



## ISE: Integrated Skills in English test

An English language test for the 21st century



## About Trinity College London

Trinity College London is an international exam board, known for its rich cultural heritage, academic rigour and pioneering spirit. We have been delivering external assessments since 1877 and each year more than 700,000 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 Association of Language Testers in Europe's Q-mark, having met all 17 of ALTE's stringent quality standards.

Trinity College London is regulated by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), as are all of our English language qualifications, including ISE. Trinity's ISE and GESE English language qualification levels are also mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England.

## A test for real-life communication

### Assessing communicative competence

Designed to assess communicative competence, ISE 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.

ISE 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, and they assess the skills in a context that reflects candidates' real-life activities.

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

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

## Background and rationale for the ISE assessment model

Trinity's ISE test recently underwent a complete revision process involving 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) to develop and quality-assure the process.

ISE was updated with the needs of students undertaking contemporary academic study in mind. Preparing students for ISE tests can help to create a positive washback, bringing communicative, study and transferable skills to the teaching and learning process, and this in turn supports the students' development of these important skills. As global mobility increases, educators and employers are looking for candidates with wider skill sets than language performance alone.

### Spontaneous communication

Tests spontaneous, authentic, interactive and communicative speaking and listening skills that are essential for tutorials and seminars.

### Personalised

Taking an ISE test encourages students to perform at their best in English, using a wide range of interpersonal skills to introduce and discuss a personalised topic, helping to develop self-confidence.

### Academic study skills

Supports academic process writing such as planning and reviewing, reading across multiple texts, and making notes to inform further writing.

### Integrated skills

Tests candidates' ability to use reading and writing skills, and speaking and listening skills in combination – to reflect how people use English in real life.

### Independent and interactive listening

Tests both independent and interactive listening skills needed for study. Trinity ISE is the only test that explicitly assesses the essential communication skill of interactive listening.

### Collaboration

Candidates are assessed on their ability to interact in real-life contexts, which are reflected in the tests. Candidates are responsible for initiating and maintaining conversation.

### Learning strategies

Promotes the development of language learning strategies which are important for students who are learning English language in parallel with other subjects.

### Critical thinking

Tasks are designed to encourage the engagement of critical thinking skills including summarising, paraphrasing, analysing and synthesising.





## Overview of Trinity's ISE test

ISE consists of two modules (Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening), which reflect an integrated assessment approach.

### 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"> <li>300 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>400 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>700 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>
Task 2 – Multi-text reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 texts</li> <li>300 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 texts</li> <li>400 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 texts</li> <li>500 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 texts</li> <li>700 words</li> <li>15 questions</li> </ul>
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 <b>PASS</b>	C2
ISE III	Distinction* Merit* Pass* <b>PASS</b>	C1
ISE II	Distinction* Merit* Pass* <b>PASS</b>	B2
ISE I	Distinction* Merit* Pass* <b>PASS</b>	B1
ISE Foundation	Distinction* Merit* Pass* <b>PASS</b>	A2

For more information see [trinitycollege.com/CEFR](http://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](http://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. Designed to encourage the development of communicative, study and transferable skills, ISE assesses the real-life communication skills needed for academic success and employment, 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.

### ► Increase 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 results provided for each skill – together with diagnostic profile reports showing strengths and areas for improvement across each sub-skill – enable institutions and students to target weaknesses and plan study programmes with greater insight and to greater effect.

### ► Reliable tests

Trinity's ISE tests are widely used as reliable evidence of English language proficiency for 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 user whose first language is not English can vary depending on the institution and/or course of study. Therefore, institutions need to determine their own minimum ISE achievement levels in line with course specifications and the anticipated English language demands to be placed on applicants.

	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 educational charity, Trinity College London 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](https://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

## 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 Speaking & Listening module:

- ▶ A one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner
- ▶ Exams are audio recorded and stored for validation purposes

The Reading & Writing module:

- ▶ Two invigilators 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 stored in a secure, locked environment before being sent off-site for archiving
- ▶ Exam papers stored securely off-site for three years after the exam date

### 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](http://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 the SELT ISE Level II, showing scores for various modules.

