

Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Guide for Students – ISE II (B2)

Reading & Writing | Speaking & Listening

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Foreword

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams assess all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – in a way that reflects real-life communication in English.

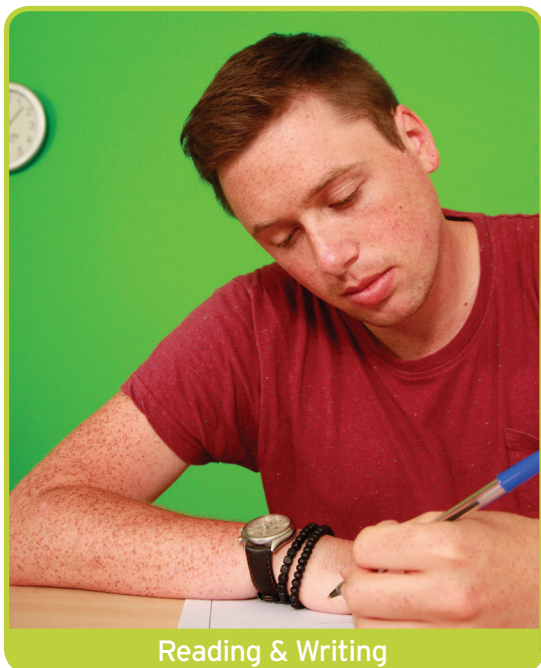
This guide:

- ▶ gives a summary of both modules of the ISE II exam – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening
- ▶ gives you some ideas on how to prepare for the ISE II exam
- ▶ tells you what the examiner is looking for
- ▶ tells you about results and certificates.

Please check trinitycollege.com/ISEII for the latest information about Trinity's ISE exams, and to make sure you are using the latest version of the related documents.

What is ISE II?

ISE II is an English language exam for learners of English who are at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference. You take ISE II in two parts – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening.



Reading & Writing



Speaking & Listening

When do I receive the ISE II qualification certificate?

After you have passed both ISE II Reading & Writing and ISE II Speaking & Listening, you receive the ISE II qualification certificate. The certificate shows your results for each separate skill – reading, writing, speaking and listening (Pass, Merit or Distinction).

Who recognises ISE?

Many institutions recognise ISE as proof that you can read, write, speak and listen in English. To find out more visit:

trinitycollege.com/recognition

ISE II summary

Reading & Writing

How long is the Reading & Writing exam? Two hours.

Which skills do the reading tasks test? Reading for gist, reading for details, reading comprehension, understanding the main ideas of a text and deducing meaning.

Which skills do the writing tasks test? How you organise a text, your range of language functions, grammar and vocabulary, how well you answer the question, and how you transform reading texts into a writing text.

The Reading & Writing exam has four parts:

Task 1 – Long reading

How many texts? One text.

How long is the text? About 500 words.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 1-5 – choose the right title for each paragraph of the reading text
- ▶ questions 6-10 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the text – three are false.
- ▶ questions 11-15 – complete sentences with exact words from the reading text.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

How many texts? Four short texts.

How long are the texts? In total, the four texts are about 500 words. One of the texts is an infographic.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 16-20 – choose which text matches a description – there are five questions that describe the main idea or purpose of the texts
- ▶ questions 21-25 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the texts – three are false.
- ▶ questions 26-30 – complete summary notes with exact words from the texts.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

How many texts do I read? You use the four texts from task 2.

What do I write? A descriptive essay, a discursive essay, an argumentative essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal email or letter, a formal email or letter, a review, or a report.

How many words do I write? 150-180 words. You can **only** use information from the texts in task 2 in your answer. Your answer must be in your own words and not copied from the texts.

Task 4 – Extended writing

What do I write? A descriptive essay, a discursive essay, an argumentative essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal email or letter, a formal email or letter, a review, or a report.

