Introduction to Guest House Classification Scheme

Registration & Classification

Failte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority
Introduction to
Guest House Classification Scheme

1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1. Fáilte Ireland
   1.2. Registration and Classification

2. MANDATORY GUEST HOUSE CLASSIFICATION SCHEME
   2.1. Minimum Requirements
   2.2. Point Scoring Opportunities

3. THE BENEFITS OF REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION

4. CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

5. THE REGISTRATION PROCESS
   5.1. Application for Registration
   5.2. Initial Registration
   5.3. Application For Renewal of Registration
   5.4. Renewal of Registration
   5.5. Prescribed Fee
   5.6. Revocation

6. EXEMPTION ARRANGEMENT – REGULATION 21

7. CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION

8. HOW TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority was established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003 to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. The organisation provides strategic and practical support to develop and sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourist destination. In this context, our mission is broadly:

“To increase the contribution of tourism to the economy by facilitating the development of a competitive and profitable tourism industry.”

Fáilte Ireland works in strategic partnership with tourism interests to support the industry in its efforts to be more competitive and more profitable and to help individual enterprises to enhance their performance.

**We have three principal areas of operation.**

Firstly, we help to develop product offerings for both the domestic and overseas markets and lead the marketing effort to promote Irish holidays to the domestic consumer. Our consumer travel website is available at: [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)

We also support enterprise development in Irish tourism, promoting best practice in operations, quality and standards and facilitating investment in tourism infrastructure.

And thirdly, we build human resource capability in the industry, investing heavily in training provision and standards across the publicly supported educational system, through our own training network of outreach centres and also, increasingly, via our executive and management development programmes for the tourism industry.
1.2. Registration and Classification

The registration and classification responsibilities of Fáilte Ireland cover accommodation legislation, monitoring of product quality, customer relations and in particular the management of appointed sub-contractors for the inspection and registration assessment of various accommodation categories.

Under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2003, Fáilte Ireland has specific powers and functions in relation to the registration and grading of tourist accommodation. We carry out this function by setting the requirements for the various categories of accommodation and through processes for the regular monitoring of the standards in all forms of approved accommodation.

We are also responsible for setting the requirements for the various other categories of accommodation. These schemes provide assurance to visitors and encourage higher standards of product amongst the industry in Ireland. Today’s visitors have high expectations and that’s why we have put such emphasis on our various quality assurance schemes.
2. MANDATORY GUEST HOUSE CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

The Fáilte Ireland Guest House Classification Scheme is a mandatory scheme on which all guest houses, being classified, must attain the One star minimum entry level requirements in order to comply with the Registration and Renewal of Registration Regulations for Guest Houses 2003. The scheme was developed in close consultation with the Irish Hotel Federation (IHF), and incorporates all star rated categories and has a point scoring system, which endeavours to meet and exceed consumer expectations.

Fáilte Ireland believes we have developed a robust system of classification to cater for the needs of today’s consumers. The classification process introduces a more streamlined and consistent approach for the approval and marketing of Guest House properties and will facilitate Fáilte Ireland to focus on supporting the sector through marketing efforts and product development.

The objective of the scheme is to inform consumers to recognise quality and to differentiate levels of facilities and services, which as potential guests they can expect. This offers far greater information and transparency to the consumer.

Our aim for these revised quality standards is to work continually with the industry and to strive together to raise quality standards in line with the ever-evolving expectations of consumers.

2.1. Minimum Requirements

There are four levels of classification ranging from One to Four stars in the Guest House sector.

All guest houses must attain the One star minimum entry level requirements in order to comply with the Registration and Renewal of Registration Regulations for Guest Houses 2003. To obtain a higher star rating, a progressively higher quality and range of services and physical facilities must be provided across all areas. All Two star, Three star and Four star guest houses will also have the option to score a number of points from a menu of optional facilities and services.
The assessment is divided up into “quality areas” that represent aspects of the business that contribute to the quality of the guest experience. Each quality area contains a series of minimum requirements. These are aspects of the facility and service that must be in place in order to meet visitors’ fundamental requirements. These minimum requirements must be met to ensure eligibility for a star grade.

