Introduction
The annual dinner is a key event in the local institute calendar. The purpose of these notes is to assist those responsible in the organisation of the dinner, particularly those who are in the role for the first time.

The notes should not be regarded as definitive instructions but simply a guide which outlines the policy covering the responsibilities between the CII and local institute regarding the CII Representative.

The CII acts as liaison between the local institutes and CII Representatives. It is important to remember to ensure the Representative is treated in a professional manner and that certain etiquette is maintained throughout the dinner.

Though the dinner is focused on the local institute’s president’s theme it must be important that a high professional standard of dinner is conducted throughout. Change is a good thing but standards should not be dropped to accommodate modifications which ignore dinner etiquette. Dinners are expensive events to run and the timings and running order for the evening should be adhered to i.e. dinner courses and speech times and if paying for a toastmaster, that they do the job properly.

A successful dinner is well hosted and spoken about for some time afterwards but a poorly managed dinner can at times be difficult to control the feedback given by parties. It also makes it difficult for local institutes to maintain an interest from members for the next annual dinner.

For more information about the project management of your dinner please visit Network Know-How – www.cii.co.uk/knowhow

Overview
The following notes are designed to give local institute officers guidance as regards to the organisation of and protocol applicable at local institute annual dinners and other formal dinners.

The Speakers
Annual Dinners organised by local institutes are opportunities for local institutes to promote the activities of the CII and their own institute to local opinion formers.

Speakers at local institute dinners can be classified in four main categories:

- Representatives from the local institute – generally the president.
- The National President or the Representative selected from National Officers.
- The president’s supporter – Usually a senior manager from the local president’s employer or a friend or the deputy president.
- The Entertainer.

The Toastmaster
The use of a qualified toastmaster is highly recommended. Whilst there are rare exceptions when a toastmaster is not required, the experience of professional Toastmasters is invaluable in ensuring that principal guests such as civic dignitaries are accorded the correct protocol and that any poor behaviour in the room is handled properly.

The Toastmaster
There is a welcome trend to reduce the number of speeches as far as possible. One way of doing this is to limit at least some of the toasts to formal toasts. These could include the Loyal Toast and that to The Chartered Insurance Institute sometimes coupled with The Insurance Charities. Some institutes include a toast to their town or city and again this should be handled simply as the Toast without a supporting speech as most institutes no longer request any civic dignitary present to speak.

It is usual to have extended speeches from the National President or the CII Representative who responds to the Toast to The Chartered Insurance Institute and often proposes the Toast to the local institute unless the President has a friend or representative of the employer to fulfil this function. At many institutes dinners the deputy president proposes the toast to the guests. This is usually responded to by the entertainer. [NB. Those proposing the toast to the guests should try to group guests by category of attendance – e.g. guests from other professional bodies, presidents from neighbouring institutes etc. Special VIP guests (e.g. Lord Lieutenant) and civic dignitaries (e.g. the (Lord) Mayor) should be named as should the CII Representative, but it is not necessary to name anyone else except the final guest speaker.

It is no longer necessary to read out CVs (except, perhaps, where a specific point is to be made) nor qualifications as these are usually included in the menu booklets. Visiting presidents, for example, can be welcomed along the lines of “We are delighted to welcome presidents from our neighbouring institutes of...”)

All institutes should consider the number of speeches recognising that the local companies or organisations hosting tables have guests who are there to be entertained and it is reasonable to assume that their expectations are that the speeches will not last much longer than 45 minutes to one hour.

The dinner secretary should ensure that each speaker knows what is expected of him or her, that they should exercise caution with humour and to aim to speak for no longer than between 3-7 minutes. The speech to the guests is particularly difficult to get right and reading too much from the CVs supplied or going into any detail about anyone other than the principal guests should be avoided. The other common pitfall is use of private jokes. (In view of the ratio of institute members to guests on these occasions it is not uncommon for 90% of the audience to ‘miss’ the joke!)

Local speakers should be made aware of any help that may be available locally. A deputy president might be able to discuss the speech to the guests with a past president to use his/her experience and pointers to develop ideas that could work quite well on the night. It is also suggested that any inexperienced speaker should avoid the books of anecdotes available in the shops like the plague.

