



ISE: Integrated Skills in English
An English language test for the 21st century



About Trinity College London

Trinity College London is an international exam board and independent education charity, known for its rich cultural heritage, academic rigour and pioneering spirit. We have been delivering external assessments since 1877 and each year more than 750,000 people across the world take a Trinity test. Operating in over 60 countries worldwide, we have over 75 years' experience delivering assessments in English language proficiency. Trinity tests and qualifications are accepted by regulatory bodies, universities and employers as robust evidence of achievement and skill level.

Trinity's English language qualifications include Integrated Skills in English (ISE) and Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE). These qualifications carry the ALTE Q-mark from the Association of Language Testers in Europe, having met all 17 of their stringent quality standards.

Trinity College London is recognised by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), and all of its regulated English language qualifications are listed on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Trinity's ISE and GESE qualifications are formally calibrated to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Meeting 21st century requirements

Trinity recognises the demand for 21st century students and job applicants to display a wide range of soft skills in addition to academic skills for study and employment. Our updated Integrated Skills in English (ISE) qualification meets these demands by encouraging the development of soft skills and transferable study skills in addition to language proficiency.

“ISE is a truly state-of-the-art exam.”

Dr John Morley,
Director, University-wide Language Programmes,
University of Manchester

A test for real-life communication

Assessing communicative competence

Designed to assess communicative competence, Trinity's ISE test measures a candidate's ability to communicate in real-life situations across all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The assessment goes beyond the confines of grammar and lexis, promoting the development of communicative, study and transferable skills, which are increasingly cited as being important for success in today's world.

In addition, Trinity's modern and holistic approach to assessment design means that young people and adults preparing for ISE language assessments will benefit from the positive effects the test has on the teaching and learning outcomes.

Integrating transferable skills

The ISE test consists of two independent modules – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening. Each module tests language skills in an integrated way, reflecting how they interact in the real world in addition to testing the skills in a context that reflects candidates' real-life activities.

Examples of the type of integrated skills realised and developed during preparation for ISE tests are shown below, alongside the name of the relevant test module and task.



The process of revising and updating ISE involved extensive research and consultation. Trinity worked in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire's award-winning Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA).

Overview of Trinity's ISE test

ISE consists of two modules – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening – reflecting the way that skills are used together in real life.

Reading & Writing module

	ISE Foundation	ISE I	ISE II	ISE III
CEFR level	A2	B1	B2	C1
Time	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
Task 1 – Long reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 700 words 15 questions
Task 2 – Multi-text reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 texts 300 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 texts 400 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 texts 500 words 15 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 texts 700 words 15 questions
Task 3 – Reading into writing	70-100 words	100-130 words	150-180 words	200-230 words
Task 4 – Extended writing	70-100 words	100-130 words	150-180 words	200-230 words

Speaking & Listening module

	ISE Foundation	ISE I	ISE II	ISE III
CEFR level	A2	B1	B2	C1
Total test time	13 minutes	18 minutes	20 minutes	25 minutes
Topic task	4 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes	8 minutes
Collaborative task	–	–	4 minutes	4 minutes
Conversation task	2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes	3 minutes
Independent listening task	6 minutes	10 minutes	8 minutes	8 minutes
Examiner administration time	1 minute	2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes

“The teachers, all of whom were new to ISE, have been very enthusiastic about the exam and preparing the students for it. Feedback about the methodology of the exam has been very positive. I was impressed by how they were able to integrate the exam skills into their normal class teaching – the exams fit well into our style of lessons.”

Lee Hawkes,
Academic Manager, St Edmund's College Summer School



Trinity College London Integrated Skills in English (ISE)		Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
Tests reading, writing, speaking and listening		
ISE IV	Distinction Merit Pass PASS	C2
ISE III	Distinction* Merit* Pass* PASS	C1
ISE II	Distinction* Merit* Pass* PASS	B2
ISE I	Distinction* Merit* Pass* PASS	B1
ISE Foundation	Distinction* Merit* Pass* PASS	A2

For more information see trinitycollege.com/CEFR

* Each skill is reported as Pass, Merit or Distinction on the certificate, although the ISE qualification is either passed or failed.

