TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

Integrated Skills in English (ISE)

Specifications – Speaking & Listening

ISE Foundation to ISE III

Contents

General introduction

About Trinity College London

Trinity College London is an international exam board providing regulated qualifications in English language, music, performing and creative arts throughout the world.

Trinity has been conducting exams since 1877 and now over half a million people take one of our exams every year.

Trinity College London is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

About Trinity's English language exams

Trinity's exams in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) are organised into five suites. These share a common philosophy, but provide learners with the opportunity to choose a qualification which most suits their individual needs.

International ESOL exams – available worldwide:

▸ Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams (this document*)
▸ Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE)
▸ Spoken English for Work (SEW) exams

UK ESOL exams – available in the UK only:

▸ ESOL Step 1 and Step 2 exams
▸ ESOL Skills for Life exams

Trinity has been setting standards and testing English for speakers of other languages for more than 75 years. Our qualifications are accepted by universities and employers worldwide.

About International ESOL qualifications

International ESOL qualifications are designed for candidates who are not native speakers of English and who wish to achieve a high quality, internationally recognised qualification in English that is available and recognised worldwide. They are suitable for candidates who are preparing for entry to higher education or professional employment in the UK or elsewhere. International ESOL qualifications are designed to correspond to the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) developed by the Council of Europe (Language Policy Division). The levels in the CEFR have been mapped to the levels in the National Qualifications Framework (see *Pathways to Proficiency: the alignment of language proficiency scales for assessing competence in English language* DFES/QCA, 2003).

*This specifications document covers ISE Foundation to ISE III. ISE IV has a different format – see trinitycollege.com

Introduction to Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams assess all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the two modules of the exam, the skills are tested both individually and together. This integrated approach reflects how skills are used in real-life settings.

The main features of the ISE exam are:

Builds real-life communication skills

Preparing for ISE develops relevant, real-life English language skills and transferable communication skills that students need for study and employability.

Tests integrated skills in English

ISE reflects how people use English in real life, by testing the candidates' ability to use reading and writing skills and speaking and listening skills in an integrated way.

Discussion with an expert speaker

The Speaking & Listening exam includes authentic, personalised, one-to-one discussion tasks with a Trinity examiner, based on the candidates' own experiences, interests and opinions.

Feedback on student performance

Trinity is unique in providing teachers with detailed post-exam feedback on candidate performance, in the form of diagnostic information and a teacher support session.

Exam titles

Each level of the exam has a title set out in accordance with the regulatory requirements of the Office of Qualification and Examination Regulation (Ofqual), which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. The titles, as set out on the Ofqual register, are as follows:

Formal title on Ofqual register	Brand name
TCL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (ISE) (A2)	ISE Foundation
TCL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (ISE) (B1)	ISE I
TCL Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (ISE) (B2)	ISE II
TCL Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (ISE) (C1)	ISE III

The formal Ofqual title and the brand name both appear on the certificates issued to successful candidates.

Integrated skills assessment – structure of the qualification

ISE is taken in two modules – Speaking & Listening and Reading & Writing. Once the two modules have been passed at the same level a certificate for the full qualification is awarded.

The four skills are assessed both independently and in an integrated way:

Component	Method
Long reading	Reading a single text and short questions
Multi-text reading	Reading three or four shorter texts and short questions
Reading into writing	Reading texts and producing a short piece of writing using the texts as source material
Extended writing	A short piece of writing similar to the kind of writing done in school or college
Independent listening	Listening to a recording and reporting information either on paper or verbally
Independent listening into speaking	Listening to a recording and verbally reporting and discussing the content
Integrated speaking and listening	A phased speaking exam including discussion of a topic, a conversation and a collaborative task (depending on the level)

The objective of Integrated Skills in English

The objective of ISE is to provide evidence of the candidates' proficiency across four skills in English language. The four skills are reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Candidates may use an ISE qualification to provide evidence of their English language ability across four levels (Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels A2, B1, B2 and C1). The CEFR outlines four test domains – a test would generally sit within one of these domains. The CEFR test domains are educational, occupational, public and private. ISE has been designed to sit within the educational domain and the design of the exam is suitable for any candidate (young person or adult) either in or entering into an educational context.

The qualification can be used for a range of purposes including:

◗ entrance to university where a specified level in English is required for study
◗ progression to a higher level of English study
◗ preparation for further or higher education, where English-medium teaching or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology may be in use
◗ to provide proof of language level to prospective employers
◗ for immigration purposes where a specified language level is required for a visa.

Intended candidature

The intended 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 in order to develop their skills and improve their knowledge of a range of subject areas. The typical ISE candidate is aged between 11 and 19, but may be older.

The candidate, at the lower levels of the exam (ISE Foundation and ISE I), would generally be a young person or adult in school or college who would be taking ISE as part of their preparation for entrance into university or as evidence to progress to a higher level of English study within their main stream or English language school. At the higher levels of the exam (ISE II and ISE III) the candidates are young people or adults preparing for further or higher education where they are required to prove their English language proficiency levels within an educational context.