Running Order for Speeches
The following is used as a guide only:

1. Pre-Dinner Drinks
2. Clap in top table – Not compulsory
3. Grace
4. Followed either by the speeches or dinner begins first
5. Dinner
6. Optional Interval – Not compulsory – if there is one try not to have to long an interval to allow for too much ‘drinking time’ before the speeches start otherwise may struggle to keep audience interested.
Speeches:

1. **Loyal Toast** – The Loyal Toast is best given by the toastmaster rapping the order and the chairman rising to say, IN TWO WORDS, “The Queen”. In Lancashire, the words “Duke of Lancaster” are added.

2. **LI President’s Address** – If applicable followed by the Award Presentation by President (usually helped by the CII Representative) if this is held separately can do this before the interval.

3. **To toast CII by LI President**

4. **In response CII Representative Address**

5. **CII Representative toasts LI**

6. **Toast to Guest** – Usually done by LI Deputy President or other person nominated who would then welcome the guests.

7. **Toastmaster should then stand up to toast guests** – Advise guests remain seated but LI members should stand up.

8. **Response by main Guest Speaker/entertainer**

**The National President or the CII Representative**

The National President or the CII Representative is a guest of honour at all local institute dinners. A CII Representative should be afforded the same status as the CII President. Whilst normal conventions give the representatives of the Crown – i.e. the Sheriff and/or Lord Lieutenant of the County – and the Mayor (if the dinner is being held in his / her city / town) precedence at the dinner the National President has precedence over others including local police officers, clerics, entertainers etc and should be seated in the appropriate place on the top table. The Toastmaster should be reminded of the position.

It is important that the CII Representative, like other dignitaries, is met by a local institute officer (the local institute should provide a contact name if possible), escorted to any pre-dinner VIP function room, introduced (usually by the Toastmaster) to host president and that the president then ensures that the CII Representative is introduced to other VIP guests.

Feedback from Representatives is encouraged by the CII and any reflection on the dinner will impact on possible difficulty in obtaining a speaker the following year. However it is not always the case but being aware of how a VIP is treated will ensure your institute retains a good reputation for years to come. Remember to thank the Representative in writing for their attendance following the dinner, verbal is ok on the night but a formal written note of thanks is appreciated by the Representative.

**Assistance to Speakers (Including National President / CII Representatives)**

It is helpful if assistance can be given to the CII Representative and other speakers by confirming arrangements for hotel accommodation, information on parking and details of the arrangements for the evening. Most speakers do not require greeting prior to arriving at the accommodation but maps do help!

Accommodation often needs to be booked a long time in advance. The booking should be confirmed in writing. The hotel bill should be paid for by the local institute and should be included in the budget for the dinner.

If the venue is not at the hotel then transport to and from should be arranged by the local institute; or a map provided with walking directions if nearby.

The speakers should also be given any information regarding topics that should be mentioned or avoided. Details of individuals who should be mentioned and some background notes on the activities of the institute and any problems they are having as well as the successes are very useful. If a speaker is expected to propose a toast or make a presentation with or without a speech please give them notice. Do not just mention it on the night or leave it to the speaker to discover when reading the menu card!

Please ensure that the speaker is aware of the salutatory to be used that evening.

**Contact Prior to the Dinner**

A speaker will feel more comfortable if there is reasonably early contact by the dinner secretary. A month before is recommended at the latest. A speaker should not need to make contact a few days before to ask if the event is still on! The more information about the event delivered at this time will help the speaker enormously. The National President/CII Representatives have busy schedules and it is not unusual for them to be looking at speaking at a number of dinners in a short period.

It is the responsibility of the Dinner Secretary to write to the Representative to confirm the arrangements and advise them of the format for the evening. Clear instructions must be provided beforehand and should include where possible:

- Make sure clear contact details/instructions are available for the Representative before and on the night of the dinner.
- Who the top table guests are and who they are seated next to.
- Expected length of speech time, between 3-7 minutes is the preferred timeline, if no speech is required by the Representative then please make this known.
- Provide any brief information the LI may have regarding the institute that may be of interest to the Representative. Details on the audience, any prizes or awards being presented – if the Representative is expected to present the prizes they must be informed beforehand not left to on the night of the dinner.
- Full details of hotel accommodation arrangements should be sent to the Representative.

Details must be provided on how the Representative can be reimbursed accordingly, if they make their own transport arrangements, this should also include any other out of pocket expenses incurred by the Representative.