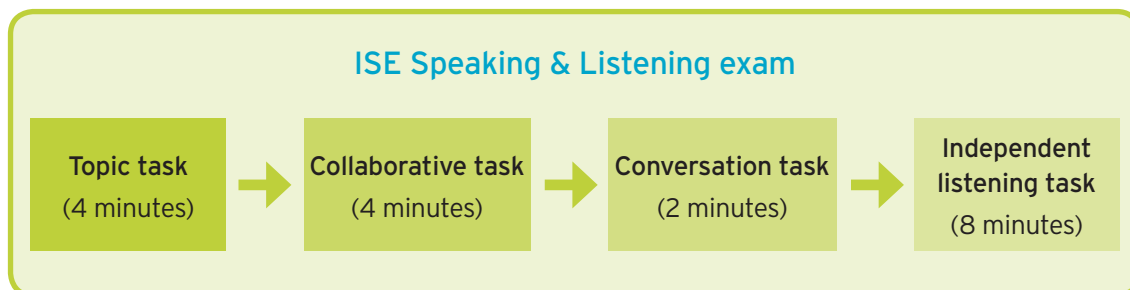
How many words do I write? 150-180 words.

To see sample Reading & Writing exams, please go to:

trinitycollege.com/ISEII

Speaking & Listening

The Speaking & Listening exam is a one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner. The exam is in four parts:



Topic task (4 minutes)

To prepare for the exam, you prepare to talk about a topic. You can choose what you want to talk about.

How do you choose a topic?

Think of three different possible topics that you would like to talk to the examiner about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What can you say about each topic? Which one demonstrates your English skills the best? Which one would you like to discuss with the examiner?

It is a good idea to bring some notes or a mind map with you to the exam. You may also bring a small item such as a picture, an event ticket or medal into the exam room to support the topic discussion. However, mobile phones must not be brought into the exam room. During the exam, you discuss your topic with the examiner. Remember to plan your topic as a discussion, thinking of questions that you can ask the examiner and also questions that the examiner might ask you.



Collaborative task (4 minutes)

1. The examiner reads a short prompt. The prompt has some information about a situation or opinion. You need to listen carefully to what the examiner says.
2. When the examiner finishes reading the prompt to you, he or she stops talking. It's then your responsibility to start the conversation. Try asking the examiner for more information or details and then respond to what he or she says.
3. For the rest of the task, it's your responsibility to keep the conversation going by responding to what the examiner says, adding to the conversation and encouraging the examiner to tell you more information.

Remember, it's a discussion and it's your role to collaborate with the examiner, working together to build the conversation. But if you say nothing, the examiner says nothing.

Conversation task (2 minutes)

In this part of the exam, you and the examiner have a conversation on one of these subject areas.

Society and living standards

Personal values and ideals

The world of work

National environmental concerns

Public figures past and present

Think about each subject area. What can you say about each one? Try to talk about your opinions, ideas and experiences.

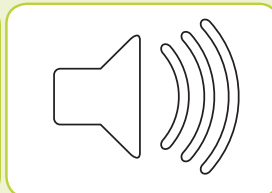
Independent listening task (8 minutes)

In this part of the exam there is one task.

You listen to a recording (about 2 minutes 30 seconds) twice. After the first time you tell the examiner in one or two sentences what the talk is about. You listen again and take some notes if you want to. Then you respond to the examiner's instructions. For example, listen for and report opinions, ideas, and advantages and disadvantages of a situation or proposal.



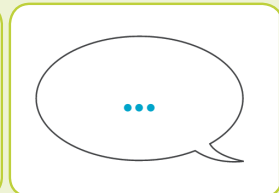
The examiner gives you some instructions



Listen to a recording (twice)



The examiner gives you some instructions



You report the relevant information

To watch a video of an ISE II Speaking & Listening exam, please go to:

trinitycollege.com/ISEII

How to prepare for ISE II

Below are some tips for preparing for each part of the ISE II exam:

Reading & Writing

Reading

Do

- ▶ Practise reading lots of different texts in English by, for example, reading English websites, newspapers or magazines – look for subjects in English that interest you and subjects that you are studying in school or college.
- ▶ Use graded readers, which are books specially written for B2 level learners of English.
- ▶ Try to understand the meaning of words you don't know. Look at the whole sentence, the paragraph and the context and try to think of possible meanings of the word. After you finish reading the paragraph or the whole text, check the meanings of the words in the dictionary.
- ▶ Practise highlighting words or phrases that you think are important for your answer. You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions in the exam, if you want to.

