

Criteria for hostel operators quality grading



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1.0 General Overview

1.1 Introduction

In Northern Ireland, all tourist accommodation must be certified by Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI) i.e. inspected by an officer of Tourism NI to ensure compliance with minimum standards set by Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 and can only trade when issued with a certificate. Details of minimum criteria are available to view on tourismni.com/accommodation.

In addition to the requirements to meet minimum standards set by legislation, accommodation in Northern Ireland can choose to be graded by Tourism NI according to pre-set quality standards. This booklet describes the requirements for the Quality Standards for Hostel Accommodation in Northern Ireland.

1.2 Categories

General Description

Establishments in each of these sub categories should fulfil all Hostel minimum entry requirements.

Category	General Description
Hostel	Often in shared rooms with bunk beds, family rooms may also be available. Hostels normally welcome individuals, families and groups, many of whom are on a staying on a short-term basis. Hostels often have a quite formalised structure, which may or may not include restricted access, meal service etc.
Backpackers	Very similar in style to a hostel, but may be run on less formal lines such as 24 hour access. They are often more appropriate for longer term independent travellers and the younger end of the market and they tend not to take family groups.
Group Accommodation	Often in shared rooms with bunk beds. Predominantly group bookings only accepted. May be fully serviced or self catering.
Activity Accommodation	Normally provided on a group basis. The establishment will also offer fully certified or licensed activities. May be fully serviced or self catering.

2.0 General Requirements

2.1 Common Standards

VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Wales Tourist Board, Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI), the AA, with the support of the Government, work together to agree, support and develop common standards for assessing the quality of self catering accommodation in the United Kingdom.

Each organisation is using these common standard requirements to determine the Star rating for your establishment. Your rating will be the same whichever organisation you choose to carry out your assessment. You can, of course, choose to be assessed by more than one organisation and each organisation will award you the same star rating. Additional marketing awards for food, comfort and service etc. from the different organisations, however, are not part of this agreement.

2.2 The Requirements

We have based the requirements for the star ratings on the existing standards of all the organisations plus extensive research into the needs and expectations of visitors. We have also consulted widely with the hospitality industry.

The feedback we received from the industry shows strong support for a common quality standard for self catering accommodation throughout the countries where we operate the schemes. Our aim for this revised common quality standard is to work continually with the industry and to strive together to raise quality standards in line with the ever-evolving expectations of consumers.

2.3 Dispensations

Dispensations for certain individual requirements within the quality standards may be given as long as all the remaining requirements and quality levels for that rating are met or exceeded. This flexibility will be on a case-by-case basis and will have to be agreed by the Standards Review Group (SRG), which represents all the five organisations who operate the Common Standards - AA, VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Wales Tourist Board and Tourism Northern Ireland. Any exceptions will need a proportional increase in quality in other areas to compensate for the area where an exception is sought.

2.0 General Requirements

2.4 Statutory Obligations

Fulfilment of your statutory obligations, where applicable, including, but not limited to, those relating to:

- **Safety**
 - Health and Safety at Work
 - Fire, Gas & Electrical Safety
 - Electrical Appliance Testing
 - Product Safety
 - Bunk bed regulations
 - British Standards applying to items such as cots, high chairs and play pens.
- **Premises**
 - Planning Permission
 - Private Water Supplies
 - Housing
 - TV Licensing
- **Discrimination**
 - Sex Discrimination
 - Race Discrimination
 - Disability Discrimination
- **Records**
 - Data Protection
 - Immigration Hotel Records
 - Consumer Protection
- **Trade Descriptions**
 - Advertising
 - Pricing
 - Unfair Contract Terms

Proprietors will also be asked to provide evidence that Public Liability Cover is being maintained and to provide a signed confirmation, at application and renewal of participation, that the above requirements are being fulfilled.

