so that you can enjoy attending formals at ease.

### **The Basics:**

Formals are usually held every Tuesday and Thursday during term-time. It's a three-course meal held in the Great Hall to which academic dress is worn. It starts at 7:00 PM and lasts approximately an hour. The Junior Common Room sit at Low Table (i.e. the majority of the tables in the Hall) and the Senior Common Room at High Table (the two rows of tables below the stained glass window).

On Thursdays the Middle Common Room sit at Low Table with the JCR, but on Tuesdays the SCR have kindly invited us to join them on High Table, and in the SCR before and after formal.

### **Sign-Up:**

#### **For Tuesdays:**

Tuesday Formal sign-up opens around midday on the preceding Friday – an e-mail will be sent to the MCR when it does – and it closes at 10:30 AM on Monday. The sign-up system can be accessed by following <https://community.dur.ac.uk/castle.scr/members/login.php>. If you are unable to login please contact Alison Howe at [alison.howe@dur.ac.uk](mailto:alison.howe@dur.ac.uk). Once logged in, select 'View Calendar', to see upcoming meals for which sign-up is open.

You can sign up a maximum of two guests per person and any dietary requirements can be noted during sign-up. The cost is £8 per person and this will be added to your battels, i.e. the termly bill you'll receive from college. It is your responsibility to collect payment from your guests (even if they are MCR members). If you subsequently find you or a guest are unable to attend, you can sign-out the place on the SCR system until 10:30 AM on Monday, after which it is your responsibility to find someone to take the place (and collect payment from them).

#### **For Thursdays:**

A link to the unique sign-up page is e-mailed to the MCR at 12:00 noon on the preceding Sunday, and the deadline to sign-up is first thing on Wednesday morning, assuming any spaces remain.

You can sign up a maximum of one guest per person and any dietary requirements can be noted during sign-up. The cost is £7.50 per person and this will be added to your battels. It is your responsibility to collect payment from your guests (even if they are MCR members). If you subsequently find you or your guest are unable to attend, it is your responsibility to find someone to take the place (and collect payment from them).

### **Dress Code:**

Men: A dark suit and tie or bow-tie (not a black one).

Women: A dress or equivalent suitably smart attire.

All: Gowns must be worn by everyone in attendance, including guests. Anyone may wear the Durham undergraduate gown (knee-length, with elbow-length square sleeves with the forearm seam opened about four inches from the bottom), and there are several of these available for guests to loan for the evening in the MCR. However, if you or your guests are entitled to wear a different gown by a previous degree or membership of a different university, this is encouraged!

### **General Rules**

- Stick to the dress code: if you're not dressed suitably, you may be asked to adjust your attire or be refused admittance by staff in attendance; conversely, you may be sconced (i.e. fined) for out-dressing the Master, for example by wearing black tie to a regular formal (this is reserved for a small number of special events).
- Any wine you take in must be bought from the Undercroft (water and squash will be provided on the tables).
- Don't be late: if you arrive after the doors to the Great Hall have been shut (at 7:00), you won't be allowed in.
- Turn your mobile phone off – texting is not permitted and you'll be sconced if it rings.
- Any form of photography is forbidden during the meal.
- Once the grace has been said, remain seated until the JCR Senior Student stands to bow out (on Thursdays), or the Master or his substitute has stood to leave (on Tuesdays).
- It's advisable to go to the toilet before dinner!
- For those drinking wine bear your personal limits in mind. Drunkenness at dinner is unacceptable.

### **Tuesdays:**

- Meet in the MCR from 6:30-6:45 to borrow gowns for guests as necessary.
- MCR members are welcome in the SCR from around 6:00. The member of the Exec handing out gowns will lead those gathered in the MCR up to the SCR via the Black Staircase at 6:45.
- When dinner is announced by a member of staff at around 7:00, members of the SCR will lead the way to the Great Hall. Let the SCR members enter the Hall first as we're their guests at High Table.
- Once you've found a seat, remain standing behind it until the college grace has been said. You may then sit and open your wine.
- Regardless of which of the two tables that constitute High Table you're sat at, wait until the Master or his substitute begins eating any course before starting it yourself.
- At around 8:00 the JCR Senior Student will stand to 'bow out'. At this point everyone sat at Low Table will stand; everyone at both tables of High Table remain seated, but stop to pay attention to

the Senior Student, who will bow to the Master or his substitute and then leave the Hall. After this, anyone sat at Low Table is free to stand and leave the Hall.

- When the Master or his substitute feels it appropriate, he will stand to leave. When he does so, everyone at High Table should stand, wait for him to conclude the meal in Latin (*'Benedicto benedicatur'*, meaning 'Let praise be given to the Blessed One'), and then follow him out.
- If you're retiring directly to the SCR, it's perfectly fine to take a wine glass with you if you have wine left to finish, and it's customary for people to take the candelabras from High Table to light the way to the SCR.

### **Thursdays:**

- Meet in the MCR from 6:30-6:45 to borrow gowns for guests as necessary.
- We walk up to the Great Hall together at around 6:50, via the main entrance. A member of the Exec will lead the way. Don't head up before everyone else, even if you're in a group.
- The MCR has a reserved table, which should be conspicuously empty of JCR members. Once you've found a seat, you may sit down to await the SCR. However, the seat at the head of the table is reserved for a member of the Exec.
- The SCR will enter at around 7:00. We stand up with everyone at Low Table as they do so, and remain standing until the college grace has been said. You may then sit and open your wine.
- Wait until everyone around you has been served before starting to eat any course. This is done in blocks of six, so wait until the people next to you and across from the three of you are served.
- At around 8:00 the JCR Senior Student and MCR Exec member will stand to 'bow out'. When they do so, stand up with everyone else at Low Table and remain silent until they have bowed to the Master or his substitute and left the Hall. You are then free to leave at any time.
- Wine glasses should not be removed from the Great Hall, but any wine remaining in a bottle can be taken to the Undercroft or MCR to finish. Take any empty bottles with you and deposit them in the red bin that will be waiting in the Courtyard.

**If you have any questions about formal at all, just ask any member of the MCR Exec. (in person or by e-mail) and they'll be happy to help you.**



### GRATIAE ANTE CIBUM AGENDAE

Domine omnipotens, aeterne Deus; qui tam benigne nos pascere hoc tempore dignatus es; largire nobis, ut tibi semper pro tua in nos bonitate, ex animo gratias agamus; vitam honeste et pie transigamus; et studia ea sectemur, quae gloriam tuam illustrare et ecclesiae tuae adiumenta esse possint; per Christum dominum nostrum.

Amen.

### GRACE TO BE SAID BEFORE DINNER

Almighty Lord, eternal God; who has so graciously deigned to feed us at this time; grant to us, that we may always give you heartfelt thanks for your goodness to us; that we may pass our lives honourably and piously; and that we may follow such pursuits as can shed light on your glory and afford assistance to your church; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.