The classification criteria and assessment forms for each grade can be viewed and downloaded from www.failteireland.ie

2.2. Point Scoring Opportunities

Each quality area includes a point scoring system for Two, Three and Four star guest houses, which indicates the level of facilities and services they offer, over and above the mandatory requirements for their star grade. The quality score is determined by the number of extra facilities and services provided and are reflected as a % score.

If you are comparing two guest houses of the same star rating, those that display the highest percentage score provide the highest level of facilities and services beyond the high level already expected of that grade. For example, additional percentage points are awarded for larger guest bedrooms which exceed the minimum requirements, for additional provisions in the bedrooms, such as iron and ironing board, complimentary mineral water or additional toiletries in the bathrooms. These extra provisions are awarded additional points and this is reflected in their overall % score. Therefore, a Four star guest house with a percentage score of 68% shows you instantly that there are more additional facilities and services available than a Four star guest house with a score of 29%.

It is always important to remember that points are awarded in addition to the star classification. The points scoring system does not apply to One star establishments. Examples of the application of point scores can be viewed on www.discoverireland.ie.

In addition to the grade the website will show the percentage points awarded to the establishment along with other relevant information such as award of “Ireland’s Best” or other Optimus certification, Spa category, White Flag Award etc.
Introduction to
Guest House Classification Scheme

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF REGISTRATION & CLASSIFICATION

As a supplier, there are a significant number of benefits available to you once you are assessed and registered under the Guest House Classification scheme.

- **Quality Rating** - an independent assessment carried out by experienced professionals. Unlimited use of your quality rating in all your promotional activity. Be eligible to use the term "Registered by Fáilte Ireland Standards".

- **Website** - free listing and promotion on Discover Ireland websites – with over 2.9 million visits to www.discoverireland.ie in 2007 and over 6.7 million visits to www.discoverireland.com in 2007, including over 19 foreign languages websites operated by Tourism Ireland.

- **Trade Show Participation** - be eligible to participate at domestic and international trade and consumer shows

- **Training** - be eligible to participate in Fáilte Ireland Training Programmes

- **Business Support & Advisory Services** - have access to Fáilte Ireland Business Support and Marketing Advice

- **Signage** - all approved participants are permitted to use the appropriate signage and quality assurance signs relevant to their category and/or classification. Where an establishment, for whatever reason, ceases to participate in the Fáilte Ireland Registration & Classification Scheme, all relevant display signs, print material and web content must be removed.
4. CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

All establishments are required to:

- Meet or exceed the Fáilte Ireland minimum entry requirements for classification purposes.
- Observe all of the requirements set out in the Registration and Renewal of Registration Regulations for Guest Houses 2003.
- Be assessed annually, and in the event of complaints, by authorised contractors of Fáilte Ireland.
- Pay an annual registration fee.
- Complete an annual information collection questionnaire either online or by post, as required.
- Maintain appropriate standards of guest care, cleanliness and service.
- Describe accurately in any advertisement, brochure or other printed or electronic media, the facilities and services provided.
- Adhere to and not to exceed the approved scale of charges agreed with Fáilte Ireland or the prices quoted at the time of booking.
- Remove all relevant display signs, print material and web content, where an establishment, for whatever reason, ceases to participate in the Fáilte Ireland Registration & Classification Scheme or falls out of registration.
5. THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

5.1. Application For Registration - Regulation 15

Regulation 15.1:

Every application made under Section 26 of the Tourist Traffic Act, 1939, for registration of any premises in the Board’s Register of Guest Houses, shall be in writing using the Initial Registration Application Form supplied by the Board or its Contractor and shall, when filled in and completed by, or on behalf of the applicant, for such registration, be sent by post to, or left at the principal office of Fáilte Ireland, or the Board’s appointed Contractor and shall be accompanied by:

A. The application fee as prescribed by the Board.

B. Evidence that the premises is registered by the Health Board, in whose functional area the premises is situated, under the Food Hygiene Regulations 1950-1989 and the EC (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations 2000 (as the same may subsequently be amended or modified).