2.5 General Miscellaneous

1. Management to observe the Tourism NI 'Code of Conduct'.
2. Self-catering facilities normally provided.
3. Easy seating and dining areas to be available with appropriate furniture provided. Open plan or combined dining/seating/kitchen areas are acceptable up to a 4 Star award standard. For a 5 Star standard a lounge area, separate from the kitchen (either by space or in a separate room) with appropriate easy seating will be required.
4. Provision for the hanging and drying of wet outdoor clothing to be available.
5. Guests to have access to sufficient conveniently situated power sockets to allow for safe use of electrical equipment (e.g. hairdryers, mobile phone chargers etc.)
6. Exception may be made at the discretion of Tourism NI in respect of remote properties with restricted/no mains services.
7. All public areas to be adequately lit for the safety and well being of guests.
8. Details of means to summon assistance, day or night, in the event of an emergency must be provided and clearly displayed to guests (e.g. staff/proprietor, doctor, dentist etc.) Emergency services callout (i.e. 999) to be detailed.
9. A first aid kit to be readily available and maintained.
10. Provision to be made to ensure the security of guests and guests' possessions should be made. i.e. key or otherwise controlled access to main entrance as a minimum.
11. All ground floor windows to have an effective closure device which prevents opening from the outside.
12. If group bookings are accepted, crockery, cutlery and dining furniture provision must be at least sufficient as to enable the maximum size of group accommodated to sit and eat together.

2.0 General Requirements

2.6 Bedrooms

1. A minimum floor space per bed (or bunk) of 4 square metres (44 square feet) to be provided. This area will be calculated on the basis of the maximum dimensions of the room divided by the number of bed bases in the room. Bed bases will be totalled as follows:

Bunk bed = 1

Single bed = 1

Double bed = 2

The impact of furniture (lockers, bedside tables etc.) will not be considered in this calculation. However, It should be recognised that rooms just meeting or marginally exceeding this minimum requirement, are unlikely to achieve high marks in the quality assessment of Space, Comfort & Ease of Use'.

2. A minimum ceiling height of 2 metres (6'7"). Sloping eaves or coombed ceilings are acceptable, providing these do not restrict reasonable free movement through the major part of the room.
3. All bedrooms to have an external opening window to provide natural light and ventilation. All windows to have opaque curtains or blinds for privacy and light exclusion.
4. Bedrooms to be adequately lit for the safety and well being of guests.
5. All properties to have the capability of providing separate sex sleeping accommodation areas if requested at the time of booking.
6. Beds / bed spaces must be at least 1.9m (6'3") x 0.76m (2'6") (including alpine platforms).
Please Note: Full sized (6'3" x 3') beds are required at a 5 Star standard.
7. Bedrooms to be provided with beds or bunks and mattresses in a sound condition. Beds to have well maintained bases.
8. Alpine platforms with mattresses are acceptable up to a maximum of 3 Stars. Alpine platforms with sleeping mat style foam will only be acceptable at 1 Star.
9. The vertical distance between upper and lower beds in any bunk must not be less than 0.75m (30").
10. Each bedroom to have adequate rucksack storage space. As a minimum this could be provided by sufficient free floor space or under bed/bunk space.
11. Each bedroom to have a non-flammable waste paper bin.
12. Bedrooms to have hooks for hanging clothes (minimum one per guest).
13. Blankets or duvets and clean bed linen including one pillow per person and clean pillow slip to be provided for each bed.
14. Bed linen to be available either free or for hire.

Exception may be made at the discretion of Tourism NI in respect of remote properties with restricted /no mains services. In such cases this should be clearly advertised.

2.0 General Requirements

2.7 Kitchens

Exception to self catering kitchen requirements may be made at the discretion of Tourism NI in respect of properties offering full catering; or in central city locations with a wide range (in price and style) of food outlets in the immediate vicinity. This exception will normally only be exercised at quality levels up to a maximum of 3 Stars. 4 and 5 Star properties will be expected to provide full facilities for at least the first 100 bed spaces, irrespective of location or in-house catering facilities. Provision required for bed spaces in excess of 100 will be determined at the discretion of Tourism NI.

