

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR HOSTEL OPERATORS ON QUALITY GRADING

VISITSCOTLAND QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME



Introduction

Visit Scotland's Quality Assurance has been available to tourist accommodation providers in Scotland for many years and has a reputation for accuracy and consistency across all the sectors of the industry that are traditionally involved. The methodology used in quality assessments for hostels is this same, time proved, technique.

However, it is recognised that there are substantial differences between sectors of the accommodation industry. It is fully recognised that in many, if not all areas, hostels are significantly different from B&B's, hotels and so on. This means that although the methodology of quality assessment is the same, the reality of what is considered is unique and specific to Hostels.

The assessment is based on an objective evaluation of two factors in any area, Quality and Condition. Any considerations of style or taste are specifically excluded from the assessment. Quality is an innate feature of any given item, whilst condition is a variable attribute, almost inevitably deteriorating over time with use, wear and tear or weathering. When considering the appropriate mark, the Quality Advisor will make a balanced assessment of these two attributes, often needing to take into consideration a mix of differing standards within the same area under assessment.

The highest mark awarded, 5, reflects excellent quality together with excellent condition. In serviced and self-catering Quality Assurance schemes these standards are set at the highest levels possible to achieve. It is recognised that hostels, catering for a significantly different market and operating under very different cost/revenue structures, would be ill advised in many cases to furnish and decorate at this standard. At this level, the Hostel Quality Assurance scheme consequently recognises the highest quality standards reasonably practicable within a hostel environment.

These guidance notes endeavor to explain some of the most commonly seen situations resulting in the range of marks awarded. The notes are by no means prescriptive or exhaustive, we would hope that participants will continue to provide the great variety and individuality which adds so much to our visitors' experience, and makes each property unique.

The examples used are drawn from actual experience and as such, they represent standards already set by the hostel industry. It should not be anticipated that VisitScotland considers it necessarily appropriate for every participant to aspire to the highest possible standards in terms of décor, furnishings etc. The market catered for by hostels is considerable and varied, to reflect that, hostels themselves should similarly be varied in terms of price, quality, size, location and so on. There is no reason to expect that a high quality award will, with certainty, lead to increased commercial success. The primary purpose of the award is to assist the visitor by providing reliable, independent re-assurance. The award should be expected to act as an effective marketing tool for hostels and to attract more of the type of customer particularly catered for by a specific property.

It will not necessarily be appropriate for the Quality Advisor to assess every potential area at every property, for example, some properties simply do not have gardens or a shop. In such cases the area in question will be completely disregarded and will therefore neither contribute to nor detract from the overall percentage achieved, there will be no quality grading penalty for not providing a particular facility.

Quality Grading

Summary of Hostel Quality Assurance Principles:

1. Hostels are considered in full recognition of the distinct nature and market of the industry sector.
2. All assessments are benchmarked against standards set by the industry and which are already in existence at member properties.
3. Expectations of quality achievement are balanced against the unique cost/revenue structures of hostels and their customers' expectations.
4. Each aspect of the quality assessment is objectively considered solely on the basis of innate quality and current condition, the mark awarded being a function of the two.
5. Under no circumstances will 'style' 'fashion' or 'taste' be considered in awarding any marks.
6. In properties where considerable variation between rooms exists, the mark awarded will be representative of the overall typical guests experience.
7. The Quality Indicators are intended as readily understood and commonly seen examples only. They do not constitute definitive standards and should in no way be seen to be restrictive or as limiting the variations that individual participants will provide.
8. The Quality Assurance Award will consist of the appropriate designator, indicating assured minimum facility standards, together with a Quality standard, where appropriate, represented by a scale of One to Five Stars.

The Quality Assurance Visit

VisitScotland Quality Advisors will make arrangements to visit every participant, every year. Visits are generally scheduled to take place at approximately 12-month intervals although for a variety of reasons this can on occasions be considerably reduced or extended. The Hostel Quality Assurance visits usually take place each year from March/April through to July/August. Visits can usually be arranged, by request, outside of this period if required.

Visits can be either in the form of an incognito overnight stay or a pre-arranged day visit. We will generally try to ensure that the first visit to a new participant is an overnight stay, although this is not always practical or achievable. Thereafter we would normally anticipate carrying out an overnight stay once every 3 to 4 years, the intervening visits being 'day visits'.

During an overnight stay, the Quality Advisor will book in and stay at the hostel, as would any other guest. Following checkout the next morning, he or she will identify themselves to the proprietor/manager, through reception staff if they are not around at the time, and ask for some of your time to complete the quality assessment and discuss their visit with you. To complete the assessment the Quality Advisor will need to see other bedrooms and facilities not used during the overnight stay.

A day visit will be arranged through a telephone appointment, usually made 3 weeks or so in advance for a time convenient to both. During a day visit the Quality Advisor will again ask to be accompanied on a tour of the property to carry out the assessment.

It would be unusual for a Quality Advisor to be able to give a definitive result at the time of the visit to a new participant. The report will need to be completed and carefully considered by the Quality Advisor and subsequently be reviewed by a Senior Quality Advisor before the award is confirmed. This process will usually take approximately 4 weeks although it can be longer on occasions. The quality assessment is, of course, the primary function of the visit. However, in response to participants' requests and subsequent direction from the Scottish Executive, Quality Advisors are also able to offer support, advice and information on a wide range of subjects, as requested by the participant concerned. This may, for example, be concerned with information about marketing opportunities, training opportunities, planned developments within the property or simply a good chat about what's going on in the hostel sector, where opportunities or threats are being spotted and who is doing what

about them. This Advisory aspect of the visit is not compulsory although it is a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and information and, as such, is highly valued by our participants.

Preparing For Your Quality Assurance Visit

In preparation for a Quality Assurance visit we would recommend that you have any relevant paperwork to hand (last years grading report for example) together with a note for your own reference of particular issues you would like to discuss with the Quality Advisor.

The Quality Advisor will carry out a careful assessment of the hostel but it is in your own interest to ensure that they are made aware of recent changes and investment that might have taken place. Similarly, it may well be useful on occasions to explain and put some things about your property into context for the Quality Advisor. Not much happens by chance, but even with an experienced eye, the reason for some things can sometimes be difficult to spot! Apparently 'quirky' may for example be a rather ingenious and practical way of doing something, or be a matter of considerable pride and sentimental value. It is your responsibility as a participant to ensure that your property is properly seen and understood in context by the Quality Advisor. Although we would certainly not suggest that a 'special effort' prior to the visit is made in terms of housekeeping for example, it is often well worthwhile to take the time and have another look around your property. Minor routine maintenance issues left unattended can easily give an impression of a property which is less favourable than might be deserved.

Award Calculation

As with all other schemes, each aspect of a property to be assessed will be marked on a scale of 1 to 5 on the basis of innate quality and current condition. These marks are then totalled and from that a percentage score determined. The award confirmed will then be based on that overall percentage, together with consideration of award qualifiers.

Consumer research has shown that cleanliness is of paramount importance at any quality level and the minimum scores for this aspect at each Star grade reflects this need. This research has also shown that guests expect a measure of consistency in all aspects of the property, meaning that each area of the property should, of itself, be of a comparable standard to the overall Star grade awarded. To ensure this, in addition to the appropriate overall score, minimum standards for each area (excluding 'Exterior', 'Food Quality and Service' and 'Other Facilities') must be achieved for an award to be confirmed.

Award Qualifiers

1 Star 34 – 47%

- No area to score less than 34%
- Cleanliness minimum score 40%
- Shower/bed space ratio 1:18 or better

Exception to this may be made in respect of remote rural properties with no mains services.

2 Star 48 – 59%

- No area to score less than 40%
- Cleanliness minimum score 48%
- Shower/bed space ratio 1:15 or better

3 Star 60 – 74%

- No area to score less than 54%
- Cleanliness minimum score 64%
- Shower/bed space ratio 1:10 or better

4 Star 75 – 86%

- No area to score less than 67%
- Cleanliness minimum score 76%
- Shower/bed space ratio 1:10 or better

5 Star 87%+

- No area to score less than 80%
- Cleanliness minimum score 88%
- Shower/bed space ratio 1:6 or better

The 'Quality Indicators' which follow are intended to provide an indication of typical benchmarks/standards seen by the Hostel Quality Advisors. The marks which are actually awarded are frequently a balance between a number of items or areas. For example, 'Public Area Flooring' will include flooring on all Guests Lounge areas, Reception area, all corridors, stairways and landings. Even in a relatively small hostel this could easily add up to five or even six different examples of flooring being assessed under the same mark. In such examples the mark will reflect the typical guests experience. If three out of five different flooring areas are of a very good standard (4/5) and the remaining two of a quite good standard (2/5), the mark awarded is likely to be 3/5 – a good overall standard.