Include in your letter to the Representative that your dinner has a required budget, and that you will reimburse reasonable travel expenses i.e. up to a first class train ticket, If a chauffeur company is used, the local institute will only pay up to a certain amount (ensure it is a reasonable amount) the rest you could ask that the CII Representative contribute to pay. Not all Representatives will submit travel expenses; each Representative is different as some are supported financially where others are not.

**The President’s Supporter**

Much of what is said under the National President’s notes applies to the local president’s supporter. It is useful if some background information is offered about the local institute and, as with other speakers, a preferred length of time for the speech given. It is unusual to have speakers other than the entertainer speaking for more than ten minutes. The speaker should be encouraged not to be too serious and to resist the temptation to advertise his company or speak as though only his/her staff are present.
The Entertainer

The final speaker tends to be the one that most people remember and can make or break the evening. It is very important that the individual understands the format of the evening, the audience and the threshold of what will be acceptable content to his/her speech. It is necessary to decide whether the entertainer is to be allowed to speak from the table or to work in a more cabaret style by walking amongst the audience. Again good briefing will ensure a more successful presentation.

Increasingly professionals are used as the speaker responding to the toast to the guests. It is stating the obvious to ensure that the costs are within the budget. Ticket prices in excess of £40 per head are usual but do impact on younger members who are not prepared to pay these amounts to attend these functions.

Room Preview

Ideally, speakers should be encouraged to visit the room in which the dinner is to be held during the afternoon of the dinner but in any event before the guests start to go to their tables. A trial of the sound system is helpful – indeed, it is often essential. Dinner secretaries should ensure that the microphone can be used in a stand or hand held to suit the wishes of the individual speakers. Some institutes have a tradition of having all speakers using a fixed microphone away from the dining table. Speakers may appreciate advance notice of such details. Many speakers like to use table lecterns and it is surprising how many hotels, when asked at the last minute, are unable to find one. The dinner secretary should check each speaker’s requirements in advance of the dinner and ensure that appropriate lecterns are available.

It is usual for principal guests to meet in a president’s reception prior to dinner. It is helpful if members of the local institute are tasked with ensuring that top table guests are shown to the reception and either announced by the Toastmaster or introduced to the president before being made welcome by the local institute members present. It should be remembered that all the speakers are likely to be at least a little nervous at this time! Specific protocol must be followed when the Lord Lieutenant of the County and/or civic dignitaries are attending. This will normally involve meeting the dignitaries at the entrance to the building and escorting them to the president’s reception. Contact should be made with the dignitaries’ offices to ascertain the protocol to be followed on the night and to provide any information that may be required.

Call to Dinner

Every effort should be made to ensure that the dinner starts on time.

Toastmasters can help to ensure that dinners do start on time. Too often the attendees are not called to dinner until after the published time. Delays create problems for the catering staff as well as creating problems later in the evening as attendees have spent more time at the bar before the dinner.

Where guests are spread amongst various pre-dinner hospitality events, the dinner secretary, working in conjunction with the Toastmaster and appointed ‘ushers’ should ensure that each area is visited and the guests called to dinner well in advance of the top table party.

Presentations – CII

A number of institutes use the occasion of their annual dinner to present successful examination candidates with their diplomas/certificates. It is an opportunity to introduce young members to the event as it is usual for the institute to meet the costs or arrange for the new diploma holder’s employer to do so.

The new range of qualifications gives greater opportunity for successful members (and prospective members) of the local institute to be appropriately recognised. It is recommended that such presentations are organised so that recipients do not delay proceedings by having to walk the longest distance to the top table.

Charitable

At most annual dinners a charity draw will take place where sponsors have been involved this will normally take the form of a raffle. In this case each of the sponsors should be acknowledged before the raffle takes place. Some institutes vary the method of fundraising to add interest.

The most usual format is for an announcement to be made at the beginning of the dinner advising those present that a collection will take place for the charity(ies) named, requesting (usually) five or ten pound notes and stating the method of collection. Where a raffle is involved some institutes offer one ticket for five pounds or three for ten pounds.