These young people and adults take ISE to gain access to further education contexts like diplomas, degrees or qualifications which are relevant to their professional development. The institutions who offer these qualifications to adult learners (who are speakers of English as an additional language) require that these adult learners evidence their language proficiency within skills and tasks which are relevant to an academically inclined educational context, such as report or essay writing and listening to lectures, before accepting them on a course of study. Therefore the subjects, genres, skills and texts used for the Reading & Writing and the Speaking & Listening modules sit within general school and college contexts, with a strong study and CLIL focus. In addition, the tasks and texts involved in the exams aim to reflect the real-life texts which the candidates would expect to encounter at school or college. The tasks and the items aim to reflect the real-life language use context, ie the kind of activities the candidates might do as part of their studies at school or college, or tasks which would support and develop those activities.

The exam is set in the educational domain within the learning training context where the aim is to acquire specific knowledge and skills (CEFR – Council of Europe, 2001, page 15).

Recognition of Trinity ISE exams

ISE is currently recognised by a wide range of bodies including universities, employers and the UK's Home Office. For a full list of bodies recognising the ISE qualification, please refer to the Trinity College London website trinitycollege.com/ISE

Recognition of prior learning

Students do not need to have taken any prior exams in order to take any level of ISE Speaking & Listening. Entry for a higher level of ISE does not require candidates to have passed lower levels and candidates may enter at the level they feel is appropriate for their needs and experience.

Students are not required to have any specific prior knowledge, skills or understanding in order to take an ISE exam but it is recommended that candidates enter at the level appropriate to their level of English proficiency.

Introduction to the Speaking & Listening exam

ISE Speaking & Listening exams are communicative and performance-based exams which assess speaking and listening skills in ways which are relevant and authentic to the candidates' circumstances and purpose for learning English.

ISE levels and the CEFR

ISE Foundation to ISE III align with the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages (Council of Europe, 2001) as follows:

ISE level	CEFR level
ISE Foundation	A2
ISE I	B1
ISE II	B2
ISE III	C1

For full information on the can-do statements and language functions targeted at each level, please see the task specifications and sample exams later on in this document.

All tasks in each ISE level are linked to and reflect a particular CEFR level. The candidates, in conjunction with the ISE rating scales, can see the extent to which they have achieved a particular CEFR level. The rating scales show four distinct scores within each CEFR level, for example a score of 4 shows excellent achievement, a score of 3 shows appropriate achievement, 2 shows acceptable achievement and 1 shows non-achievement. A score of 4 is not intended to evidence the level above the level of the exam, ie achieving a score of 4 in ISE I does not grant a higher level (B2), it means excellent achievement at B1, the tested level. Similarly, a score of 1 at ISE I will not grant certification at the level below (A2).

Please note that over the course of an exam, several scores are given in various rating scales (four scales for speaking and one scale for listening). Please refer to the section 'How is ISE Speaking & Listening assessed?' for more complete information on how overall scores are reached.

Score	Interpretation
4	Excellent achievement – at the upper end of the CEFR level
3	Appropriate achievement – at the middle of the CEFR level
2	Acceptable achievement – of the CEFR level, possibly newly qualified at that level
1	Non-achievement – not of the CEFR level
0	No topic task, no performance to rate

How is the Speaking & Listening exam delivered?

▷ The tasks are conducted as one-to-one, face-to-face, oral interviews between one candidate and one examiner.
▷ The tasks become more demanding and are longer from ISE Foundation to ISE III.
▷ The speaking tasks replicate real-life exchanges, in which the candidate and the examiner pass on information, share ideas and opinions and debate topical issues.
▷ The Independent listening tasks are pre-recorded audios played by the examiner and tasks which vary in format depending on the ISE level.

ISE is currently administered at Trinity registered centres throughout the world including, but not limited to, these countries:

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

Speaking and listening are assessed together in one exam administration. The earlier tasks are used to assess the candidates' speaking ability including communicative effectiveness, interactive listening, language control and delivery. The later tasks are used to assess candidates' independent listening ability. The table below illustrates the exam format.

	ISE Foundation	ISE I	ISE II	ISE III
Speaking assessment (including interactive listening)	Topic task	Topic task	Topic task	Topic task
	–	–	Collaborative task	Collaborative task
	Conversation task	Conversation task	Conversation task	Conversation task
Independent listening assessment	Independent listening tasks	Independent listening tasks	Independent listening task	Independent listening task

Training

All examiners are trained to conduct the exams and apply the rating scales every year.

Quality control

Annual standardisation of examiners

All examiners complete annual standardisation exercises, the results of which are analysed to monitor intra-rater consistency.