Few properties achieve the highest standards in all areas and variation, sometimes concentrating resources on the areas perceived to be of most importance to a particular market, is perfectly acceptable and normal. Provided the variation in overall quality standards remains within the definitions of the award bands and qualifiers, this will not directly restrict the overall Quality Assurance award.

It is entirely reasonable for an individual hostel operator to consider the highest benchmark standard for a particular area and decide it to be unrealistic to achieve for their property or their market. This will not, of itself, restrict an award if other areas 'compensate' in terms of high quality and condition.

It is also important to remember that visitors choose accommodation for a variety of reasons to suit a variety of purposes. The VisitScotland Quality Assurance award will support and independently endorse market focused promotional activity at any quality level.

Aspects considered in the Quality Assessment:

1. EXTERIOR:

1. Appearance of buildings
2. Grounds, Gardens & Parking
3. Environment

2. HOSPITALITY AND SERVICE

4. Hospitality
5. Service & Efficiency
6. Security
7. Personal Touches and Tourist Information

3. CLEANLINESS:

8. Bedrooms
9. Bathrooms
10. Public areas
11. Dining area
12. Self catering kitchen

4. FOOD QUALITY AND SERVICE:

- 13. Meals Service
- 14. Food Quality (Breakfast)
- 15. Food Quality (Dinner)

5. BEDROOMS:

- 16. Decoration
- 17. Furnishings, furniture & fittings
- 18. Flooring
- 19. Lighting & heating
- 20. Beds, linen & bedding
- 21. Space, comfort & ease of use

6. BATHROOMS & WC'S:

- 22. Decoration
- 23. Sanitary ware & fittings
- 24. Flooring
- 25. Lighting, heating & ventilation
- 26. Space, comfort & ease of use

7. PUBLIC AREAS (includes all stairs, landings and corridors):

- 27. Decoration
- 28. Furnishings, furniture & fittings
- 29. Flooring
- 30. Lighting & heating
- 31. Space, comfort and ease of use

8. DINING/RESTAURANT AREA:

- 32. Decoration
- 33. Furnishings, furniture & fittings
- 34. Flooring
- 35. Lighting & heating
- 36. Space, comfort and ease of use

9. SELF- CATERING KITCHEN:

- 37. Decoration & Flooring
- 38. Lighting, heating & ventilation
- 39. Fittings & furniture
- 40. Cookers & electrical / gas equipment
- 41. Crockery, cutlery, glasses, cookware
- 42. Space, comfort & ease of use

10. OTHER FACILITIES:

- 44. Laundry / drying Room
- 45. Recreation/additional facilities

In each of the above aspects, the Quality Advisor will decide whether to award a score of "excellent" (5 marks), "very good" (4 marks), "good" (3 marks), "quite good" (2 marks), "acceptable" (1 mark) or "poor" (0 mark).

Any aspect assessed as being of a 'poor' standard and consequently scoring zero will result in the property failing to achieve any Quality Assurance award.

Where a facility or aspect is not provided, such as a city centre property with no grounds and garden or a property which does not provide meals, these aspects will not be assessed and their absence will have no effect on the award achieved.

The following sliding scale indicates examples of quality, which may be in evidence, in order to achieve the various levels of quality (1 – 5). These indicators are representative of what might be seen at each quality level, but they are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive; that is to say they are included to offer suggestions on how quality can be improved and enhanced, but will not in themselves guarantee a higher quality grade.

Quality score 1

Generally, everything must be safe and clean. However, older items, or those lacking in intrinsic quality, must work and be fit for their purpose. There should be no outstanding need for immediate repair and maintenance.

Quality score 2

Generally described as quite good, these items may be of simple quality and the range may be limited. However, they should be in good working order and there will be a high standard of cleanliness.

Quality score 3

Generally described as 'good'. Not necessarily expensive, but they must be of good, sound quality and show that some care has been taken. There must be a good standard of maintenance and decoration.

Quality score 4

Generally described as 'very good'. This may reflect aspects of innate excellent quality but which are now showing some slight wear or ageing or conversely, of a good quality but pristine condition.

Quality score of 5.

Generally described as 'excellent'. Providing high quality levels of décor, fixtures and fittings, together with excellent standards of management efficiency and guest services.

1. EXTERIOR:

APPEARANCE OF BUILDINGS

The décor, maintenance and repair of the building. This includes stonework, woodwork, rendering, paintwork, gutters, fall pipes, external plumbing, chimneys and roofs. External signage attached to the building (clarity & maintenance) and lighting is taken into account here. Any outbuildings and storage areas e.g. refuse areas will be assessed here as well.

Quality indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Exterior may be in need of attention and showing extensive weathering in places, rusting downpipes, flaking or stained paintwork but will be in an overall acceptable and sound condition.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Signs of ageing and defects should be limited to a small number of areas with no obvious significant structural defects. Woodwork generally in sound condition, though some areas of paint may be aging and rather weathered or flaking. May be small defects, damage, cracks etc. to stonework. Heavy moss or lichen growths. No evidence of recent freshening up. Ageing signage.

Mark 3 (Good)

Exterior in a generally good condition, principal aspects of the building are well maintained. Paintwork mainly fresh but some minor weathering or staining to external paintwork may be apparent. Doors and windows in good state of repair, though not necessarily new. External fabric all in sound condition. Where displayed, signs will be maintained in good condition.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Overall perhaps not pristine but still resulting in a very good first impression with no neglected aspects. High quality maintenance of stonework and paintwork, some natural weathering may be present. May be some additional external features to enhance appearance such as window boxes. Any outbuildings or annexes to be of similar quality.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Premises in an immaculate condition. High quality paintwork with no damage or wear evident. Door furniture and signage of high quality. All buildings on site maintained to the same high standard.

GROUNDS, GARDENS AND PARKING:

If the property has no clearly defined grounds or gardens or parking of any type this section is not assessed. Assessment of this area will include garden areas, hedges, paths, driveways, parking, lighting and all other areas within the clearly defined (i.e. fenced, walled or hedged) boundaries of the property and which are under the care and control of the establishment.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Safe pathways, signs in reasonable condition, an acceptable first impression. Grounds reasonably neat, some areas may be in need of closer attention. Acceptable quality and condition of parking where provided.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Evidence of some effort made to make gardens attractive, tidy and litter free. Pathways in quite good order, without trip hazards. Reasonably easy access, safe and quite well maintained parking.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good standard overall. All areas will show evidence of regular attention i.e. no litter, grass cut and only minor weed growth in paths / driveways. Signage should be in good condition and effective. Parking areas may have thinning gravel or potholed surfaces but still be in a safe and usable condition.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

High standards of maintenance in garden areas. Tidy beds, pathways and hedges. All trees and shrubs well tended. Dustbin areas not visible, preferably screened. Easy access to parking with well maintained surfaces and clear definition.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Thoughtful and imaginative landscaping, planting and design features, as appropriate to location and environment. May include barbecue / patio area and garden seating. May include effective external lighting. High quality signage in pristine condition. Obvious detailed care and attention given to all aspects. Car parking where provided will be well laid out and clearly signed with an appropriate well maintained surface.

ENVIRONMENT:

A reflection of the positive or negative aspects of the location of the property and surrounding area that could affect the guests' comfort.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

In a less favoured urban area, some distance from public transport but by no means rural, could be good except for a particular feature of the immediate environment or outlook.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

In a location reasonably convenient for some limited public transport. In an urban location, perhaps some distance from the centre of town. In a rural location perhaps at main roadside or with restricted views.

Mark 3 (Good)

In a city/town centre, with some parking restrictions and busy traffic but close to all amenities. On a working farm where access is muddy or there is some farm machinery close by. In a suburban area of a city where there is busy traffic and noise.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good environment would include rural properties which may be close to roads, but which have the benefit of open scenic views. Urban properties are likely to be central to main attractions and transport, some attempts e.g. double-glazing, made to overcome traffic / street noise.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

In an urban setting in the heart of the city with all amenities, attractions and transport links immediately accessible. In a rural location with open views in an area of outstanding natural beauty, ideally located for the pursuit of a range of outdoor activities.