1. The kitchen to be designated a non-smoking area with appropriate signage.
2. A smoke alarm or heat detector to be installed.
3. A fire extinguisher suitable for kitchen fires and a fire blanket to be provided.
4. Kitchen to be properly equipped with an adequate number of utensils (pots, pans, food preparation knives etc.) which enables, as a minimum, 20% of the maximum number of guests to make food at the same time.
5. A minimum of 4 cooking rings to be provided. Where the total number of bed spaces exceeds 32 an additional cooking ring is to be provided for every further 8 bed spaces.
 - i.e. 32 beds: 4 cooking rings
 - 40 beds: 5 cooking rings
 - 48 beds: 6 cooking rings
 - 56 beds: 7 cooking rings etc
6. An oven or microwave and a grill to be provided. Each of these to be provided at a minimum ratio of 1 per 50 guests accommodated.
7. Where additional electrical equipment is provided, adequate electrical sockets must be available.
8. Crockery and cutlery to be provided in sufficient range and quantity as to enable at least 25% of the maximum number of guests to eat at the same time.
9. Adequate refrigerated food storage space to be available.
10. Facilities for boiling water to be provided e.g. kettle or geysers.
11. Dry food storage facilities to be provided, appropriate for the number of guests accommodated, e.g. open shelving or cupboards.
12. Kitchen area to have effective ventilation.
13. A covered waste disposal bin and liners to be provided.
14. Adequate washing up facilities with hot and cold running water and washing up liquid to be available.
15. Adequate hygienic work surface to be provided.

2.0 General Requirements

2.8 Bath, WC and Shower Facilities

1. Shower, washbasins and WC's to bed space ratios must meet or exceed minimum levels:

(Properties in Northern Ireland will be required to meet the tourism legislation)

1 Star:	1:10
2 Stars:	1:10
3 Stars:	1:6
4 Stars:	1:6
5 Stars:	1.6

En-suite facilities will not be included in calculating these ratios. (Exception to these minimum requirements may be made at the discretion of Tourism NI in respect of remote properties with restricted / no mains services.)

2. There must be privacy between sexes for washing/showers and toilet facilities and wherever possible between members of the same sex and clearly designated.
3. All bath, shower and WC rooms to be adequately ventilated.
4. Hand drying facilities and soap required in all public WC facilities.
5. All WCs to be lidded with a toilet roll holder, toilet paper and sanitary disposal bin (where appropriate) provided.
6. Bath/Shower facilities to have clothes hooks and soap trays within each cubicle.
7. A shelf and electric razor point (or adapter available) with a mirror and towel rail close by to be provided.

2.9 'Group Accommodation' Designator

In addition to all of the above 'Hostel' criteria; minimum 'Group Accommodation' criteria will also require:

1. Normally, group bookings only to be accepted.
2. Dining area must have sufficient space and furniture for the maximum number of guests to dine at the same time.
3. Shower, washbasins and WCs to bed space ratios must meet or exceed minimum levels:

1 Star:	1:10
2 Stars:	1:10
3 Stars:	1:10
4 Stars:	1:8
5 Stars:	1:6

(Exception to these minimum requirements may be made at the discretion of Tourism NI in respect of remote properties with restricted / no mains services)

4. Sufficient crockery, cutlery, glassware, food preparation and cooking utensils to be provided for the maximum number of guests to dine at the same time.
5. Cooking equipment (pots, pans etc.) to include an appropriately sized range of catering equipment.
6. A dedicated and appropriately sized drying room to be provided. Size and layout of the drying room should be appropriate for group arrivals.
7. Suitable equipment storage facilities to be available.

2.0 General Requirements

2.10 'Activity Accommodation' Designator

In addition to all of the 'Hostel' and 'Group Accommodation' criteria, 'Activity Accommodation' establishments will be required to be in possession of a current AALA Certificate or other national body licence in respect of one or more outdoor activities based at the property.

NOTE:

'Group Accommodation' and 'Activity Accommodation' will not be required to provide self-catering facilities where a fully serviced (Dinner, Bed and Breakfast) package is the normal product. If lunches are not provided then facilities for preparing packed lunches should be available to guests.