

Language Centre
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge

Guidelines/Specifications for
Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 (A2)



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Purpose

Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 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.

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 2

Scrúduithe Samplacha Bhonnleibhéal 2

Tuairisc ar Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2

Level of Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 (A2)

The level of *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2* generally corresponds to Level A2 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001). It is estimated that learners who successfully undertook *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 1* will be able to undertake *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2* after approximately 160-200 extra hours of study. Below is a short description of the attainments of *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 (A2)* learners in the various skills.

Speaking and listening

At this level, learners will be able to describe, in simple terms, their background, their work, their daily activities, their likes and dislikes. They will use simple phrases and sentences (see examples in the syllabus). They will be able to participate in simple conversations on ordinary matters. They will understand simple sentences and common phrases pertaining to ordinary life, provided that the language is clear, that

the speech isn't overly dialectal and that it is delivered at a reasonable pace. They will continue to rely greatly on others to help them in their efforts to communicate.

Reading

Learners will be able to understand the gist of a written account (e-mail or letter, for example) as long as it is in simple language and the subject matter pertains to an area in which the learner has some knowledge or interest. Learners will not be able to handle abstract subject matter or material which doesn't contain commonly used vocabulary. They will have to use their limited resources in terms of vocabulary and structure to ascertain the meaning of a text and to understand details of simple texts.

Writing

The learner will be able to write simple sentences, in an e-mail message for example, on subjects directly relating to his/her own life. See, for example: 'Tá mé ag dul go dtí an phictiúrlann.'/'I am going to the cinema tonight.' At this level, learners will be able to write the following: simple sentences and phrases constructed with simple conjunctions such as 'and', 'but' and 'because'.

Language specifications

Comprehensive details regarding the topics, functions, vocabulary, grammatical structures, communication strategies etc on which this examination is based are available in *Siollabas Bhonnleibhéal 2* which you can download from this website.

Grading

The final mark a candidate receives in *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2* 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 a breakdown of marks in obtained in each of these components. There is no minimum pass mark for individual components.

<i>Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 (A2)</i>	
80 - 100%	Pass with distinction
65 - 79%	Pass le merit
50 - 64%	Pass
0 - 49%	Fail

Examination components

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

<i>Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2 (A2)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking 35%• Listening 25%• Reading comprehension 25%• Writing 15%

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 questions in this component.
- All material on the compact disk is in Irish.
- Candidates will have five minutes to read the exam paper before the recording is played.
- Each listening comprehension question will be played twice. Candidates will have time between each question, and additional time at the end of the exam, to check their questions.
- This part of the exam lasts for approximately 25 minutes.
- The speakers used will be good, clear-voiced speakers. The three main dialects will feature but none of the speakers will have a very strong regional accent.
- The materials used in this part of the exam will be based on authentic material. By this we mean that the texts will be based on commonly-heard materials, for example announcements on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, conversations and so on.
- Where a written answer is called for (a word or a phrase), these must be in Irish.
- Below is a description of the questions in the listening comprehension component.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Type of text</i>	<i>Format of answers</i>	<i>Number of marks</i>	<i>Focus of the task</i>
1	6	Three short announcements	Short answer (one word, number or phrase)	12	Listening for specific information.
2	6	Three short informal conversations	Short answer (one word, number or phrase)	12	Listening to find simple factual information.
3	9	A longer conversation	Short answer (one word, number or phrase) / Multiple choice answer (four options)	9	Listening to find simple factual information.
4	6	A longer conversation	Multiple choice (three options: true/false/not stated)	12	Listening to find simple factual information.

Marking

- Each question in section 1, 2 and 4 carries two marks. Each question in section 3 carries one mark. This gives a total of 45 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 6 questions in this component of *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2*.
- 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.
- In this component, candidates are expected to use their limited resources in vocabulary and structure to understand the main message and some detail in a range of texts.
- Candidates will face various challenges in each question, as shown in the table below. They may encounter words not contained in the syllabus. In such a case, they should be able to use strategies to guess the meaning of the word or decide that the word isn't essential to understanding the overall meaning of the piece. See the examples in the sample exams in this booklet.
- These texts will have an emphasis on facts and opinions.
- Below is a description of the questions in the reading comprehension component.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Type of text</i>	<i>Format of answers</i>	<i>Number of marks</i>	<i>Focus of the task</i>
1	6	Dialogue between friends / relatives	Multiple choice matching (choose 6 from a total of 9 items)	12	Reading to identify the correct response.
2	6	Short statements or questions and answers	Multiple choice answers (three options)	12	Reading to identify the correct answer
3	6	Three short texts of a similar type (book or film reviews, description of TV programme etc.)	Multiple choice answers (three options)	12	Reading for detailed understanding of a subject
4	6	Newspaper / magazine article	Multiple choice questions (3 options: true/false/not stated)	12	Reading for detailed understanding of a subject and to identify the main points.
5	12	Interview from magazine/ newspaper	Cloze test (open)	12	Reading to identify the appropriate lexical items.

Marking

- Each question in section 5 carries one mark. Each question in the other sections carries two marks. This gives a total of 60 marks, which represents 25% of the whole examination.
- Candidates are strongly advised to follow instructions in order to minimise their chances of losing marks.

The writing examination

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 are expected to be able to write very simple sentences/phrases. The subjects will be family, hobbies, holidays and other typical aspects of the candidates' experience.
- There are three questions in the writing component.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Type of text</i>	<i>Format of answers</i>	<i>Number of marks</i>	<i>Focus of the task</i>
1	1	Short paragraph	Guided writing task, based on a series of pictures	12	Grammatical accuracy and language structures
2	1	Email or informal note	Guided writing task based on a theme and prompts	12	Grammatical accuracy and language structures
3	10	Email, short letter or note	Cloze test (Open)	10	Grammatical accuracy and language structures

Marking

- The writing test carries 34 marks, which accounts for 15% of the total exam marks.
- Candidates are assessed on the following: grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and content.
- Each examiner works from a comprehensive marking scheme.

The oral examination

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 pictures in Section 3 of the examination.
- All oral examinations are recorded for monitoring and research purposes.

- Below is a description of this component in *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2*.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Length of time</i>	<i>Type of task</i>	<i>Language functions</i>
1	4-5 minutes	The candidate is asked questions about his/her daily life (place of residence, family, work, hobbies, holidays, travel, etc.)	Giving information
2	2-3 minutes	Role-play: (a) The candidate is given a card five minutes before the examination begins. The card contains key words relating to a particular event: planning holidays, describing a weekend etc. The candidate answers questions posed by the examiner relating to dates, places, price, journeys etc. (b) Then the candidate asks the examiner about an event similar to that on the role-card. (No prompts are given).	Giving information Seeking information Expressing simple opinions
3	2-3 minutes	Telling a simple story: The candidate is given a series of six pictures and has one minute to look at them. Then the candidate describes what is happening in the pictures. The pictures show scenes from daily life – eating in a restaurant, walking in the mountains, etc. – and an event that happens – for example, a bag is stolen, somebody falls and is hurt, etc.	Describing a series of related pictures and what is happening in them

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 35% of the total marks for this examination.
- In the *Scrúdú Bhonnleibhéal 2* oral examination, examiners award marks according to five analytical criteria. These are: Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency and Communication. ‘Communication’ refers to candidates’ ability to use communicative strategies like asking for repetition or clarification 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.