2. HOSPITALITY AND SERVICE

HOSPITALITY

Assessment of hospitality will consider the following aspects: Staff attitude, customer care skills, welcome and all guest contact. N.B. For 'Group Accommodation' and 'Activity Accommodation', no overnight stay is possible, therefore this section will be omitted from the assessment.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Hospitality generally of the lowest acceptable standard. Warmth of welcome may be lacking and guests contact with staff or owners minimal. Overly casual attitude apparent.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Hospitality of a quite good standard with some warmth of welcome. Likely to include some positive customer contact from staff.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good standard of hospitality with obvious warmth of welcome. Staff readily available and forthcoming with advice, information and assistance for guests when requested.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of hospitality. Staff demonstrating a commitment to customer care. Staff proactive in offering advice and assistance to guests, being clearly available and willing to help at all reasonable times.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Exceptional hospitality standards with a personal welcome. Proactively ensuring guests comfort and wellbeing throughout their stay. May include positive, knowledgeable input and assistance with guest's plans and activities. Staff should be evident, but not intrusive and remain respectful of guest's privacy if appropriate.

SERVICE AND EFFICIENCY:

Service and efficiency will assess the competency, speed and capability of staff in dealing with guests and their requirements. This will include the initial enquiry, booking, arrival and departure as well as general contact during a guest's stay, general management effectiveness, and guest information.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Service generally of a minimal acceptable standard. May be difficult to contact staff to make a reservation. Casual approach to booking resulting in a lack of clear confirmation that reservations are secure. Effective booking and reception procedures, but staff contact minimal.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Service of a quite good standard. Restricted reception hours may make contact for booking difficult. Where there is reliance on telephone answering machines, then any enquiries left on these should be responded to promptly. All bookings handled effectively in a manner which leaves guests confident that their reservation is secure and properly recorded.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good standard of service. Clear and well organised booking and reservations procedures. Staff or management easily contacted to make reservations with little if any, reliance on telephone answering machines. Staff should freely offer additional useful information (directions, public transport etc.) on request. Guests fully confident in the reservations system.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of service. Clear and easy booking procedures should be available via varied channels (telephone, email, internet, direct booking etc.) It is unlikely that email bookings are not available at this level. All enquiries through whatever channel should be responded to quickly and efficiently.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Exceptional service standards. Exemplary booking procedures through varied channels which all incorporate a positive and proactive approach to ensuring guests have all necessary information quickly provided in a welcoming and useful manner.

SECURITY

Assessment of this aspect will include entry systems, personal security when inside the building such as window locks and CCTV (internal and external), provision of lockers and the provision of storage for "long term luggage". Security has been conclusively shown by research to be a significant concern to visitors and will therefore be assessed at every property. An exception to this may be made in respect of 'Group Accommodation' properties which only ever accept single group bookings. In these circumstances then providing that perimeter security is adequate, i.e. the group leader is provided with a key to secure the accommodation; it is acceptable to assume that security of possessions within the property is a matter for the group itself to take responsibility for. Irrespective of this potential exception, it is still strongly recommended that such properties also make provision for individual guests to secure their valuables.

N.B. It is recognised that security needs in smaller rural properties are generally significantly different than for those hostels situated in large urban areas.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

In a rural or urban hostel there should be reasonable effort made in terms of controlling access to the building. This may mean that hostels are locked during hours of daytime closure. There may be no separate provision made for security of guests' possessions e.g. lockers etc.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Hostels should make some effort to provide a limited number of facilities for secure storage of guests' possessions i.e. lockers or safety deposit boxes (an extra charge may be made). Bedroom doors should be capable of being secured from the inside.

Mark 3 (Good)

Security systems should be good and effective. Lockers should be available for most guests, but may not be conveniently situated in the bedrooms. All bedroom doors to have locks capable of securing the room and guests to be routinely provided with keys/access codes.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A high level of control over entry to the building probably supported by well positioned CCTV cameras situated inside and, where appropriate, externally. Provision for all guests to make their possessions secure (e.g. rucksack lockers with padlock or key available on deposit or additional charge) is likely to be expected. In addition, large city centre properties will usually provide secure long term luggage storage (if long term residents are accepted).

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Security systems should be excellent throughout. Appropriate use of technological security solutions might be expected such as self-locking bedroom doors which will automatically secure against external entry, a key-card system which may restrict access to specified areas of the building or comprehensive 24/7 digital video recording in key areas. High quality lockers with keys and/or padlocks can be expected to be provided for every guest and conveniently situated within bedrooms.

ADVICE:

The consumer research carried out before this scheme was introduced indicated that guests consider that security of themselves and their belongings is of primary importance when staying in a hostel. There is almost always realistic and practical opportunity to improve security standards. On occasions this may require some financial investment but a great deal can be effectively achieved through risk awareness, staff training and good practice. This is a specialised area which VisitScotland Quality Advisors are trained to assess as above but not to give technically detailed or specific advice. VisitScotland strongly recommends that operators seek the advice of local Police Crime Prevention Officers, a free service. A record of such a consultation together with evidence of the implementation of its recommendations will be fully considered if made available to the Quality Advisor at the time of the visit and can be anticipated to significantly and positively influence the mark awarded.

Urban hostels – Your guests are most likely to feel the need for security. It is likely that keys, key cards or number entry systems will be provided on bedroom corridors or bedroom doors as well as the main hostel entrances. Any bedrooms located adjacent to flat roofs, fire escapes or on the ground floor may require bedroom windows to be fitted with a device which allows them to be opened, whilst safety and security is maintained. Communal lockers may be available in the public areas, but in a higher quality hostel the number of lockers available and their size should be greater. Many urban hostels offer long term storage for guest's luggage and access to this facility should be closely monitored.

Rural hostels – Your guests are less likely to feel the need for a high degree of security. However, as a minimum the door should be lockable at night. For 'Group' and 'Activity Accommodation', keys should be made available to the group leader to enable security of accommodation and equipment storage rooms, where provided, to be controlled and maintained. Accommodation catering for guests involved in outdoor activities will usually ensure route cards are freely available to guests and properly monitored. Secure and appropriate equipment storage facilities will also be appreciated by such guests as will some control and monitoring of access to drying room facilities.

PERSONAL TOUCHES AND TOURIST INFORMATION

Assessment of Personal Touches and Tourist Information will take into consideration the range and quality of additional personal touches, artifacts, collections, books. Tourist Information provided and available for guests is also considered.

Quality indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Minimal tourist information, jumbled piles of dog-eared and stained brochures and leaflets, out of date information. Stark and purely functional, no attempt at any personal touches.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Brochures and information will be current, neatly and conveniently displayed. A limited range of information, likely to only represent strictly local services or attractions. Little evidence of personal touches.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good level of provision which will certainly include current Area Information and local/regional public transport information. May also include information on networked hostels in other areas with reciprocal arrangements. A clear attempt to provide a welcoming and personalised atmosphere.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

In addition to a wide range of information, expert specialised knowledge may also be provided by some Hostel proprietors or staff. Recommendations and advice for walking/climbing routes, current climbing and summit conditions, a well-maintained guests comment book recommending local pubs/clubs/restaurants/ attractions etc. Strong evidence of personal touches – flowers, plants, collections, displays.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

An exemplary level of provision which, in addition to the usual brochure displays and recommendations for outdoor activity markets, will often include personally prepared local information. This will normally contain advice and information not commercially produced or motivated but of interest to guests. Additional guest's facilities such as TV, video, books, magazines etc. are likely to be provided.

Outdoor Activities Information:

In season, current Scottish Avalanche Information Service reports and regional ski reports are strongly recommended. Outdoor activity weather forecasts, summit or route conditions reports are of particular benefit to this market all year round. Guests themselves can often contribute to this if a Log/Routes Book is provided and they are encouraged to use it.

3. CLEANLINESS**BEDROOMS:**

Assessment of cleanliness in bedrooms will include consideration of housekeeping standards in all aspects of bedrooms.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Although termed 'acceptable', in respect of cleanliness this represents a standard which gives considerable cause for concern and shows clear evidence of neglect and longstanding lack of proper attention. Any aspect of cleanliness assessed at this level is likely to at least seriously compromise the overall award achieved and has the potential to preclude any quality assurance award being confirmed.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Cleaning may visibly lack attention to some difficult to access areas and is likely not to involve any regular or systematic deep cleaning processes. Standards seen at this level are likely to be effectively the minimum acceptable and will almost certainly require significant and systematic improvement for an award to be sustained on future assessments.

