

The Language Centre
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge

Guidelines / Specifications for
Scrú dú Bhonnleibhé al 1 (A1)



Guidelines/Specifications for Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1 (A1)

Purpose

Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1 is a general proficiency examination of Irish. It is aimed primarily at adult learners of Irish. It is suitable for people in Ireland or abroad who are studying Irish at night classes or attending other similar courses. It is also suitable for those engaged in private study. In short, the examination is for all those who would like a qualification to attest to their ability in Irish. The examination itself, is not however, tied to any particular course of study. *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1* is not appropriate for those who speak Irish as a native language or for those who already hold any educational qualifications in Irish.

General information

- The examination for full accreditation is held once every year, usually in April or May in NUI Maynooth and in other centres throughout Ireland, in Europe, in the USA and Canada. Contact the Language Centre if you are interested in partial accreditation. Application forms and all current information relating to dates, examination centres, etc are available on this website.
- We work on the assumption that candidates who take these exams will have various first languages. On that basis, it was decided to write the examination questions and all guidelines in Irish.
- Candidates will not be allowed to bring a dictionary into the examination hall.
- It is important that candidates be aware of the examination's layout and the type of questions in each component. Therefore, candidates should use the sample papers to familiarize themselves with the question types in this examination.
- Consult the Frequently Asked Questions section of this website if you have any questions. Further information can also be obtained from The Language Centre, NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland (01) 7083737 or info@teg.ie
- Candidates and teachers are also advised to study the following documents:

Siollabas Bhonnleibhéal 1

Scrúduithe Samplacha Bhonnleibhéal 1

Tuairisc ar Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1

The level of *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1(A1)*

The level of *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1* generally corresponds to Level A1 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001). It is estimated that learners who have not studied Irish before will be able to undertake this examination after approximately 80-100 hours of study. Below is a brief description of what learners at this level can do in the various skills.

Speaking and listening comprehension

Learners will be able to use single words and simple sentences while taking part in a conversation based on the topics and general information that relate to everyday life. For example, they will be able to give a very basic description of themselves, where they live, their work and their daily routine. They will rely heavily on memorised

sentences but will be able to use some communication strategies to help them maintain interaction and also to help them in the learning process.

Learners will be able to understand simple speech that is delivered in a slow, carefully articulated but natural manner. They will rely heavily on others for assistance in their efforts to carry on communication.

Reading comprehension

Learners will understand texts that are short and simple insofar as they relate specifically to everyday life. They will understand the text on a phrase-by-phrase basis, finding words and recognisable phrases. They will reread the text as often as necessary.

Writing

Learners will be able to write simple words and very simple basic phrases. In *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1* candidates are asked to write single words only.

Language specifications

Comprehensive details regarding the topics, functions, vocabulary, grammatical structures, communication strategies etc on which this examination is based is available in *Siollabas Bhonnleibhéal 1* which you can download from this website.

Grading

The final mark a candidate receives in *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1* is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the four components of the examination (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Candidates will also receive the mark obtained in each of these components. There is no minimum pass mark for individual components.

The following grades are awarded in this examination:

<i>Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1(A1)</i>
80-100% Pass with Distinction
65-79% Pass with Merit
50-64% Pass
0-49% Fail

Components of the examination

The examination includes four components: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The marks are distributed as follows:

<i>Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1 (A1)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking 40%• Listening comprehension 25%• Reading comprehension 25%• Writing 10%

The different components are described in detail below. Candidates are advised to carefully study the sample papers also available on this website.

Listening comprehension

General information

- There are four sections in the listening comprehension component.
- Candidates are given five minutes to read the listening test before the recording begins.
- The instructions for the candidates on the recording correspond to the instructions on the examination paper.
- There are short pauses for candidates to write their answers.
- The texts in this component are specially scripted for the examination and recorded in a studio. However, the texts are based, as far as possible, on authentic situations.
- Each listening text is heard twice.
- The listening component lasts approximately 25 minutes in total.
- The speakers on the recording will represent the three major dialects in Irish. However, speakers with strong regional accents are not used. All speakers have clear diction and pronunciation and speak slowly but naturally.
- Where a written answer is called for (a word or a phrase), these must be in Irish.
- Details of the listening component are outlined in the table below:

Section	Number of items	Text type	Number of marks	Response Format	Focus of task
1	12	2 informal monologues	12	Short answer (one word or number)	Listening and writing down key information relating to personal information (e.g. type of job, number of children, pastimes etc.).
2	6	3 short semi-formal announcements	12	Short answer / Four-option multiple choice	Listening to identify simple factual information (e.g. prices, numbers, dates etc.).
3	6	3 short informal messages left on a telephone answering machine	12	Short answer / Four-option multiple choice	Listening to identify simple factual information (e.g. arrangements, locations, descriptions etc.).

