

Tips for preparing for the ISE IV Controlled Written exam

The ISE IV Controlled Written exam lasts three hours and is taken under exam conditions at a Trinity Registered Exam Centre.

There are three tasks:

- ▶ Task 1: Reading into writing – text synthesis
- ▶ Task 2: Reading into writing – text transformation
- ▶ Task 3: Critical and analytical writing

ISE IV Controlled Written exam tasks are chosen to be relevant to a range of learners. However, candidates will be mature and experienced enough to handle abstract concepts and matters of major importance in today's world, and will display their ability to use the functional, grammatical and lexical items specified for ISE IV and the preceding ISE levels. They are expected to make use of a wide range of vocabulary items relating to subjects of general or topical interest. There are no specified subject areas for the Controlled Written exam.

TOP TIPS

Here are some tips to help you prepare for your ISE IV Controlled Written exam:

1. Reading and writing skills are assessed in the Controlled Written exam. Two assessment criteria are applied, so for each task, candidates are awarded two grades, using a five-point scale (letters A-E):
 - ▶ Task fulfilment: Overall achievement of communicative aim / text organisation / appropriacy of format, style and register / effect on reader
 - ▶ Accuracy and range of the specified functional, grammatical and lexical requirements of the level, as well as accuracy of spelling and punctuation
2. Take time to develop your reading skills before the exam. You should familiarise yourself with a wide range of literary and non-literary texts – including abstract, structurally complex or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings, as well as infographics. In tasks 1 and 2 you must show an ability to understand and critically interpret virtually all forms of the written language (including tables, graphs, charts, etc), appreciate subtle distinctions of style, and understand implicit as well as explicit meaning. Use your own words as far as possible as no marks are given for copying from the source materials. You must be able to:
 - ▶ Summarise information from different written sources, reconstructing and paraphrasing arguments and accounts – where information is presented in different formats, you must make reference to both the text(s) and graphic information in your answers
 - ▶ Write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works, produce clear, smoothly flowing complex reports, articles, letters or essays which present a case, or give a critical appreciation of a proposal
3. Task instructions must be interpreted accurately – read them carefully so you don't accidentally misinterpret anything. Follow them exactly. Make sure you answer all parts of the question fully – there are normally three sub-tasks for each task. It is vital that all requirements of the task are satisfied. If the task asks you to use examples (plural), make sure you provide more than one. If you only use one example, this will be regarded as an 'omission'. Omissions, irrelevance and/or repetitions will affect the grade awarded. Expand on the points made. If there is a quotation

to interpret, as in task 3, make sure you refer to it, more than just fleetingly. Keep checking back at what is being asked so that your whole answer is relevant and the reader is informed as fully as possible. You don't need to copy the quote into your answer as this uses up valuable word allowance.

4. Plan your answers before writing. Practise writing effective plans as part of your exam preparation. Time yourself when planning your answer (without writing the actual essay). Try using mind maps, notes, bullet points, arrows or whatever suits your own style. When you know which is the most effective for you, practise as much as you can to speed up the planning process. Good planning helps you manage your time, select task-related key information and organise your response. Writing out in draft the whole answer isn't an effective use of the exam time. Please note that planning notes are not assessed.
5. Check the word count for each piece of writing – it is different for each task. Please note that addresses, dates, customised email prompts, abbreviations, titles, headings and quotations are not included in the final word count. When assessing Controlled Written exam tasks, a 10% tolerance above and below the stated word length is applied. Any text which is more than 10% over the stated word length range will not be marked by the examiner and will affect the grade awarded.
6. Organise your writing using paragraphs and cohesive devices appropriately. Your writing should demonstrate a clear presentation, as well as a logical development of any ideas and arguments to help the reader find significant points.
7. Write in a suitable format, style and register. Each section requires you to display your ability to deal with different types of writing, so you should learn the standard conventions for different text types. Check the task instructions to be sure you're writing in the correct style.
8. Demonstrate a wide range of ISE IV language. You should be able to handle abstract concepts and topical subjects relevant to today's world. Make sure you are demonstrating the functions of the level, such as asserting, affirming, implying, denying, contradicting, and softening and downplaying propositions, as well as sophisticated grammar and lexis appropriate to this level.
9. Write accurately, using correct spelling and grammar. To ensure you are able to allow yourself time to check your work, practise doing timed essays before the exam. Manage your time and leave 10 minutes before the end of the exam to go over and check your spelling, punctuation etc.
10. The Controlled Written exam is taken at an exam centre and written by hand. If you're not used to writing by hand for any length of time then practise writing sample answers coming up to the exam – it'll help you on the day.
11. You must write in black or blue pen, and you are not allowed any correction fluid/tape, pencils or magic eraser pens. You are encouraged to use highlighters on the question paper to mark relevant parts of the questions, instructions, texts or infographics when preparing your response and making notes. If you make an error, cross it out neatly. The Controlled Written part of ISE IV is carried out without the support of external resources. You are not allowed to use dictionaries or other language aids.