Mark 3 (Good)

Regular attention paid to all aspects and consistent standards maintained. Systematic approach with evidence of clear standards being set and monitored. May lack some attention in high areas, behind some furniture items etc. This standard will represent a fundamentally good level of cleanliness, probably with some areas that could potentially be improved, but no aspect giving concern.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard with obvious close attention to detail in most areas but not quite achieving an excellent standard in every respect. Relatively minor omissions such as dusty lampshades or carpets vacuum cleaned but in need of deep cleaning may differentiate a 'very good' from an 'excellent' standard.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Immaculate throughout with a professional approach and detailed thoroughness apparent in every aspect. Well presented beds and bedding, gleaming surfaces, no smears or marks, no blown bulbs or broken equipment. Careful and consistent attention to even relatively minor details resulting in a standard that is effectively without fault.

BATHROOMS:

Assessment of this aspect will include consideration of housekeeping standards in all aspects of bath/shower rooms and WC's.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Although termed 'acceptable', in respect of cleanliness this represents a standard which gives considerable cause for concern and shows clear evidence of neglect and longstanding lack of proper attention. Any aspect of cleanliness assessed at this level is likely to at least seriously compromise the overall award achieved and has the potential to preclude any quality assurance award being confirmed.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Cleaning may visibly lack attention to some difficult to access areas and is likely not to involve any regular or systematic deep cleaning processes. Standards seen at this level are likely to be effectively the minimum acceptable and will almost certainly require significant and systematic improvement for an award to be sustained on future assessments.

Mark 3 (Good)

Regular attention paid to all aspects and consistent standards maintained. Systematic approach with evidence of clear standards being set and monitored. May lack some attention in high areas, behind some doors or WC's or extractor grills etc. This standard will represent a fundamentally good level of cleanliness, certainly with some areas that could potentially be improved, but no aspect giving concern.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard with obvious close attention to detail in most areas but not quite achieving an excellent standard in every respect. Relatively minor omissions such as some extractor vents not cleaned or stained (black mould) grout in a few places may differentiate a 'very good' from an 'excellent' standard.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Immaculate throughout with a professional approach and detailed thoroughness apparent in every aspect. Gleaming surfaces, no smears or marks, no blown bulbs or broken equipment. Careful and consistent attention to even relatively minor details resulting in a standard that is effectively without fault.

PUBLIC AREAS & DINING ROOM

Assessment of cleanliness will include consideration of Housekeeping standards in all aspects of public areas: lounge(s), stairways, corridors and the reception area. Dining room(s) (serviced and non-serviced) will be assessed separately but to the same standards and guidance as below.

Quality indicator: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Although termed 'acceptable', in respect of cleanliness this represents a standard which gives considerable cause for concern and shows clear evidence of neglect and longstanding lack of proper attention. Any aspect of cleanliness assessed at this level is likely to at least seriously compromise the overall award achieved and has the potential to preclude any quality assurance award being confirmed.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Cleaning may visibly lack attention to some difficult to access areas and is likely not to involve any regular or systematic deep cleaning processes. Standards seen at this level are likely to be effectively the minimum acceptable and will almost certainly require significant and systematic improvement for an award to be sustained on future assessments.

Mark 3 (Good)

Regular attention paid to all aspects and consistent standards maintained. Systematic approach with evidence of clear standards being set and monitored. May lack some attention in high areas, behind some furniture items, skirtings, light-fittings etc. This standard will represent a fundamentally good level of cleanliness, certainly with some areas that could potentially be improved, but no aspect giving concern.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard with obvious close attention to detail in most areas but not quite achieving an excellent standard in every respect. Relatively minor omissions such as dusty lampshades or carpets vacuum cleaned but in need of deep cleaning may differentiate a 'very good' from an 'excellent' standard.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Immaculate throughout with a professional approach and detailed thoroughness apparent in every aspect. Particular attention to detail in respect of soft furnishings, flooring in heavily used areas such as corridors & staircases, high corners and shelving. Gleaming surfaces, no smears or marks, no blown bulbs or broken equipment. Careful and consistent attention to even relatively minor details resulting in a standard that is effectively without fault.

SELF CATERING KITCHEN

Assessment of this aspect will consider housekeeping standards in all aspects of self catering kitchen facilities.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Although termed 'acceptable', in respect of cleanliness this represents a standard which gives considerable cause for concern and shows clear evidence of neglect and longstanding lack of proper attention. Any aspect of cleanliness assessed at this level is likely to at least seriously compromise the overall award achieved and has the potential to preclude any quality assurance award being confirmed. In the Kitchen and food preparation areas in particular, cleanliness of this standard would be a serious concern.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Cleaning may visibly lack attention to some difficult to access areas and is likely not to involve any regular or systematic deep cleaning processes. Standards seen at this level are likely to be effectively the minimum acceptable and will almost certainly require significant and systematic improvement for an award to be sustained on future assessments.

Mark 3 (Good)

Regular attention paid to all aspects and consistent standards maintained. Systematic approach with evidence of clear standards being set and monitored. This standard will represent a fundamentally good level of cleanliness, probably with some areas that could potentially be improved, but no aspect giving concern. Whilst being generally of a good standard, closer attention to detail may be recommended in some areas e.g. extractor fans, inside ovens, fridges, within drawers and cupboards or under sinks.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard with obvious close attention to detail in most areas but not quite achieving an excellent standard in every respect. Relatively minor omissions such as difficult to access areas behind cookers or a slight build up of dead insects in overhead light diffusers may detract from an otherwise excellent standard.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Immaculate throughout with a professional approach and detailed thoroughness apparent in every aspect. Highest standards of cleanliness to all surfaces including kitchen fixtures, cupboard and drawer interiors & all electrical equipment. Rubbish areas should also be kept clean and rubbish regularly removed. Gleaming surfaces, no smears or marks, no blown bulbs or broken equipment. Careful and consistent attention to even relatively minor details resulting in a standard that is effectively without fault.

4. FOOD QUALITY & SERVICE

N.B. Meals Service, Breakfast and Dinner quality will only be assessed when meals are offered at an alternative 'all inclusive' rate to self catering or are separately charged for 'as taken'. Food provided and available to all guests as a 'free' facility on a self-catering basis will not be assessed.

MEALS SERVICE:

Assessment of meals service will take into consideration the following: Efficiency of meals service, appropriate professional skills levels, design ergonomics of self service facilities.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

In a serviced or self-service facility staff will show low skills levels but be basically pleasant. Informality bordering on inefficiency but will respond in a reasonably helpful way to requests. All staff involved in food service will be clean and appropriately dressed for handling food.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Service staff showing some degree of skill and interest. There should be sufficient staff available to serve and/ or clear tables as required. Staff should display a willingness to help and be attentive, more enthusiastic than polished but trying to do their best. In a self-service dining facility the range and availability of menu choices may be variable through service periods.

Mark 3 (Good)

Service will be friendly throughout and efficient. Self-service facilities should be of a reasonably effective ergonomic design and layout. Staff should have a reasonable level of product knowledge particularly in respect of the suitability or otherwise of menu items for vegetarian or other common specific dietary requirements. This may, in a self-service environment, be offered in part by appropriate signs and information at the point of service.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Proactive and knowledgeable staff with a friendly and caring attitude. Staff should have a high level of product knowledge. In self-service situations this could be achieved in part by clearly labeling the food on offer. Staff should be competently skilled and attentive without being intrusive.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Service should be delivered with a considerable degree of proactive friendly and professional skill. The full range of menu choices should be available throughout service. Self-service facilities will be of an excellent ergonomic design.

FOOD QUALITY – BREAKFAST

Assessment of Breakfast will take into consideration the quality and range of items offered and the standard of presentation.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

A minimal range which may be a simple and very limited continental choice. Cheapest 'bulk catering' quality ingredients offered in their original containers.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

An adequate range of continental choices but may not include a cooked option.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good range of choice which is likely to include a cooked option. Menu choices likely to be of a standard quality with no particular effort to provide any unusual or locally sourced items.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good range of choice which will include a full cooked option. All menu choices will be well prepared, attractively and freshly presented.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

An extended range of menu choices including a variety of cereals, full cooked breakfast and continental options. Ingredients will be of high quality and, where possible or appropriate, locally sourced.

FOOD QUALITY – DINNER

Assessment of Dinner will take into consideration the quality and range of items offered and the standard of presentation.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

May consist of only one or two courses with no choice, vegetarian options only available by prior arrangement. Pre-prepared meals simply heated up on the premises with little effort at presentation, small portions, edible and adequate.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Meals could be of a good quality but restricted in menu choice or number of courses. Menus could show a reliance on pre-prepared or frozen ingredients.