Writing

Do

- ▶ Look at the question carefully (How many different ideas are there in the question? How many ideas do you have to write in your answer?).
- ▶ Practise writing in a three-stage process:
 - plan what you want to write
 - write your answer
 - check what you have written.
- ▶ Check your work to see if it is:
 - organised (Have you used paragraphs? Does it have a conclusion? Are your ideas clearly organised and logical?)
 - appropriate (Have you answered the question? Have you thought about the intended audience?)
 - accurate (Is your spelling correct? Have you used capital letters and full stops?)
 - legible (Is it easy to read?).
- ▶ Practise doing sample exams from the Trinity website trinitycollege.com/ISEII
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside study time – for example, write a journal of your ideas and plans, write your opinions on news items and current affairs, write reviews of films you have seen or books you have read, take part in discussions on the internet in English, and write emails or messages to friends in English.

Speaking & Listening

Topic task

Do

- ▶ Spend time choosing and preparing your topic. Choose a topic that interests you and that you can spend up to four minutes discussing.
- ▶ Try to think of a topic that includes lots of language of ISE II. For example, a topic in which you can talk about advantages and disadvantages, speculate or ask for opinions.
- ▶ Use a range of different language functions from the level (see page 14).
- ▶ Think of the language you will need and the questions the examiner might ask you.
- ▶ Use a diagram or mind map to help you plan your topic.
- ▶ Think of questions you can ask the examiner about your topic.
- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

Don't

- ▶ Don't choose a technical topic – it's difficult to remember technical vocabulary in the exam.
- ▶ Don't memorise a script – you can plan ideas and phrases for your topic, but remember that the topic is a discussion and it is important to be natural.

Collaborative task

Do

- ▶ Practise with a friend or colleague.
- ▶ Practise asking another person about a problem, a situation that has happened, or a problem or situation that might happen in the future. Also, try asking them about their opinion on a problem or situation – ask them for more information and try to work with them to discuss the situation.
- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

Don't

- ▶ Don't talk about yourself – the Collaborative task is about the other person's situation, not yours.



Conversation task

Do

- ▶ Be prepared to talk about all the conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about what questions the examiner might ask about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about how you can use the language functions of ISE II to talk about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Remember to think of questions to ask the examiner about each conversation subject area.
- ▶ Practise listening to English in addition to speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

Independent listening task

Do

- ▶ Practise listening to recorded English – you are tested on listening to recordings, so watch films and television in English, listen to English podcasts or news programmes, watch English videos on the internet and practise in and out of study time.
- ▶ Practise taking notes while you listen – try to only write the most important information like key ideas, opinions and facts.
- ▶ Listen to discussions and speeches where the content is abstract and implied rather than factual.

Don't

- ▶ Don't try to write down everything you hear – you don't need 100% of the information.

What happens on the day of the exam?



Reading & Writing

You take the exam at a Trinity centre or at a registered exam centre. It is a written exam and it takes two hours.

Here is the format of the exam and some tips on each part.

Task 1 – Long reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task.
- ▶ Make sure you have enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Tip

If you make a mistake, cross out your answer and write a new answer next to it.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task, and make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write – your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Make sure you use information from the texts in task 2 to answer the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Tip

Don't just copy from the texts – always try to use your own words.

Task 4 – Extended writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write – your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Speaking & Listening

A Trinity examiner comes to your centre for the Speaking & Listening module. This is what happens:

Introductions

- ▶ The examiner says 'Hello' and asks your name. The examiner uses some simple greetings like 'How are you?'.
- ▶ The examiner asks to see your identification.
- ▶ You are not tested during the introduction part of the exam.