As with presentations of diplomas it is important that such activity proceeds at the right pace. When raffle prizes are offered it is useful to be prepared for a winner to suggest an auction (unless it is made very clear that winners are expected to collect and keep their prizes). Generally, unless there is someone present who is good at auctioneering it is a bad idea to hold the auction on the night even though it does get it out of the way. As this can detract from the overall effect of the evening. It is usual for at least some of the profits of such draws to be passed to The Insurance Charities. The dinner is sometimes used as an opportunity to present a donation to a local charity. The recipient usually wants to say thank you. When this occurs the dinner secretary is recommended to limit the time available as the enthusiasm of some local organisers is such that they can take the opportunity to give an expanded response that is probably unnecessary and unappreciated. Please ensure that any prizes take into account equality and diversity issues.

Those announcing details of charitable collections should, when appropriate, remind attendees of the benefits of the Gift Aid scheme.

Location and Transport to and from the Venue

It goes without saying that the location should be appropriate for the people attending and that numbers be controlled so that there is sufficient room available for people to eat in comfort. It is also important, as there are an increasing number of women attending, that the location adequately caters for women. Attendees do not appreciate being left to their own devices in a strange town, having to find their own way back to their hotel. The local institute should ensure that their speakers are catered for as regards transport. In addition, where venues are separate from hotels, it is useful for attendees to be provided with contact details for reputable taxi companies (and/or for such companies to be aware of the function).
Table Layout/Plans

Table seating plans should be available for guests. Speakers also appreciate sight of these prior to the event so they have an idea where companies are located. It is useful to have several of these in a central position so that there is not a queue as people are being called to dinner. There should always be one in any room used for the president’s pre-dinner reception.

Although it is not always possible to do so, the provision of lists of attendees in alphabetical order identifying table allocations can save a lot of time and ease congestion when guests are called to dinner.

Poor Behaviour

It is unfortunate for one reason or another, some people may be noisy at inappropriate times during the evening. This can be a particular problem during the speeches and even professionals sometimes have difficulty handling such situations. Inexperienced speakers should not be expected to suffer in this way. The toastmaster should be encouraged to help control such a situation. If the speaker fails to deal with the situation the Toastmaster must take appropriate action.

At some dinners guests decide to sit out the speeches by staying in the bar. This behaviour should be discouraged as the speakers have usually put in a considerable amount of work in preparing their speeches. Such behaviour is discourteous to the president as well as all other attendees and can also cause problems if the volume of noise from the bar reaches the dining room.

Cost

The ticket price is often significant with prices sometimes exceeding £50 each. It is essential to plan for the annual dinner to be self-funding. Dinners are not considered a proper purpose for members’ funds. There are circumstances when such events make a loss that has to be covered by members’ funds but this should not be a regular occurrence. Dinner secretaries should be required to ensure that the price is reasonable and that costs are controlled properly. As stated above many young members simply cannot afford to fund themselves to attend local dinners and perhaps a concessionary rate for them might be considered if viable. Similarly local companies may be encouraged to invite more guests if the price is set at a lower level.

Dress

Most annual dinners are considered to be the most important event in a local institute’s calendar. Consequently, even if the event takes the format of a dinner dance, the dress code is usually formal – i.e. dinner jackets for the men and evening/cocktail dresses for the women. It is always helpful for the dress code to be clearly stated on any communications and especially on the tickets (where issued). Women in particular welcome guidance as to the type of attire and evening/cocktail dresses for the women. It is always helpful for the dress code to be clearly stated on any communications and especially on the tickets (where issued). Women in particular welcome guidance as to the type of attire and evening/cocktail dresses for the women. It is always helpful for the dress code to be clearly stated on any communications and especially on the tickets (where issued). Women in particular welcome guidance as to the type of attire and evening/cocktail dresses for the women.

Carriages

Many attendees like to know when the dinner is likely to end. The inclusion of an announcement on the ticket (or earlier communication) along the lines of “Carriages at 11.30pm” enables guests to make arrangements for their travel home and also provides encouragement to the organisers and the speakers to keep the dinner running to schedule.

Protocol

There is often confusion about top table seating arrangements and also about dress code.

Top Table Seating Arrangements

The host president is “Chairman” for the night and therefore sits in the middle of the top table. Guests should then be seated according to their status alternately on the right of the president, when facing the body of the room, and then on the left.