Mark 3 (Good)

A three-course meal should be available which may not normally offer a range of choice (although vegetarian options should always be available on request). All dishes should be competently prepared and attractively presented.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good range of menu choices one of which should be vegetarian. Ingredients will be of high quality and where possible or appropriate fresh and locally sourced. All menu choices will be well prepared, attractively and freshly presented.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

A three-course meal should be available with an excellent range of choices at each course. A reasonable range of vegetable, potato and salad choices, as appropriate, should also be available.

5. BEDROOMS**DECORATION:**

Assessment of this aspect will include consideration of all wall coverings, finishes, pictures, posters, borders etc. on all bedroom walls and ceilings.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Basic quality décor showing some wear and damage, some lifting wallpaper, thinning or lifting paint, marks and wear evident although overall still of an adequate standard.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Wallpaper where used may have some seams beginning to open or showing age, could be of basic quality. Plain painted walls may have been painted directly onto plasterboard or be thinning and patchy in places. May be breeze or concrete block walls with fresh paint in good condition.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good quality décor with minimal wear. May be functional but fresh looking and well maintained, DIY effectively done but without a 'professional' finish.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of décor throughout. May be relatively simple finish e.g. emulsion but executed and maintained in an excellent condition. May be wallpaper or embossed paper and emulsion. Wallpaper will be well applied with no lifting corners or opening seams. Plain décor of an intrinsically good standard may have been enhanced with use of colour, pictures/photos or other artwork. Standards maintained through all bedroom areas. Very little, if any, visible marks or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality décor with well-considered use of colour, pictures, posters or themes. May be of an intrinsically functional nature but additional features and immaculate condition still define an excellent standard. Plain painted walls will have a properly finished plaster or plasterboard surface that has been skimmed or paper lined before painting. Paint will be in excellent condition, evenly and professionally applied.

FURNISHINGS, FURNITURE, FITTINGS:

The assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of the quality and condition of all bedroom furniture, chairs, lockers, shelving, clothes hanging, curtains, heating and lighting fittings/equipment.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Could consist of little more than just hooks or some shelving for storage. Furniture & fittings may show wear but still be in a serviceable condition, damage may be evident on some pieces. Blinds/curtains etc. of a basic quality, possibly unlined or ill-fitting. Basic quality light fittings e.g. fluorescent tubes. Heating equipment will be safe and functional but may show marks, rust or damage to finishes.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Furniture / fittings in a quite good condition, possibly 'domestic' in quality, only slight evidence of wear. Lockers where provided may be old 'industrial' style metal units with damage/wear apparent. Furniture provision could be of a good quality and condition but provided at minimal levels.

Mark 3 (Good)

May be modest quality but excellent condition 'flat pack' furniture. Good quality properly fitting curtains or blinds or well-maintained shutters where appropriate. Good quality heating fixtures and fittings but showing some marks or wear.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Lockers where provided may be relatively new metal cabinets in very good condition or higher innate quality wooden units. Well coordinated furnishings. High quality light and heat fittings in excellent condition. Ample hanging & storage space.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality furniture, individually made by craftsmen to an excellent standard, or could be commercial quality. Lockers where provided are likely to be high quality wooden units of a style which co-ordinates with other furniture in the room. Will probably include other occasional furniture e.g. easy seating, tables etc. Co-ordinated soft furnishings of a high standard. Curtains/blinds of excellent quality often fully lined with thermal/blackout material. Lighting and heating fittings or equipment will be of a similarly excellent quality and condition.

FLOORING:

The assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of floor finishes and coverings in all bedrooms.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Flooring in an overall adequate condition, some wear and stains evident but not extensive, badly rucked carpeting, inappropriate patching. May be thin cord carpet or loose/worn carpet tiles.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Flooring of an overall quite good condition and/or quality. May be of an intrinsically very good or even excellent quality but now showing quite noticeable wear or flattening and some marks. May be more modest quality but in very good condition. Vinyl flooring or wooden floors in reasonable condition may typically be considered to be of this standard.

Mark 3 (Good)

Flooring of a good overall standard, may be thinner quality contract carpeting in excellent condition or better quality but with some wear or marks. Some carpets may be better than others but all will be reasonably well fitted. Wooden floors will be sound and have had an appropriate finish (varnish, sealant etc.) with no significant burns or unsightly scarring.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of flooring throughout the bedroom areas. Carpets may be of a good 'contract' quality but well fitted with no obvious marks, wear or damage. Wooden floors will be well finished and maintained with little, if any, scarring or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Flooring of a uniform excellent standard, carpets will be properly fitted, free of obvious signs of wear or any damage and with good quality underlay. May be higher quality loop pile carpets, laminate flooring or high quality finish and condition on original floorboards with additional bedside rugs or carpet squares.

LIGHTING AND HEATING:

The assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of the level, distribution and range of lighting provision. Heating appliances and level of provision/controllability.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Lighting: Adequate lighting within the main bedroom; may be just a single pendant. Some or all fittings without shade or cover. Could be bare fluorescent tubes.

Heating: Adequate heating but may be less than effective for the full room during colder periods. Some rooms may be unheated. Some form of free standing heating should, at least, be available for the colder months.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Lighting: Quite good lighting levels, sufficient for most practical purposes. All bulbs, unless decorative, to have appropriate shade or cover. Fluorescent tubes with diffusers.

Heating: Heating available but only at certain times e.g. older night storage heaters or central heating system on restricted timing. Small freestanding heaters showing age or wear.

Mark 3 (Good)

Lighting: Effective lighting to all parts of the room. May include some bedside lighting.

Heating: Good level of heating which maintains a good background temperature. Effective and available at appropriate times. May be more modern (i.e. more effective) style of storage heaters but without boost facility or wet central heating system with flow controls only and radiators of minimal effective size and distribution for the room.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Lighting: Thoughtful provision of high quality effective lighting reaching all parts of the room, this should include bedside lights per person in some rooms and some occasional or task lighting where appropriate.

Heating: Fixed heating, fully responsive to customers needs. Well positioned heating appliances.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Lighting: High quality effective lighting, giving sufficient controllable and appropriate illumination to all parts of the room e.g. task lighting at wash hand basins, shelving and mirrors and occasional lighting where appropriate. May also include provision of separate low wattage night-light.

Heating: Responsive, thermostatically controlled source of heat in all rooms. Available 24 hrs a day. E.g. Central heating with individual thermostatic valves. May be combined heating/ventilation or air conditioning system.

BEDS & BEDDING:

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of: Bunks, Beds, Alpine platforms, frames, bases, mattresses. Duvets, duvet covers, blankets, sheets, sheet sleeping bags, pillows and pillowcases.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Beds & bunks solid and movement free, secure and safe access to upper bunks, Beds to an acceptable quality – some will be showing some signs of wear but still be in a serviceable condition. Some marks, damage or wear on finishes to bed/bunk frames or bases. Mattresses with little support left in them, thin, lumpy pillows. Narrow (2'6") width beds. Adequate range of bedding and linen to include sufficient blankets/duvets and sheets or sheet sleeping bags.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Beds /bunks or sleeping platforms generally to a quite good standard, some of an older/more basic style and showing some signs of wear and tear. Clean and well presented bed linen/sheet sleeping bags. Some thinning or faded bed linen. Tog ratings on duvets appropriate to climate. Mattress and pillow protectors would be anticipated.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good quality bed/bunk frames and firm mattresses. May be high quality foam mattresses in excellent condition but more likely to be internally sprung. Well presented bedding and linen, all in good condition, pillows should be substantial, good quality pillow & mattress protectors in use.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Most, if not all, beds and bunks to be full sized (i.e. 3' width) and in very good condition, usually with full depth sprung mattresses. High quality linen and pillows in very good condition. Linen may well be co-ordinated with other aspects of the soft furnishings.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Top quality (may often be commercial quality) full sized (3') beds or bunks with internally sprung full depth mattresses. Co-ordinated & crisply laundered bed linen/ sheet sleeping bags. High quality duvets or weighty blankets with spares available.

SPACE, COMFORT & EASE OF USE

This assessment will normally include consideration of spaciousness, layout, and access to storage units, light and heat controls. The impact (negative or positive) of additional furnishings, coombed ceilings, narrow or awkwardly shaped rooms and access to beds will also be considered in assessment of this aspect.