ISE test levels and the CEFR

ISE qualifications are offered at five levels on the CEFR from A2 to C2.**

Candidates are awarded one of the following results for each of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), which reflect the extent to which the CEFR level has been achieved in each skill:

- **Distinction**
- **Merit**
- **Pass**
- **Fail**

Both modules (Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening) must be passed in order to be awarded the ISE qualification and receive the qualification certificate. The certificate shows the results achieved in each of the four skills, as well as the month and year when each module was taken.

If a candidate fails to demonstrate the requirements of the corresponding CEFR level in any of the skills, they will not pass the test.

** ISE IV (C2) has a different format – see trinitycollege.com/ISEIV for details



Why institutions are using ISE

► A high-stakes test for the 21st century

ISE is a contemporary multi-skills language test designed for people who need English language skills for study or employment. ISE assesses the real-life communication skills needed for academic success and employment, and is designed to encourage the development of communicative, study and transferable skills such as note-taking, synthesising information and preparing for discussion and presentation.

► Suitable for university admissions

By accepting ISE you can be sure of a candidate's ability to communicate effectively in English. Preparing for Trinity's ISE tests fosters the communication skills needed for future development, as the type of tasks practised for the test are relevant for college, university and employability purposes.

► Increases access to student mobility

Accepting ISE provides access to hundreds of thousands of international students who hold our qualifications.

You can also encourage successful outbound mobility by implementing ISE at your institution to help prepare students whose first language is not English for global opportunities and to promote their study and communication skills.

► Entry and exit English assessment

Many institutions use ISE to benchmark the English language proficiency of students when they arrive and when they leave the institution.

This is useful as students often arrive having used an array of different tests to evidence their English. ISE provides a robust external evaluation of student cohorts, providing a reliable benchmark from which to evaluate student development. The test result gives an outcome for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and each candidate receives a diagnostic profile, detailing strengths and areas for improvement across each sub-skill.

► Reliable tests

Trinity's ISE tests are widely used as reliable evidence of English language proficiency by institutions and organisations, ranging from governments and employers to universities and schools.

“Ca' Foscari has always appreciated Trinity's ISE exams as they are focused on performance, ie the use of language in different contexts, and not only on theoretical knowledge.”

Professor David Newbold,
Professor at the Department of
Linguistics and Comparative
Cultural Studies, University of
Venice – Ca' Foscari

Guide to ISE level requirements for entrance to courses delivered in English

The level of English language competence required of a student whose first language is not English may vary depending on the institution and/or course of study. Institutions determine their own minimum ISE achievement levels in line with course specifications and the anticipated English language demands placed on students.

The guidelines below reflect typical requirements of higher education institutions in English speaking countries.

	ISE II (B2 CEFR)	ISE II (B2 CEFR)	ISE II (B2 CEFR)	ISE III (C1 CEFR)	ISE III (C1 CEFR)	ISE III (C1 CEFR)
Level of achievement in all four skills	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Academic courses – advanced level	Unlikely to be suitable	Likely to be suitable	Likely to be suitable	Likely to be suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Academic courses – entry level	Likely to be suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Vocational training courses – advanced level	Likely to be suitable	Likely to be suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Vocational training courses – entry level	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Suitable

Assessment research

As an independent education charity, Trinity is committed to supporting continued research into English language testing and to developing assessments at the leading edge of testing theory. One such project is the Trinity Lancaster Spoken Learner Corpus, which is a collaboration between Trinity and the Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS) at Lancaster University.

The corpus consists of samples of language used during Trinity's Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE), representing learners from a variety of first language backgrounds.

The findings of analyses of the corpus can be used for many practical and pedagogic purposes, such as devising teaching materials, constructing tests and improving communication between different cultural groups.

To find out more about the Trinity Lancaster Corpus visit trinitycollege.com/corpus

“The corpus, which provides ample evidence about different successful communicative strategies, will thus help produce better textbooks and teaching materials and will help fine-tune language tests to promote learning.”

Dr Vaclav Brezina,
Research Fellow at CASS, University of Lancaster

Post-test feedback and support

Diagnostic profile report

Trinity's philosophy is to support candidates before, during and after the test. This is reflected in the diagnostic feedback provided for each candidate, in the form of a diagnostic profile report, regardless of their level of achievement. This shows the sub-skills tested for reading, writing, speaking and listening and a candidate's performance in relation to these.