C. Written evidence that the premises complies with Fire Services Act 1981 and/or Building Control Act 1990.

   (i) Written evidence from the Fire Authority for the area where the premises are situate that the said Fire Authority have no objection to the registration of the premises as a guest house or from the applicant’s architect/engineer that the premises substantially complies with the Fire Services Act 1981 and/or the Building Control Act 1990.

   (ii) Copy of Fire Safety Certificate to be provided.

5.2. Initial Registration - Regulation 16

Regulation 16.1:

Where the Board is satisfied that an application has been duly made in accordance with Regulation 15 and that the premises in respect of which the said application has been made is eligible for registration in the Board’s Register of Guest houses, having regard to the standards and requirements set out in Part 11 of these Regulations, the Board shall cause the premises to be registered in the said Register on payment of the following:

A. For each visitor’s bedroom entered in the Initial Registration Application Form as containing one single bed, the fee as prescribed by the Board,

Regulation 16.2:

Where the opinion of the Board that the said premises is eligible for registration in the Board’s Register of Guest houses is formed on or after the 1st day of September in any one year, the registration fee to be paid shall be calculated at one-third of the fee prescribed in 16.1 above.
5.3. Application for Renewal of Registration - Regulation 17

Every application made under Section 29 of the Tourist Traffic Act, 1939 for the Renewal of Registration of any premises in the Board’s Register of Guest houses shall be in writing, using the Renewal of Registration Form supplied by the Board or its Contractor and shall, when filled in and completed by, or on behalf of the applicant for the renewal of such registration, be sent by post, to or left at the principal office of, Fáilte Ireland or the Board’s appointed Contractor, and shall be accompanied by:

A. In respect of each visitor’s bedroom entered on the Renewal of Registration Form the fee as prescribed by the Board.

B. Evidence that the premises continues to be registered by the Health Board, in whose functional area the premises is situated, under the Food Hygiene Regulations 1950 to 1989 and the EC (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations 2000 (as may subsequently be amended or modified).

C. Evidence that the premises continues to comply with the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts, 1963 to 2000.

D. Particulars of any requirements of the Local Fire Authority made under the Fire Services Act 1981, (No.30 of 1981) and written evidence that these requirements have been or are being complied with.

5.4. Renewal of Registration - Regulation 18

Where the Board is satisfied that an application has been made in accordance with Regulation 17.1 and that the premises in respect of which such application has been made is eligible for renewal of registration in the Board’s Register of Guest houses, having regard to the standards and requirements set out in Part 11 of these Regulations, the Board shall cause the registration of such premises to be renewed in the said Register.
5.5. Prescribed Fees - Regulation 19

All references to prescribed fees in Regulations 15, 16, and 17 of these Regulations relate to fees prescribed by the Board with the consent of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism under Sections 26(2) (as amended by Section 5(1) of the Tourist Traffic Act, 1983), Section 27(2) and Section 29(2) of the Tourist Traffic Act, 1939.

5.6. Revocation - Regulation 20

The Registration and Renewal of Registration Regulations for Guest houses, 1986 are hereby revoked.
6. EXEMPTION ARRANGEMENT – REGULATION 21

In this Regulation 21, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

"New Structural Requirements" means the new structural requirements contained in these Regulations which include but are not limited to Regulations 4.1, 5.5, 8.2, 10.1, 10.3, 10.4 and 10.10.

"Year of Registration" means the 1st January to 31st December in every year as the same may be adjusted from time to time by the Board.

21.1 – Renewal of Registration

21.1.1 These regulations shall apply to applications for renewal of registration except that the New Structural Requirements shall not apply to any application for renewal of registration in respect of a premises which was registered under a set of regulations preceding these.