Quality indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Bedrooms of an adequate (minimum criteria standard) size in relation to the number of beds. Little space for storage or free movement. Access to windows, heating and lighting controls may be severely restricted.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

An overall quite good standard of room size and layout. Some rooms may be of a very good standard but others much more restricted. Although minimum spaciousness requirements will have been exceeded, the impression is likely to remain that the maximum possible number of beds has been put into rooms to the detriment of guests comfort.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good-sized bedrooms with sufficient space for free movement; access to windows, lighting and heating controls not unduly restricted. Some bedrooms may be slightly small, but well laid out. Some coombed ceilings but not over the majority of floor space. May be very good sized bedrooms but with no additional furniture.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Very good sized rooms with ample free floor space and no restrictions on access to windows, power sockets or heating controls. Likely to have some items of additional furniture which enhance visitors comfort and use of the room.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Spacious bedrooms, well laid out with clear emphasis on guest comfort and convenience. At the highest standard some (if not all) bedrooms can be expected to be well furnished, possibly including for example, lockers, well organised storage space, bedside or occasional tables and easy seating. Minimum criteria floor space requirements can be anticipated to be exceeded by at least 50%.

6. BATHROOMS & WC's

DÉCOR

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of all wall coverings, finishes, pictures, posters, borders etc. on all bath/shower room and WC walls and ceilings.

Quality indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

In an acceptable condition, some aged or damaged décor with marks or wear evident, some flaking paint but mostly sound. Could be a number of cracked (but secure and not dangerous) tiles.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Wall or ceiling paper, where used, may have some seams beginning to open or showing age, could be of basic quality. Plain painted walls may have been painted directly onto plasterboard or concrete block walls or be thinning and patchy in places. Tiling may be aged with some cracked tiles and loose or missing grout. May be some mis-matched replacement tiling

Mark 3 (Good)

Good quality décor with minimal wear. May be functional but fresh looking and well maintained. e.g. well painted concrete or breeze block walls. DIY effectively done but without a 'professional' finish. Tiling will be basically sound throughout although perhaps not pristine. Some bathroom wall boarding may be in use but could be in either only restricted areas such as splash backs or more extensively used but showing some minor damage or ageing.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of décor throughout. May be a relatively simple finish e.g. emulsion or bathroom paint but executed and maintained in an excellent condition. Wallpaper will be well applied with no lifting corners or opening seams. Plain tiling may be extensive and uniformly of a very good standard. Bathroom wall boarding may be extensively in use. Standards maintained through all bathroom areas. Very little, if any, visible marks or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

All of excellent quality and condition. May be fully lined with bathroom wall panelling or a combination of more traditional finishes. Attractive tiling (and grout) in excellent condition.

SANITARY WARE AND FITTINGS

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of all bath and shower units, sanitary ware, shower trays, shower cubicles, shower curtains/doors, shelving, mirrors, room curtains/blinds. Clothes hooks, towel rails, soap dishes, disposal bins, wash basins and taps. Lighting and heating fittings and equipment.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Fixtures and fittings may be old but will still be in a serviceable condition. May be metal shower cabinets showing some rust or chips, cracks or crazing in plastic or fiberglass shower trays. Many stretched or DIY repaired shower hoses, aged and stained shower curtains. There should always be a reasonable hot water supply.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Fixtures and fittings presented to a quite good standard, may be undersized wash hand basins, basic quality shower heads & trays. All fittings should be in sound working order, easily used and responsive. There should be plenty of hot water at all times. Heating and lighting fixtures and fittings may show some rust, discolouration, wear or ageing.

Mark 3 (Good)

Efficient showers with properly set temperature or effective controls, standard sized washbasins in good condition. Standard size/quality ceramic shower trays or non-slip shower floor tiles. Heating and lighting appliances well maintained. Fresh looking shower curtains of a good quality or effective shower doors.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Very good quality, well made fixtures and fittings. Showers with a powerful flow and fully controllable. Generously sized ceramic or stainless steel shower trays. Shower curtains of a good quality in a very good condition. Towel rings/rails and hooks of a high quality with no evidence of rust or wear.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Bathrooms will be well co-ordinated and thoughtfully designed. The facility should create an excellent overall impression, with matching sanitary ware. All ancillary fittings, curtains/ blinds etc. will be of a similarly excellent quality and condition.

FLOORING

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of floor finishes and coverings in all bath/shower rooms and WC's.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Light domestic vinyl flooring showing some wear. Painted floors with a rough surface or paint patchy/peeling. Some cracked floor tiling but not dangerously so. Vinyl floor tiles with some tiles missing or loose.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

An overall quite good standard. May be of a modest quality but in very good condition. Old vinyl floor tiles showing heavy wear but all intact and secure. May be of an intrinsically higher quality but poorly fitted or now showing wear and marks.

Mark 3 (Good)

Flooring of a standard quality in good condition e.g. domestic vinyl or painted concrete with no flakes or wear. Floors properly prepared prior to fitting of vinyl or similar coverings. Well sealed edges and seams.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

High quality domestic bathroom flooring, well fitted and in very good condition. May be flooring of an excellent innate quality but no longer in pristine condition.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Contract quality non-slip flooring or high quality floor tiles, professionally fitted and in an excellent condition.

LIGHTING, HEATING & VENTILATION:

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of the following: Level and distribution of lighting provision. Heating appliances and level of heating provision/controllability. Efficiency and maintenance of ventilation/extraction systems.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Adequate wattage offering acceptable lighting levels. Ventilation available e.g., may just be an opening window. Little or no effective heating provision.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

A centre light but no or minimal effective lighting at the wash hand basin or mirror. Usually some limited mechanical ventilation. Some heating available within the bathrooms but may not be particularly effective.

Mark 3 (Good)

Effective lighting and ventilation in all areas, often supplemented with shaver lights/sockets. Effective mechanical ventilation appropriate for the size of facilities. Heating which maintains a good background temperature and which is effective & available at appropriate times.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Well positioned lighting effective for all purposes, may see lights set on timers. Ventilation systems will be fully effective and capable of maintaining a fresh environment during periods of heavy use. Fully effective and controllable heating provision. E.g. Central heating with individual thermostatic valves.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality lighting often with dedicated lighting in each shower and toilet cubicle, shaver lights and sockets. Ventilation system may incorporate individual extractors over each shower cubicle, perhaps coupled to humidity/movement sensors, a remote fan and/or timing devices. Controllable fully effective heating available 24hrs.

SPACE, COMFORT & EASE OF USE

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of: Spaciousness, layout, ease of use and degree of privacy.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Adequately sized facilities but perhaps rather restricted in places. Little opportunity for privacy when changing or drying.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Quite good spaciousness overall, some facilities may be quite restricted while others may be rather better. Standard sized cubicles. Restricted changing area. Facilities tight for space when used by a number of guests. Washbasins may be inconveniently closely spaced or when in use restrict access through the room.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good-sized bathrooms, sizeable shower cubicles, ample space for changing, well positioned fixtures and fittings for ease of use.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard which in many properties is likely to represent a mix of some excellent facilities with others being more restricted and of a 'good' standard.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Generously sized and well planned facilities. Shower cubicles will be of a size and layout that enables privacy for changing within the cubicle in a dry area separate from the shower tray. Wash basins should be well spaced to allow ease and comfort of use at busy periods.

7 & 8. PUBLIC AREAS & DINING AREAS

(Please Note: These areas will be assessed separately, but to the same quality indicators as listed)

DECORATION

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of all wall coverings, finishes, pictures, posters, borders etc. on public area walls and ceilings. These areas will include guests lounge, reception, stairways and corridors providing access to general use facilities and bedrooms.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Basic quality décor showing some wear and damage, some lifting wallpaper, thinning or lifting paint, marks and wear evident although overall still of an adequate standard.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Wallpaper where used may have some seams beginning to open or showing age, could be of basic quality. Plain painted walls may have been painted directly onto plasterboard or be thinning and patchy in places.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good quality décor with minimal wear. May be functional but fresh looking and well maintained. DIY effectively done but without a 'professional' finish. May be breeze or concrete block walls with fresh paint in good condition. Likely to be some pictures, photos or other artifacts used to enhance décor.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of décor throughout. May be relatively simple finish e.g. emulsion but executed and maintained in an excellent condition. May be wallpaper or embossed paper and emulsion. Wallpaper will be well applied with no lifting corners or opening seams. Plain décor of an intrinsically good standard may have been enhanced with use of colour, pictures/photos or other artwork. Standards maintained through all public areas. Very little, if any, visible marks or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality décor with well-considered use of colour, pictures, prints (e.g. local scenes) and other decorative relief. Original architectural features restored or maintained to an excellent standard and used to good effect. May be of an intrinsically functional nature but additional features and immaculate condition still define an excellent standard. Where used, wallpaper will be of a high quality and excellent condition with no open seams,

wear or damage. Plain painted walls will have a properly finished plaster or plasterboard surface that has been skimmed and/or paper lined before painting. Paint will be in excellent condition, evenly and professionally applied.