Extract from a diagnostic profile report for ISE II

		Incorrect or not attempted	More practice required	Adequate performance	Skilled in this area	Highly skilled in this area
Reading: Pass	Task 1 - Long reading	Reading for the main idea				
		Reading carefully for facts or information				
		Reading carefully for details, working out meaning of unknown words				
	Task 2 - Multi-text reading	Reading for the main ideas or the purpose, skim reading				
		Reading carefully for facts or information				
		Reading carefully for details, working out meaning of unknown words, summarising what you have read				
Writing: Merit	Task 3 - Reading into writing	Reading for writing - using information from the reading texts in your writing*				
		Task fulfilment - answering the question fully and appropriately*				
		Organisation and structure - organising your texts logically and clearly and presenting your writing appropriately*				
		Language control - using the appropriate words and grammar accurately*				
	Task 4 - Extended writing	Task fulfilment - answering the question fully and appropriately*				
		Organisation and structure - organising your texts logically and clearly and presenting your writing appropriately*				
		Language control - using the appropriate words and grammar accurately*				
Speaking: Pass		Communicative effectiveness - starting and maintaining a conversation, interacting with another speaker*				
		Interactive listening - showing that you understand and follow other speakers*				
		Language control - using the appropriate words and grammar accurately*				
		Delivery - using clear and understandable pronunciation, stress and intonation*				
Listening: Distinction		Listening for the main ideas and reasons or arguments				

* For the full criteria, please see trinitycollege.com/ratingscales

“ISE is a truly communicative exam, focusing on language use and communicative skills. The diagnostic profile facilitates meaningful feedback – with reference to the CEFR proficiency levels.”

Prof Claudia Harsch,
Professor for Research into Language Learning and Teaching, University of Bremen

Please note that diagnostic profile reports are not intended as an additional test scoring feature, nor are they an exact measure of performance on the test.

Skills development tables

Having identified their strengths and weaknesses from their personal diagnostic profile reports, students can target specific skills to practise and improve with the help of Trinity's skills development tables, which list the sub-skills tested and suggest how to practise them.

For more information please see trinitycollege.com/skillsdevelopment

Extract from a skills development table for ISE II Speaking

Topic, Collaborative, Conversation tasks

Skills tested	How to practise these skills
Communicative effectiveness (Does the student do what is necessary to complete the speaking tasks successfully?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure students understand the format of the speaking part of the test, eg make sure they understand that at ISE II, they also have the Interactive task. Give students practice in asking and answering questions on a range of topics. Give students practice in expanding and developing ideas, eg encourage students to give examples or reasons to support their ideas and opinions. Make sure that students know different ways of showing the speaker that they don't understand, eg <i>'I'm not sure I understood that completely. Could you repeat it, please?'</i> Make sure students know different ways of dealing with mistakes while speaking, eg <i>'Sorry, I mean...'</i> and <i>'That's wrong. What I meant to say was...'</i> Check students know different ways of showing interest in what the speaker is saying, eg <i>'Really?', 'Right', 'That's a good point'.</i>

Information on the ISE qualification certificate

All successful candidates receive an ISE qualification certificate showing the information detailed below.

Extract from an ISE certificate

Trinity College London

Soomita Patel

is awarded

ISE II Integrated Skills in English

CEFR Level B2

Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International*

Reading	Merit	November 2017
Writing	Pass	November 2017
Speaking	Pass	November 2017
Listening	Distinction	November 2017

A pass in each skill is required to achieve the qualification certificate. In this case, the candidate achieved higher than Pass in Reading and in Listening.

The CEFR level achieved.

Security

Test security

The ISE test is taken under secure conditions. A current, valid passport, national identity card or full photocard driving licence has to be shown on the day of the test.

The Reading & Writing module:

- ▶ Two invigilators are present in the exam room at all times
- ▶ Mobile phones or other electronic devices (including smart watches) are not permitted in the exam room
- ▶ All marked exam papers are stored in a secure, locked environment before being sent off-site for archiving
- ▶ Exam papers are stored securely off-site for three years after the exam date

The Speaking & Listening module:

- ▶ Conducted face-to-face with a Trinity examiner
- ▶ Tests are audio recorded and securely stored


Results verification

Trinity has an online verification service where higher education institutions can validate candidate results quickly and securely. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/verification

Screenshot of online verification service website



The screenshot displays a 'CANDIDATE RESULT' page. It includes a candidate's photo and a table of personal details. Below this is a table of exam results for ISE Level II, showing scores for Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing, and overall results.