A representative of The Crown (e.g. The Lord Lieutenant of the County or a Sheriff) takes precedence and should be seated on the president’s right hand. (Provided the person is there in his/her official capacity and not as a director of the local president’s company). The (Lord) Mayor of the city/town in which the institute is based or is holding its dinner – would then be seated on the president’s left and the CII Representative on the right of the representative of the Crown.

In the absence of a representative of The Crown, the (Lord) Mayor (if in his/her own city/town) would be seated on the president’s right and the CII Representative on the left. In all other circumstances the CII Representative would be the principal guest and would be seated on the president’s right.

The guest speaker would normally be accorded a prominent position and would be next in line to be placed unless another civic dignitary was present.

It should be remembered that the (Lord) Mayor of the host city/town or the chair of the local authority should not be displaced without reference to his/her secretary. The mayor or civic dignitary from a neighbouring town/borough should have their status acknowledged by placing them in order after the principal guests mentioned above but before the presidents of neighbouring institutes/representatives of other professional bodies.

A typical top table layout is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Professional Body</th>
<th>Lord Mayor</th>
<th>CII Rep</th>
<th>Chair Local Authority</th>
<th>President LI</th>
<th>Professional Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President LI</td>
<td>Guest Speaker</td>
<td>Host President</td>
<td>CII Rep</td>
<td>Chair Local Authority</td>
<td>President LI</td>
<td>Professional Body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.1 If other civic dignitaries, such as Chief Constable, Chief Fire Officer, are present, they can be inter-dispersed amongst the local presidents but should be placed towards the centre of the top table rather than towards the ends.

N.B.2 Some institutes now have an oval top table. In this case it helps conversation during dinner but top table guests should not be placed directly facing the host president if at all possible and cognisance should be taken of the fact that some top table guests could have their backs to the main body of the room which is not ideal.
Main Room Seating

Most institutes use either a sprig layout or round tables. In most instances a sprig layout will accommodate more guests but, depending on the shape of the main room, round tables may be the best option.

The absolute maximum number on round tables should be twelve per table. Smaller tables should be used if possible as larger tables tend to restrict conversation to those either side of individual guests.

Dress Code

What to wear at formal functions seems to be the question that causes prospective attendees most concern. Notice should be taken of the information on the invitation which will probably read “Dinner jacket”, “Dinner jacket, medals and decorations”, “Black tie” or “White tie”. Rules are becoming more relaxed but the following are the accepted protocols.

Dinner Jacket

This means that gentlemen should wear a black jacket with black trousers with a silk or light braid stripe on the outside of each leg, a white shirt – pleated (buttons not showing) or plain fronted with black stud buttons and a black bow tie at all formal dinners. (Coloured or patterned bow ties should only be worn at semi-formal occasions). Socks should be black and shoes highly polished black or black patent leather.

If a cummerbund is to be worn the jacket should be single breasted. The pleats should be worn so that they face upwards.

If a waistcoat is to be worn the jacket should be single breasted and a cummerbund should not be worn.

Cufflinks, preferably of a fairly simple design, should be worn.

Ladies should wear evening dress or a cocktail dress although evening suits are becoming more accepted these days.

Dinner Jacket, Medals and Decorations

The dress code for “Dinner Jacket” as described above applies but in addition those who are entitled to wear them should wear any medals or decorations and/or badges of office.

The one question that causes most concern is “on which side should I wear my medals?”

Medals awarded by the Sovereign (Queen’s awards, New Year’s / Birthday Honours, Military etc) should be worn on the LEFT.

All others, including past president medals, should be worn on the RIGHT.

Jewels on ribbons should be worn as normal except where a person has more than one in which case the most senior, or in the event of equal status, the most appropriate for the occasion should be worn round the neck.

Ladies should wear an evening or cocktail dress with medals pinned on appropriately.

Black Tie

The dress code is as described under ‘Dinner Jacket’ above but with a BLACK bow tie unless the function is semi-formal – e.g. a party or celebration when it is possible to be a little more adventurous.

White Tie

This is not really relevant to local institute dinners as it is the most glamorous and romantic eveningwear of all worn at State Banquets and other such events. The outfit consists of a black evening tailcoat, black dress trousers with a double braid down the outer seam, and a stiff-fronted shirt fastened with mother of pearl or gold studs and cufflinks. The bow tie and waistcoat are both white pique to match the shirt front and the shoes are as for ‘Dinner jacket’. Ladies should wear full evening dress.