FURNISHINGS, FURNITURE & FITTINGS

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of all public area furniture including dining tables and chairs, easy seating, coffee/occasional tables, curtains. Light fittings and heating equipment/fittings in these areas.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Furniture, furnishings and fittings may show wear but still in a serviceable condition, damage may be evident on some pieces. Blinds/curtains of a basic quality, possibly unlined or ill-fitting. Heating and lighting appliances and fittings may be of a basic quality and showing some wear or marks but still be safe and functional.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Furniture, furnishings and fittings in a quite good condition, possibly of quite modest 'domestic' quality, may be showing some evidence of wear.

Mark 3 (Good)

Furniture, furnishings and fittings all of a good standard, though age and use beginning to show some minor signs of wear and tear. Good quality curtains or blinds, well maintained shutters (where fitted). Well maintained heating and lighting appliances with little or no rust, marks or staining.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Furniture and furnishings must offer a high degree of comfort and allow ample seating for the number of guests. Light fittings & heating appliances/radiators etc. to be of a high quality, well maintained and in an excellent condition.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Furniture to offer a high degree of comfort and quality. Solid dining furniture, again offering high levels of comfort, well spaced chairs of appropriate height for tables. Bench seating could be excellent if of a high standard & generously proportioned. Wooden seating will have tie on cushions or similar for added comfort.

FLOORING

Assessment of this aspect will normally include consideration of floor finishes and coverings in all lounge, reception, and public areas. Stairways and corridors providing access to general use facilities and bedrooms.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Flooring in an overall adequate condition, some wear and stains evident but not extensive, badly rucked carpeting, inappropriate patching. May be very modest quality e.g. thin cord carpet with little/no underlay. May be wood flooring in a serviceable and safe condition but heavily scarred with poor condition or no finish.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Flooring of an overall quite good condition and/or quality. May be of an intrinsically very good or even excellent quality but now showing quite noticeable wear or flattening and some marks. May be more modest quality but in very good condition. Vinyl flooring or wooden floors in reasonable condition may typically be considered to be of this standard.

Mark 3 (Good)

Of a good overall standard, perhaps some signs of wear but not significant, some carpets may be better than others but all will be reasonably well fitted. Carpets may be of a high original quality but now showing some age/wear or may be relatively modest quality (e.g. thinner 'contract' carpeting) but in very good condition. Wooden floors will be sound and have had an appropriate finish (varnish, sealant etc.) with few burns or marks.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard of flooring throughout the public areas. Carpets may be of a good 'contract' quality but well fitted with no obvious marks, wear or damage. Wooden floors will be well finished and maintained with little, if any, scarring or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Flooring of a uniform excellent standard, carpets will be professionally fitted, free of obvious signs of wear or any damage and with good quality underlay. Other finishes or natural alternatives e.g. laminate flooring, polished wood floors, parquet flooring could be of an excellent standard if of a high innate quality and well maintained.

LIGHTING & HEATING

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of level, distribution, range and controllability of lighting provision and the level, distribution and controllability of heating provision. Aspects of Lighting and Heating will be separately assessed and then a composite mark, not necessarily a mathematical average, will be determined. For clarity, these aspects are individually considered in the following:

LIGHTING**Quality Indicators: For example****Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Adequate lighting in all living areas to include corridors, staircases and landings. Acceptable levels of illumination, possibly just a minimum wattage provided. May be bare fluorescent tubes.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Quite good levels of lighting, but perhaps not reaching all parts of the room. All bulbs, unless decorative, to have appropriate shade or cover. Lighting is likely to be effective for general purposes but not be capable of providing task or ambient lighting should it be required.

Mark 3 (Good)

Likely to be to be more than one source of lighting giving sufficient light in all areas for most practical purposes. Dining areas suitably well lit.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Effective lighting to all parts of the room; may include some supplementary lighting (table lamps, standard lamps etc.). May see separate controllability of lighting over the dining area etc.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality effective lighting, giving excellent illumination to all parts of the room for all practical purposes. This will typically include supplementary, occasional or task lighting for reading, dining etc. Lighting levels may be controllable e.g. with dimmer switches.

HEATING**Quality Indicators: For example****Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Generally adequate heating. Heating may be less than effective for the full room during colder periods. Likely to be modest quality appliances with limited output or freestanding heaters. Solid fuel fires will have an adequate and accessible fuel supply.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Heating available and effective but only at certain times such as basic model night storage heaters without boost facility or central heating system on restricted timing.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good level of heating which maintains a comfortable background temperature in all areas. Fully effective and available at appropriate times. May be more modern (i.e. more effective) style of storage heaters but without boost facility or wet central heating system with flow controls only and radiators of minimal effective size and distribution for the room. Where appropriate, heating may be very effectively provided or enhanced by traditional stove or open fires.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Highly effective and responsive heating system in all rooms. Well positioned appliances or radiators, available at all reasonable times and fully controllable.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Responsive heating system, with back up. Could be central heating with 24hr availability and thermostatically controlled. Solid fuel fires, where provided, will have a generous supply of fuel ready for use and easily available to guests.

SPACE, COMFORT & EASE OF USE

Assessment of this aspect will normally take into consideration: Spaciousness, layout, comfort and ambience in relation to normal levels of use. Usage is generally anticipated to be less in city centre environments than in more rural or remote properties.

Quality Indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Limited space, restricted range and availability of seating. An acceptable environment without disturbing levels of noise, smoke etc.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Overall a quite good standard which may represent otherwise well laid out rooms that are not really big enough for normal levels of use. Could be rooms which contain enough seating for normal levels of use but where this has been achieved at the expense of reasonable free movement and comfort. Ambience and comfort may be compromised by a combined kitchen/dining/lounge area in a relatively small room.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good sized rooms with sufficient space for free movement. Rooms should be adequately sized and furnished to accommodate normal levels of use. Lounge areas are like to be comfortably separated from kitchen/dining areas at least by space.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

An overall very good standard which may represent some variation between 'excellent' and other 'good' standards seen in a range of rooms. Could be of an excellent size with a full range of furniture but laid out in a formal way which compromises the ambience of the room.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

A well-planned room offering high levels of comfort for all users, furniture/ TV's/lighting all positioned in suitable & convenient places. Seating, both dining and easy, should be should be available to accommodate a significant proportion of the maximum number of guests. A 'significant' proportion is likely to be less in a city centre location, where use may be limited, than in a rural property with a high level of use.

9. SELF CATERING KITCHEN**DÉCOR & FLOORING**

Assessment of these aspects will normally take into consideration all wall coverings, finishes and floor coverings in the kitchen and food preparation areas.

Quality Indicators: for example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Basic quality décor showing some wear and damage, marks and wear evident although overall of an adequate standard. May be some cracked tiles but not extensive or dangerous. Noticeable localised stains/burns around cookers, wear showing in heavy traffic areas but otherwise of a better condition.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Décor overall of a quite good standard. May be fundamentally sound but with some marks, wear or ageing detracting from an otherwise good standard. Flooring in an overall quite good condition, some wear and stains evident but not extensive. May be aged or new but relatively light quality domestic vinyl with opening seams or wooden flooring with some damage or a scarred finish.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good quality décor with minimal wear. May be functional but fresh looking and well maintained. Tile grouting and sealant to be in a good clean condition. Floor covering of a good overall standard, perhaps some signs of wear but not significant. Domestic quality vinyl flooring or floor tiling, all in good condition.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Décor throughout the kitchen areas of a very good standard with only some relatively minor blemishes or weaknesses differentiating from an otherwise excellent standard. Flooring likely to be of an excellent domestic quality, free of any marks or damage and professionally fitted.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Décor to be high quality & durable with consideration given to both practicality and visual impression. Likely to include some commercial quality aspects such as fitted stainless steel splash backs or use of appropriate quality wall boarding, Flooring of a uniform excellent standard. May well be heavy contract quality non-slip vinyl flooring.

LIGHTING, HEATING AND VENTILATION

Assessment of these aspects will normally take into consideration level and distribution of lighting provision. Level and controllability of heating provision. Efficiency and maintenance of ventilation and extraction systems.

Quality indicators: For example**Mark 1 (Acceptable)**

Adequate lighting in all main areas, may be single bare fluorescent tubes. No mechanical ventilation available e.g., may just be an opening window. Little or no effective heating provision.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Adequate wattage but may result in some work areas being less than effectively lit. Fluorescent tubes should be fitted with diffusers. No mechanical or only marginally effective mechanical ventilation.