CANDIDATE RESULT			
	First name Lian	Middle name n/a	Last name Yang
	Gender F	Nationality China	ID type Passport
	Certificate issue date 01-03-2016	Exam centre Trinity London Holborn SELT Centre	Agent name n/a
		Agent address n/a	
Exam taken SELT ISE Level II	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Exam result Pass
SELT ISE Level II Speaking and Listening	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Pass
SELT ISE Level II Speaking	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Distinction
SELT ISE Level II Listening	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Merit
SELT ISE Level II Reading and Writing	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Pass
SELT ISE Level II Reading	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Merit
SELT ISE Level II Writing	17-02-2016	17-02-2016	Distinction

### Period of validity

For non-visa purposes, an ISE qualification certificate is valid for life. However, governments and institutions may require recent evidence of language proficiency. The SELT ISE certificate is valid for two years for UK visa applications. 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](http://trinitycollege.com/recognition)



## 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 given to each candidate, who, regardless of their level of achievement, receive a diagnostic profile report. 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](https://trinitycollege.com/ratingscales)

“We chose ISE because of the diagnostic profile reports all candidates are issued with. The information and analytics these provided were invaluable to informing in-session English language support for our students.”

Tam Milner,  
Interim Director of the Language Centre, University of Salford

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 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](http://trinitycollege.com/skillsdevelopment)

### Extract from a skills development table for ISE II Speaking

#### Topic, Collaborative, Conversation tasks

Skills tested	How to practise these skills
<b>Communicative effectiveness</b> (Does the student do what is necessary to complete the speaking tasks successfully?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Give students practice in asking and answering questions on a range of topics.</li> <li>Give students practice in expanding and developing ideas, eg encourage students to give examples or reasons to support their ideas and opinions.</li> <li>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></li> <li>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></li> <li>Check students know different ways of showing interest in what the speaker is saying, eg <i>'Really?', 'Right', 'That's a good point'.</i></li> </ul>

## Information on the ISE qualification certificate

All successful candidates receive the qualification certificate with 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\***

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 appears on the certificate.

Reading	Merit	November 2016
Writing	Pass	November 2016
Speaking	Pass	November 2016
Listening	Distinction	November 2016

## Running Trinity tests at your institution

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

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

Should you wish to run test sessions at your institution, please see application details at [trinitycollege.com/register](https://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](https://trinitycollege.com/worldwide)

Over 3,000 ISE testing locations worldwide.



- ▶ ISE Reading & Writing test sessions are available monthly on **fixed dates** throughout the year.
- ▶ ISE Speaking & Listening test sessions can be arranged **on demand** according to your institution's requirements.

### Resources

As an international exam board and educational 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](https://trinitycollege.com/ISE)

### Secure English Language Tests (SELT) in the UK

Candidates wishing to take an ISE test for British Citizenship, Settlement and visa applications can take the test in one of the 10 dedicated Secure English Language Test (SELT) Centres in the UK. Find out more at [trinitycollege.com/SELT](https://trinitycollege.com/SELT)

# Trinity College London – the international exam board for English language and performing arts qualifications

## International reach



Trinity's ISE qualification is accepted by universities and higher education institutions in the UK and internationally as reliable evidence of English language proficiency for student admission.

Examples of institutions accepting Trinity qualifications include:

- ▶ Approval of Trinity's ISE and GESE tests by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for Secure English Language Test (SELT) purposes
- ▶ A large-scale English language assessment project with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India
- ▶ Accredited by the Conference of Spanish University Rectors
- ▶ Numerous bilingual projects in Spain, including agreements with the Comunidad de Madrid and Andalucía regions
- ▶ Recognition of Trinity's qualifications by the Ministry of Education in Italy
- ▶ Approval of Trinity's qualifications by the Mexican government under the Certificación Nacional de Nivel de Idioma México (CENNI)
- ▶ Approval by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) assessment board
- ▶ Acceptance of ISE by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for Chevening scholarships
- ▶ Approval of Trinity's ISE I (B1) Secure English Language Test (SELT) for Transport for London's English language requirement for private hire drivers

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.

**Accepted by 95% of UK universities and 100% of Irish universities as evidence of English language proficiency.**

## Talk to us

- ▶ Email [recognition@trinitycollege.com](mailto:recognition@trinitycollege.com)
- ▶ Call +44 (0)20 7820 6100

- ▶ [/TrinityCollegeLondon](https://www.facebook.com/TrinityCollegeLondon)
- ▶ [@TrinityC\\_L](https://twitter.com/TrinityC_L)
- ▶ [/TrinityVideoChannel](https://www.youtube.com/TrinityVideoChannel)

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