Tip

It is natural to be nervous when taking an exam – but try to think of the Speaking & Listening exam as an opportunity to talk about things that interest you. It's a chance to show the examiner what you can do in English.

If you don't understand something, ask the examiner to repeat what he or she said.

Topic task

The examiner asks you what you want to talk about and then asks you a question about your topic to start the discussion. Listen carefully and answer the examiner's questions. Don't forget to ask questions too.

Collaborative task

The examiner reads out a short prompt. You have to ask questions and keep the conversation going. Listen carefully to what the examiner says and make sure you understand the prompt. Respond to the prompt and ask questions, offer opinions and ask the examiner what he or she thinks. Don't just talk about the subject in general, but interact with the examiner about what he or she says. Build the conversation together.

Conversation task

The examiner tells you which subject you are going to talk about and then asks you a question to start the conversation. Listen carefully to what the examiner says and think about what language you need to answer the question. Don't forget to ask questions too.

Independent listening task

You listen to a recording twice. After the first time you tell the examiner in one or two sentences what the talk is about. You listen again and take some notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed. Then you respond to the examiner's instructions. For example, listen for and report opinions, ideas, and advantages and disadvantages of a situation or proposal.

End of the exam

The examiner tells you that the exam has finished and says goodbye. You are not marked on this part of the exam.

What is the examiner assessing in ISE II?

Language functions for ISE II

Study and practise the language functions before the exam. You should also be able to use the language functions for ISE Foundation and ISE I

- ▶ Initiating and maintaining the conversation
- ▶ Expressing and expanding ideas and opinions
- ▶ Highlighting advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ Speculating
- ▶ Giving advice
- ▶ Expressing agreement and disagreement
- ▶ Eliciting further information
- ▶ Establishing common ground



Reading

There are 30 questions in the reading section. Depending on the number of correct answers you give, your Reading result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Writing

Here are the four skills that the examiner assesses:

Task fulfilment: How well you answer the question.

Organisation and structure: How well you organise your writing, use paragraphs and sentences and link your ideas together.

Language control: How well you use the language functions at ISE II and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling that you use.

Reading for writing (task 3 only): How well you use the reading texts from task 2 to write answers using your own words, in task 3.

For the writing tasks, your scores in the four scales are combined. Your Writing result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the reading part and the writing part, you will pass the Reading & Writing module. If you fail either the reading part or the writing part, or both, you will not pass the Reading & Writing module.

Reading result:

Writing result:

Reading & Writing module result:

Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

Speaking

The examiner assesses these four abilities:

Communicative effectiveness: How well you complete each task. For example, discussing your topic or having a conversation.

How well you respond to the examiner and how you cope with problems. For example, can you ask the examiner to repeat when you don't understand.

Interactive listening: How well you follow and build the conversation with the examiner.

Language control: How well you use the language functions of ISE II (see page 14) and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar that you use.

Delivery: Can the examiner understand you? How good is your pronunciation and fluency?

Your Speaking result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Listening

In the Independent listening task the examiner awards a score based on how well you have understood the recording. Your speaking and writing are not assessed in the Independent listening task.

Your Listening result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the speaking part and the listening part, you will pass the Speaking & Listening module. If you fail either the speaking part or the listening part, or both, you will not pass the Speaking & Listening module.

Speaking result:		Listening result:*		Speaking & Listening module result:
Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

*Independent listening task

Your ISE II qualification certificate

Your ISE II qualification certificate

When you pass both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you receive your ISE II qualification certificate. This certificate shows that you have passed ISE II and gives your results in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

ISE II: Pass

Reading: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Writing: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Speaking: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Listening: Pass or Merit or Distinction

You also receive a report showing your strengths and areas for future improvement in each skill. You get this report if you pass or fail.