Mark 3 (Good)

All work areas reasonably well illuminated. Effective ventilation, typically via extractor fan & opening window. Appropriate heating levels.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Effective lighting reaching all parts of the room. Kitchens should be well ventilated; cookers will usually have extractor hoods and integral lighting. Thermostatically controlled heating where appropriate e.g. in large or open plan kitchens.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

A high standard of illumination, shadow free 'task' lighting over all work surfaces, hobs & cookers (e.g. under unit lighting). Excellent ventilation system, larger kitchens are likely to be equipped with commercial extractor systems.

FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of all kitchen furniture, fitted units, shelving, dry storage, tables etc. Light and heating fittings and equipment, curtains or blinds.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Furnishings may be extensively worn but still in a serviceable condition. May be basic open shelving with worktops above or old domestic units re-fitted and heavily used. Damage evident on some furniture pieces. Worktop surfaces may be damaged in parts through burns or cuts and scrapes.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Kitchen furnishings overall of a quite good standard. May be standard quality domestic fitted units showing noticeable age and wear e.g. knife damaged worktops, a cupboard or door handle missing or broken but nonetheless in good overall functional order.

Mark 3 (Good)

Good standard of furnishings, possibly domestic in quality but in good condition with only slight evidence of wear. May be DIY construction but executed to a very good standard. Cupboard, drawer and shelf interiors all in a good condition with only minor damage or wear.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good standard throughout which is likely to be represented by standard quality domestic fitted units all in excellent condition. Very little, if any, noticeable signs of wear or damage.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

High quality furniture & fittings, may be craftsman made to an excellent standard, could be commercial quality kitchen furnishings or domestic quality of a higher than usual standard. Units may or may not have doors. Kitchens equipped to this standard may well incorporate catering quality stainless steel work/food preparation surfaces or shelving.

COOKERS, ELECTRICAL & GAS EQUIPMENT

Assessment of these aspects will normally include consideration of cooking appliances including microwave ovens, grills, hobs and conventional ovens. 'White' goods including fridge, freezer, kettle, toaster, water boiler.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Equipment worn and heavily used but serviceable and in a safe condition. Fridge interior surfaces cracked or door seal damaged. Basic range of equipment e.g. fridge space very limited in relation to number of guests accommodated. Cookers and hobs properly installed and safe to use but may be aged and worn, gas burners partially blocked or deformed. Some rust; may have damaged but functional controls.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Equipment overall of a quite good standard which may reflect some considerable variation in quality/condition of different items. Likely to be domestic quality equipment with some wear or damage evident.

Mark 3 (Good)

Equipment may show some wear but not extensive, being of a generally good condition. Fridge interiors all sound, seals all complete and effective. Cookers and hobs often of a standard domestic quality but in very good condition. May be second hand/refurbished catering equipment in good condition.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good overall standard which may be differentiated from an otherwise excellent standard by a restricted range of equipment or by individual items being of a noticeably lower standard. Fridge space provision will be

generous in respect of the number of guests accommodated with clear facility for hygienic food separation (usually separate fridges).

Mark 5 (Excellent)

Full size cookers and hobs of top domestic quality or, often, commercial catering quality in excellent condition. A wide range of high quality electrical equipment, all in excellent condition. May include 'luxury' items such as toastie/toasters, blenders, coffee machine etc. A freezer would normally be provided. Likely (especially in larger properties) to include at least some commercial quality equipment, e.g. water boilers, or toasters.

KITCHEN & DINING WARE

Assessment of these items will normally include consideration of all pots, pans, cooking utensils, cutlery, crockery, glassware.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Very mixed crockery and utensils, some damaged and extensively worn. Pan surfaces pitted or damaged, aluminium utensils oxidizing, some handles burnt or otherwise damaged.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Largely free of damage or significant signs of wear. It is recommended to include some of bulk catering size where group bookings are accommodated.

Mark 3 (Good)

Utensils and crockery in a good condition and enabling appropriately full table settings to be made.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good range of cutlery, crockery and glassware available. Full range of utensils all in a very good condition.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

An extended range of utensils and crockery and glassware, all in an excellent condition, usually considerably in excess of minimum requirements. Additional items may be provided e.g. Range of items suitable for microwave or specialist knife sets.

SPACE, COMFORT & EASE OF USE

Assessment of this aspect will normally consider: Spaciousness, layout, ergonomic design. Level of provision and space relative to level of use.

Quality Indicators: For example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Adequate work and storage space. May be rather restricted in respect of the normal level of use or with particularly poor ergonomic design.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Quite good size and layout of kitchen although may become a little tight for space during peak use periods. Sufficient but less than generous provision of convenient work and food preparation surfaces.

Mark 3 (Good)

Sufficient space for food preparation and cooking, appropriate for the number of guests and normal level of use. Plentiful power points functionally placed. A provision of individual food storage space should be available for a significant proportion of the maximum number of guests.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

A very good size and layout of the kitchen and food preparation areas. May be less generous in terms of space or size for the level of peak potential use than an excellent standard, but not to a point which could be reasonably expected to cause any major inconvenience.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

The kitchen should be ergonomically designed with generous allowance for ease of movement and work for all guests. Individual food preparation areas are recommended in larger kitchens. Kitchen space at this standard would not be anticipated to be compromised by dual use as a dining area.

10. OTHER FACILITIES

LAUNDRY AND DRYING ROOMS

Assessment of these facilities will normally consider quality of facility and equipment, maintenance and cleanliness.

Quality Indicators: for example

Mark 1 (Acceptable)

Ageing equipment, either commercial or domestic, showing extensive signs of wear, e.g. rusty, chipped enamel, scratches. Insufficient provision of hanging and storage space for all potential users. Drying room with minimal equipment for hanging clothing and only marginally effective equipment for ensuring equipment and clothing is dried. This standard may also reflect where an otherwise good facility is being used as a storage area to the detriment of its intended use or a facility that is good but restricted in size relative to its potential use.

Mark 2 (Quite Good)

Clean and well presented facility, perhaps quite basic or limited in its provision but of a good standard.

Mark 3 (Good)

A good sized facility relative to the number of guests. Standard domestic or commercial laundry equipment might be showing some signs of wear, but generally be in good order. Drying room equipped with comprehensive hanging and boot rack facilities. The drying room will be fitted with fully effective and controllable equipment to ensure clothing and equipment can be dried in reasonable timescales (e.g. overnight) under normal circumstances.

Mark 4 (Very Good)

Laundry and drying facilities will be well designed, spacious and equipped to a high standard. In respect of the laundry this will usually require commercial coin or token-op machines. There should be sufficient equipment to ensure that normal guests requirements for use can be met. In respect of the drying room this standard will usually be achieved by a facility equipped with comprehensive drying facilities and very effective drying systems. This will most often be achieved by a combination of dehumidifiers, background heating and ventilation. Both facilities will be well maintained and show excellent standards of cleanliness.

Mark 5 (Excellent)

An excellent standard will be most often demonstrated in these areas by the additional provision of an extended range of high quality equipment, spin dryers, iron, ironing board, laundry baskets etc. It would be anticipated that laundry facilities at this standard are provided for the exclusive use of guests and guest access would not therefore be restricted to limited hours when equipment is not required by the hostel for its own purposes.

RECREATION/ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

Assessment of this aspect will normally include any additional recreational facilities provided for guests' use. This may include, for example only and not definitively or exclusively: Quality, range and maintenance of additional recreational facilities such as pool table, game machines, internet access, table tennis, library, shop, games room, internet café, leisure facilities, specialist equipment storage provision e.g. canoes/bikes/climbing gear. Marks will be awarded in consideration of the range, quality and condition of facilities provided. A limited range, for example bike hire only, but providing high quality and well maintained bikes, is likely to be considered to be of a good standard. A more extended range, of similar high quality could be considered very good or excellent. Where the

range is limited and/or the quality and maintenance is modest or lacking, the provision may be considered to be quite good or acceptable.

Please Note:

There is no minimum entry requirement in respect of this aspect. Where additional facilities are provided but are of a minimalist nature and limited benefit or quality, potentially detracting from the standards achieved in other aspects of the property, they may not be assessed. This exception is made at the discretion of the Quality Advisor carrying out the visit. It is enabled to ensure that an upgrade in Quality Assurance award is not achievable by simply removing facilities that, of however modest a quality, are still additional to basic requirements and are better (from a guests perspective) than nothing. In such cases the Quality Advisor will still be expected to make comment on such facilities and recommendations for their improvement.

Irrespective of the above, it is important to note that all such facilities will still be required to comply with any relevant British Standards or other statutory obligations.