4	6	3 short informal dialogues between friends or relatives	12	Short answer / Four-option multiple choice	Listening to identify simple factual information.
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Marking

- Each question in section 1 carries one mark. Each question in the subsequent sections carries two marks. This gives a total of 48 marks, which represents 25% of the whole examination.
- There are two question types. In multiple choice questions candidates are reminded that they can only tick one box. Candidates who tick more than one box will not be awarded any marks, regardless of whether or not they choose the correct answer. In the short-answer questions spelling inaccuracies are accepted as long as the words written are recognisable. The only exception to this is when spelling is dictated on the recording.

Reading comprehension

General information

- There are 5 questions in this component.
- The reading and writing component last ninety minutes in total. The time that candidates should allocate to the different components or individual tasks is not specified.
- Candidates will have to deal with various challenges in each of the questions. See below.
- Details of the reading component are outlined in the table below:

Section	Number of items	Text type	Number of marks	Response Format	Focus of task
1	5	Sentences completion (Sentences relate to one theme/topic)	10	Four-option multiple choice	Reading and identifying appropriate lexical items.
2	5	Complete 5 short conversational exchanges.	10	Three-option multiple choice	Reading and identifying appropriate responses.
3	5	Complete a longer dialogue	10	Multiple matching (choose 5 items from a list of 8 options)	Reading and identifying appropriate responses.

4	7	E-mail / letter / note etc.	14	Right/Wrong/Doesn't say	Reading for detailed understanding and main ideas.
5	7	E-mail / letter / note etc.	14	Multiple matching (choose 7 items from a list of 12 options)	Reading and identifying appropriate lexical items.

Marking

- Each question in this component carries two marks. This gives a total of 58 marks, which represents 25% of the whole examination.
- Candidates are strongly advised to adhere to the instructions in order to minimise their chances of losing marks.

The writing exam

General information

- The reading and writing components last ninety minutes in total. The time that candidates should allocate to the different components or individual tasks is not specified.
- At this level candidates only have to write single words.
- Details of the writing component are outlined in the table below:

Section	Number of items	Text type	Task format	Number of marks	Focus of test
1	10	Informal e-mail or note	cloze test (open)	10	Providing appropriate word with focus on structure and spelling.
2	8	Informal e-mail or note	Cloze-test (multiple choice)	16	Grammatical and structural accuracy.

Marking

- The writing test carries 26 marks, which accounts for 10% of the total exam marks.
- In section one, candidates are assessed on their ability to provide the correct lexical item or grammatical structure and the correct spelling. No marks are allocated if there are spelling inaccuracies. In section two candidates who tick more than one box when answering the multiple-choice question will not be awarded any marks, regardless of whether or not they choose the correct answer.

The oral exam

General information

- Only one candidate is examined at any one time. The examination is carried out by two examiners. One of the examiners will concentrate exclusively on assessment throughout the examination and will not take part in the conversation. The other examiner will also be attentive to the candidate's performance but will ask the candidate questions and administer the tasks the candidate must perform.
- Candidates are given the card used in the role-play (Section 2) 5 minutes before the examination starts.
- They are given 1 minute to reflect on what they are going to say before they have to describe the drawing in Section 3 of the examination.
- All oral examinations are recorded for monitoring and research purposes.
- Details of the speaking component are outlined in the table below:

<i>Section</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Task type</i>	<i>Language functions</i>
1	3-4 minutes	Candidate is asked a number of questions about his/her daily life (home, family, work, hobbies, holidays and travel)	Giving information.
2	2-3 minutes	Role-play: (1) Candidate is given a card 5 minutes before the test. The card shows an advertisement e.g. for evening classes/new restaurant/house to let etc. Candidate answers questions by examiner regarding time/date/location/cost/telephone number etc. (2) Candidate is then invited to ask examiner questions about similar evening classes/ restaurant/house to let etc. (No prompts given)	Giving information. Asking for information. Giving a very simple opinion.
3	2-3 minutes	Describing a scene in a drawing: Candidates are given a picture and have one minute to look at it. Then they are invited to describe what is happening in the picture. The picture shows people participating in daily activities e.g. shopping/catching a train/watching television/working etc.	Describing a picture and what is happening in it

Marking

- Candidates are assessed on a sustained performance over the three sections of the examination and not on individual tasks. The speaking component accounts for 40% of the total marks for this examination.
- Examiners award marks according to four analytical criteria. Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Communication (this refers to candidates' ability to use communication strategies like asking for repetition and their ability to display basic sociolinguistic competences by using the simplest everyday forms of greetings, farewells, introductions, saying please, thank you, sorry etc).
- Examiners receive comprehensive training and standardization of marks is maintained by monitoring of examiners' performance.