Integrated Skills in English (ISE)

Qualification Specifications

ISE Digital and paper edition

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Welcome

Welcome to the qualification specifications for the Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exam. The ISE exam assesses all four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. The skills are tested both individually and together. This integrated approach reflects how language skills are used in real-life settings.

Transferable skills for study and employment

Preparing for ISE helps develop authentic communicative abilities and transferable skills that are crucial for academic study and employment. These skills include synthesising information, participating in interactive discussions and presenting on topics of personal interest.

An ISE level for every candidate

ISE is intended for young people and adults, typically at school, college or university, who are learning and using English in their studies. It is also suitable for working adults seeking a respected English language qualification. ISE covers all six levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) from A1-C2 – so it's possible to gain a certificate at every stage of the language-learning journey.

Proof of English proficiency

ISE provides universities and employers with evidence of the required level of English proficiency for educational and professional purposes, such as entry to a course of study, a job application or promotion, or as part of a learner's personal development. It also provides government agencies with proof of a candidate's English proficiency where a specified language level is required for a visa.

About Trinity College London

Trinity College London, established in 1872, is a leading internationally recognised awarding organisation (exam board), publisher and independent education charity. We specialise in the assessment of communicative and performance skills covering music, drama, combined arts and English language.

With over 850,000 candidates a year in more than 60 countries worldwide, Trinity qualifications are specifically designed to help people progress. We inspire teachers and learners through the creation of assessments that are enjoyable to prepare for, rewarding to teach and that develop the skills needed in real life.

At the heart of Trinity's work is the belief that effective communicative and performance skills are life enhancing, know no boundaries and should be within reach of us all. We exist to promote and foster the best possible communicative and performance skills through assessment, content and training that is innovative, personal and authentic.

Introduction to Trinity's Integrated Skills in English exams

Objective of the qualifications

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams have been designed to reflect the type of tasks and texts students encounter within the educational domain or during their professional life. ISE provides evidence of candidates' proficiency across four skills in English language: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Candidates may use an ISE qualification as evidence of their English language ability across all six CEFR levels, from A1 to C2.

Who the qualifications are for

The intended ISE candidate is a young person or adult, typically at secondary school or college, who is using English as a second or foreign language as part of their studies to develop their skills and improve their knowledge of a range of subject areas. The typical ISE candidate is aged between 12 and 19 but may be older. Candidates at CEFR level A1 may be as young as 10 years old and have been studying English in school for a year or so.

Students do not need to have taken any exams prior to taking ISE. Entry for a higher level of ISE does not require candidates to have passed lower levels, and candidates may enter for the exam when they feel they are ready for their target level.

Trinity is committed to making its exams accessible to all, and each candidate is treated individually when considering how assessments can be adapted for those with special needs. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/language-special-needs.

Recognition

Trinity College London is an international awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) in England, CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland and by Qualifications Wales. Trinity's Integrated Skills in English are regulated by these authorities within the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and are recognised by other education authorities in many countries around the world.

ISE exams conducted at Trinity Secure English Language Test (SELT) centres are accepted by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for some UK visa categories.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

ISE A1

(RQF Entry Level 1, CEFR A1)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Talk very briefly about familiar topics	1.1 Use simple phrases to ask and answer questions
2. Listen to short descriptions and conversations on concrete and familiar topics	2.1 Understand familiar words and very basic phrases 2.2 Understand when people speak slowly and clearly
3. Read short concrete texts (eg notices, posters and catalogues)	3.1 Understand familiar names, words and very simple phrases
4. Write a short, simple text and/or complete a form (eg a passport application)	4.1 Use simple phrases to convey their message

ISE A2

(RQF Entry Level 2, CEFR A2)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Exchange information on familiar topics	1.1 Use short phrases and sentences 1.2 Participate in short social exchanges
2. Listen to descriptions and conversations on familiar topics (eg shopping, local area, employment)	2.1 Understand familiar phrases and short texts 2.2 Understand when people speak clearly
3. Read simple, everyday texts (eg advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables)	3.1 Understand short, simple texts 3.2 Find specific, predictable information in texts
4. Write a short, simple message or letter on familiar topics	4.1 Use short phrases and sentences to convey their message

ISE B1

(RQF Entry Level 3, CEFR B1)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Talk about/discuss topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life	1.1 Participate spontaneously in exchanges 1.2 Provide descriptions, opinions and plans
2. Listen to descriptions and discussions on topics regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc	2.1 Understand radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest 2.2 Understand speech that is relatively slow and clear
3. Read everyday and job-related texts (eg letters, articles and stories)	3.1 Understand commonly used language, especially on familiar topics, such as everyday life and work 3.2 Understand descriptions of events, feelings and wishes
4. Write simple, connected text on familiar topics	4.1 Write sentences and paragraphs to convey their message 4.2 Describe experiences and impressions

ISE B2

(RQF Level 1, CEFR B2)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Talk on a wide range of subjects	1.1 Actively respond to exchanges 1.2 Explain a viewpoint on a topic or issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options
2. Listen to lectures on topics of interest, TV news and current affairs programmes	2.1 Understand extended speech 2.2 Can follow extended lines of argument if the topic is reasonably familiar
3. Read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems	3.1 Understand lengthy texts written on a wide range of topics 3.2 Understand writers' attitudes or viewpoints
4. Write essays or reports on subjects related to their interests	4.1 Write clear, detailed texts 4.2 Give reasons in support of, or against a particular point of view 4.3 Highlight the personal significance of events and experiences