21.1.2 Failure to apply to renew – lapse of over 12 months – New Structural Requirements Apply.

The New Structural Requirements shall not apply where a premises which has received its first registration under a set of regulations preceding these fails to apply to renew its registration for a given Year of Registration but subsequently applies to renew within 12 months after the final date for submitting applications for the said given Year of Registration.
21.2 – Initial Registrations

These Regulations shall apply to initial registration applications save that:

21.2.1 Where, within 24 months prior to the Commencement Date a person has either:

A. Incurred not less than 15 per cent of the total cost of construction or refurbishment of a proposed guest house and/or

B. (The foundations of a premises having structural characteristics which would comply with the 1986 Regulations have been laid, and evidence of this has been provided in the form of a duly qualified auditor’s certificate of expenditure or by such other evidence as the Board or its authorised contractor may require, and

C. The applicant has on a date thereafter (which date shall not be more than 24 months after the Commencement Date hereof) sought initial guest house registration for the said premises from the Board and the premises does not comply with the New Structural Requirements in these regulations but would comply with the corresponding provisions of the 1986 Regulations as regards these structural requirements, then, the corresponding provisions of the 1986 Regulations will apply as regards these structural requirements only.

21.2.2 For the avoidance of doubt, where the registration of a premises has been cancelled by the Board under the provisions set out in the Tourist Traffic Acts, 1939-2003, these regulations shall apply to any subsequent application for registration of the said premises.
7. CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION

Cancellation of registration has very serious consequences among which are;

1. The inability to renew a liquor licence.
2. A prohibition on the use of the name ‘guest house’ to describe the business.
3. The necessity, in the subsequent renewal of registration, to obtain confirmation of compliance with planning permission, fire officer requirements and hygiene regulations.
4. The property being subject to the most recent registration criteria and not the registration criteria under which the premises was previously registered.
5. Failure to maintain registration of a guest house can seriously reduce the value of the property.
6. Failure to renew registration of a guest house is, in many cases, a breach of the borrowers’ covenants in the loan agreements of banks and other lending institutions.
8. HOW TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION

Fáilte Ireland has sub-contracted its accommodation registration assessment and classification functions to Tourist Accommodation Management Services Ltd (TAMS), who will be responsible for inspecting and recommending approval for properties under the scheme.

Tourist Accommodation Management Services Ltd (TAMS)
56 Drury Street, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 6179292,
Fax: (01) 6179553,
Email: info@tams.ie

For purposes of clarity and transparency, the operator will initially complete an assessment form for their particular classification. This will then be verified by Fáilte Ireland’s contractors following a visit to the premises and only then can a classification be awarded.

An appeal procedure will also be put in place, with the decision of the Appeal Board being final. However, as the rating and scoring procedure will be demonstrably objective and transparent, it is not envisaged that a substantial demand for appeals will emerge.

All guidance notes and assessment forms for classification for each grade are available to download from the Fáilte Ireland website: www.failteireland.ie
8.1 Completing the Assessment Form

A. Download the relevant document for your establishment at www.failteireland.ie or request a copy of the appropriate paperwork from TAMS via email at info@tams.ie or call 01-6179292.

B. Complete page 1 of the document with the premises name, address, contact details etc.

Work through the document, following the instructions in relation to standard facilities and points scoring items.

- **Standard Facilities:**
  - If available insert ✔ in column 1
  - If not available insert ✘ in column 1

- **Points Scoring Items:**
  - If available insert 1 in column 2
  - If not available insert 0 in column 2

C. Do not enter anything into the advisor columns as this will be completed by the advisor when they visit your establishment to complete the verification process.

D. Please note that at One star there are no opportunities for point scoring but all standard facility requirements must be adhered to.

E. Subtotal your points in the appropriate column at the end of each page.

F. At the end of the point scoring opportunities insert your overall total, sign and date the document.

G. Return your completed document to TAMS either via email or post.

H. An Advisor will visit your establishment to verify and award classification. When verification has been approved by TAMS management, your award under the new scheme will be entered into the system.