CANDIDATE RESULT			
	First name Lian	Middle name n/a	Last name Yang
	Date of birth 23-03-1997		
Gender F	Nationality China	ID type Passport	ID number 006541078
Certificate issue date 01-03-2016	Exam centre Beijing test centre	Agent name n/a	Agent address n/a
Exam taken ISE Level II	Date of exam	Exam result	
ISE Level II Speaking and Listening	19-02-2016	Pass	
ISE Level II Speaking	19-02-2016	Pass	
ISE Level II Listening	19-02-2016	Distinction	
ISE Level II Reading and Writing	17-02-2016	Merit	
ISE Level II Reading	17-02-2016	Pass	
ISE Level II Writing	17-02-2016	Merit	
		Distinction	

Period of validity

While an ISE qualification certificate is valid for life, governments, immigration authorities, employers and education institutions often require recent evidence of language proficiency. Universities and organisations set their own language proficiency requirements, which vary between institutions – we advise students to check with individual institutions before applying. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/recognition

Running Trinity tests at your institution

“English language is the communication language of the world. Knowledge is of no use if one cannot communicate. ISE is here to polish these skills – reading, listening, speaking and writing – to present you before the society at large.”

Professor (Dr) S Durgaaprosad,
Vice Chancellor, Himalayan University, Arunachal Pradesh

If you would like to run ISE tests at your institution, you can find application details at trinitycollege.com/register

Entering candidates for tests

Trinity delivers tests in over 60 countries worldwide.

For ISE test fees, administration and general support, please contact your local Trinity representative – find their details at trinitycollege.com/worldwide

Over 3,000 registered ISE test centres worldwide.



Resources

As an international exam board and independent education charity, providing teacher and candidate support is at the heart of our ethos. We provide a wide range of complimentary teaching and learning resources – from free practice papers to webinars and regional support for teachers, candidates and administrators. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/ISE

Secure English Language Tests (SELTs) in the UK

Candidates wishing to take an ISE test for British Citizenship, Settlement and visa applications can take the test in one of Trinity's 10 dedicated Secure English Language Test (SELT) Centres in the UK. The SELT ISE certificate is valid for two years for these purposes. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/SELT

The international exam board for English language and communicative qualifications

International reach



Trinity's ISE qualification is accepted by universities and higher education institutions in the UK and internationally. Examples of institutions accepting Trinity English language qualifications include:

- ▶ Approval of Trinity's ISE and GESE tests by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for Secure English Language Test (SELT) purposes
- ▶ Approval of Trinity's ISE I (B1) Secure English Language Test (SELT) for Transport for London's English language requirement for private hire drivers in the UK
- ▶ Approval of ISE by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) assessment board
- ▶ Acceptance of ISE by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for Chevening scholarships
- ▶ ISE qualifications are officially accepted by the Greek government as evidence of English language proficiency
- ▶ A large-scale English language assessment project with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India
- ▶ Numerous bilingual projects in Spain, including agreements with the Comunidad de Madrid and Andalucia regions
- ▶ Trinity's qualifications are accredited by the Conference of Spanish University Rectors
- ▶ Recognition of Trinity's qualifications by the Ministry of Education in Italy
- ▶ Approval of Trinity's qualifications by the Mexican government under the Certificacion Nacional de Nivel de Idioma Mexico (CENNI)
- ▶ The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is including ISE tests (levels B1-C1) on its list of recognised English proficiency outcomes for international students following 2018 rule changes
- ▶ Trinity's English language qualifications are recognised by the Hong Kong government-led initiative to increase public awareness of English in the Workplace
- ▶ Recognition and use of GESE exams by the Beijing Education Examinations Authority (BEEA) and the Hubei Education Examinations Authority (HEEA)

With the number of Trinity candidates growing around the world, it is likely that your institution will receive more applications from international students holding an ISE qualification from places such as China, Hong Kong, India, UAE, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and many other countries.

ISE is accepted by universities in the UK and Ireland as evidence of English language proficiency.

Contact us

- ▶ Email recognition@trinitycollege.com about accepting ISE qualifications at your institution
- ▶ Visit trinitycollege.com/ISE for Trinity ISE exam specifications, information and teaching resources
- ▶ Visit trinitycollege.com/worldwide to find out local availability and details of your nearest Trinity representative
- ▶ Call +44 (0)20 7820 6100