ISE C1

(RQF Level 2, CEFR C1)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Talk about/discuss complex subjects	1.1 Express themselves fluently and spontaneously 1.2 Offer clear, detailed descriptions 1.3 Formulate ideas and opinions with precision
2. Listen to lectures, TV news and current affairs programmes	2.1 Understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and/or when the topic is unfamiliar 2.2 Understand natural speech without too much effort
3. Read specialised articles and longer technical instructions	3.1 Understand texts even when the topic is unfamiliar 3.2 Appreciate distinctions of style
4. Write essays or reports about complex subjects	4.1 Write clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length 4.2 Emphasise the salient issues 4.3 Select an appropriate style for the reader

ISE C2

(RQF Level 3, CEFR C2)

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Participate in any spoken exchange	1.1 Participate effortlessly in conversations/discussions
	1.2 Convey finer shades of meaning with precision
	1.3 Present a topic with an effective logical structure which helps the listener to notice and remember significant points
2. Listen to spoken language on any topic (live and broadcast)	2.1 Understand spoken language even when delivered at a fast speaking pace
3. Read complex articles and reports	3.1 Understand with ease virtually all forms of the written language
	3.2 Understand abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts (eg specialised articles or manuals)
4. Write complex essays or reports	4.1 Write texts with an effective structure which helps the reader to notice and remember significant points
	4.2 Write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style
	4.3 Highlight the personal significance of events and experiences

Integrated Skills in English: Pathways

▶ **ISE Digital**
(available globally)

ISE Digital is delivered entirely by computer. There are four modules – Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Candidates take the exam under strictly controlled supervision on verified secure computer equipment.

▶ **ISE (paper edition)**
(available in registered exam centres in selected locations)

There are two exam modules – Speaking & Listening and Reading & Writing. These can be taken together or separately. One-to-one, face-to-face Speaking & Listening assessments can be taken in person or via live video conference. The Reading & Writing module is taken as a written exam.

ISE (paper edition) is currently administered in these countries:

– **Asia**: China, India, Macau, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates
– **Europe:** Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Malta, Moldova, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom
– **South America:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.

Qualification information

Assessment and marking

Each ISE module is assessed using either dichotomous (right/wrong) scoring or rating scales. The result for each module is calculated by converting the raw score into a standardised reporting score. Information about the reporting score for each delivery pathway can be found in the ISE (paper edition) and ISE Digital exam information booklets.

The ISE achievement levels align with the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020).

Duration of study (total qualification time)

All regulated qualifications are assigned a total qualification time. This should be used as guidance only. Total qualification time is an estimate of the average time a candidate spends with a teacher (guided learning hours) added to the average time spent learning independently. It is recognised that the amount of time needed to commit to a qualification will be dependent on each individual's level of experience.

Qualification	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Independent learning hours (ILH)	Total qualification time (TQT) (hours)
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) A1	200	40	240
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) A2	200	40	240
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) B1	200	60	260
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) B2	200	80	280
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) C1	200	100	300
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) C2	200	120	320

Qualification certificate

When candidates have completed all ISE modules, they will receive an overarching certificate. This will show:

◗ the candidate's score for each module
◗ the overall score for the qualification
◗ the CEFR level they have achieved.

An example of a Trinity qualification certificate can be seen at: trinitycollege.com/understand-certificates.

Where the qualifications could lead

While, for some learners, ISE qualifications represent personal goals and objectives, they are designed to support decisions that rely on a general, CEFR-aligned description of English language proficiency across speaking, listening, reading and writing. ISE qualifications may therefore be used to provide evidence of English proficiency for educational, professional and mobility-related purposes:

◗ to provide universities and other higher education institutions with evidence of the required level of English proficiency for entrance to a diploma, degree or vocational course

◗ to provide secondary schools and parents with evidence of learning and progress in English

◗ to provide course providers with evidence of the required level of English proficiency for a candidate to take a course that uses English-medium teaching or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology

◗ to provide employers with evidence of the required level of English proficiency for professional purposes, such as a job application or promotion, or as part of a learner's professional development

◗ to provide government agencies with evidence of a candidate's English proficiency where a specified language level is required for a visa.

Appropriate use and limitations of interpretation

Misuse may arise where results are applied outside this scope, for example by using the qualification with candidates whose age or learning context is not aligned with the intended test population, by treating results as evidence of specialist professional competence or non-linguistic abilities or by extending interpretations beyond those set out in Trinity's published score reporting and guidance.

Table showing Trinity English language qualifications

Trinity exam	**GESE** Graded Examinations in Spoken English	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3 Grade 4	Grade 5 Grade 6	Grade 7 Grade 8 Grade 9	Grade 10 Grade 11	Grade 12
	ISE Integrated Skills in English	Pre-A1*	ISE A1	ISE A2	ISE B1	ISE B2	ISE C1	ISE C2
Framework	**CEFR****		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	RQF***		Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3

Qualification information May 2024

* ISE Digital

** Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment

*** Regulated Qualifications Framework

Regulated titles and qualification numbers

Qualfication	Qualification number
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) A1 **TCL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (ISE) (A1)**	610/3190/2
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) A2 **TCL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (ISE) (A2)**	601/5514/0
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) B1 **TCL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (ISE) (B1)**	601/5515/2
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) B2 **TCL Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (ISE) (B2)**	601/5516/4
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) C1 **TCL Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (ISE) (C1)**	601/5517/6
Integrated Skills in English (ISE) C2 **TCL Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (ISE) (C2)**	500/3827/8

Integrated Skills in English: Take the next step

More information about the two different pathways can be found at the links below.

ISE Digital ❯

(available globally)

ISE (paper edition) ❯

(available in selected locations)