Live monitoring of the exam

A proportion of exams are observed by a visiting monitor whose task it is to witness the exam and report back to the examiner and to Trinity on the exam and assessment processes. The visiting monitor will take no part in the exam process and will not influence the interaction between the candidate and examiner. The monitoring procedure does not lead to changes in the result awarded to any individual candidate. Approximately 30% of the examiner panel are live monitored each year, and each examiner is live monitored every three to four years.

Monitoring of recorded exams

Trinity examiners audio record oral exams for monitoring and research purposes. This procedure ensures the consistency of marking and administration by its examiners and does not affect the candidate. The procedure does not lead to changes in the result awarded to any individual performance.

Quality assurance visits to exam centres

Trinity representatives may visit any exam centre unannounced to check that all prescribed measures for security and exam conduct are in place and are adequate.

Results checking

The results given by every examiner at every exam are routinely checked at Trinity's central office to ensure that no faults have occurred.

Statistical monitoring

All examiner performances are subject to regular, systematised statistical monitoring to quality assure both intra-examiner and inter-examiner reliability. Similarly, centre performance is statistically monitored.

How is ISE Speaking & Listening assessed?

ISE Speaking & Listening is assessed using rating scales (apart from two listening tasks at ISE Foundation and ISE I). A rating scale contains descriptions of performances at different levels. The examiner judges the performance and assigns it a score based on how close to the description the performance is judged to be.

Introduction

Speaking assessment

The Speaking task rating scale consists of four criteria and five levels of performance for each criterion. The four criteria are:

◗ **Communicative effectiveness** – this includes the fulfilment of the task, appropriacy of contributions and effectiveness of communicative strategies such as turn-taking and repairing breakdowns in communication.

◗ **Interactive listening** – this includes the relevance of a response to a question or input, the level of understanding and the speed and accuracy of responses.

◗ **Language control** – this includes the range and accuracy of the language functions used and the effect on the listener.

◗ **Delivery** – this includes fluency, intelligibility and the effect on the listener.

For each criteria there are five levels of performance. These can be interpreted in this way:

Score	Interpretation
4	Excellent achievement – at the upper end of the CEFR level
3	Appropriate achievement – at the middle of the CEFR level
2	Acceptable achievement – of the CEFR level, possibly newly qualified at that level
1	Non-achievement – not of the CEFR level
0	No topic task, no performance to rate

Each criterion and score has a performance descriptor which enables the examiner to decide which score the candidate is awarded within each criterion. Each ISE level has its own rating scale. The performance descriptors for ISE Foundation are very different from those for ISE III.

The candidate's speaking performance is assessed across all tasks of the speaking exam and all tasks are equally weighted. The candidate is awarded four scores, one for each criterion of the rating scale. These are then combined to give an overall speaking score.

The overall score for speaking is reached by combining the four criterion scores (also called raw scores). The overall score is converted to the following grades:

◗ Distinction
◗ Merit
◗ Pass
◗ Fail

Please see the specifications at each ISE level for the full, detailed rating scales.

Listening exam

Listening is assessed either by objective scoring (the number of correct answers out of a total of possible answers) or by examiner judgment (using a rating scale), or by a combination of both methods. This depends on the ISE level being assessed.

The methods used at each ISE level:

Level	Task	Assessment method	How overall score is reached
ISE Foundation	Task 1	Objective – number of correct answers	Scores combined to make an overall listening score
	Task 2	Subjective using a rating scale	
ISE I	Task 1	Objective – number of correct answers	Scores combined to make an overall listening score
	Task 2	Subjective using a rating scale	
ISE II	Task 1	Subjective using a rating scale	One score awarded
ISE III	Task 1	Subjective using a rating scale	One score awarded

The Independent listening rating scale is not divided into several criteria, but rather gives a more general description of listening at five levels. The examiner takes into consideration the relevance and appropriacy of the candidate's response, correctly identifying the content of the recordings and the amount of detail recognised in the recording.

The Independent listening rating scale does not aim to measure the candidate's speaking performance, therefore fluency or accuracy in the verbal responses are not assessed.

Each ISE level has its own rating scale. The performance descriptors for an ISE Foundation exam are very different from those for an ISE III exam.

Depending on the ISE level, either the scores (objective and subjective) are combined to reach an overall score, or the single score is converted to one of the following results:

◗ Distinction
◗ Merit
◗ Pass
◗ Fail

Please see the specifications at each ISE level for the full, detailed rating scales.

Reporting of results

All candidates receive a module certificate and an individual diagnostic profile report.

Module certificate
◗ The module certificate gives an overall score for their speaking performance (Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail)
◗ The module certificate gives an overall grade for their listening performance (Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail)

Diagnostic profile
◗ The diagnostic profile gives a diagnostic profile of the candidate's performance in both speaking and listening, showing what areas of skill development a candidate may want to focus on in the classroom.

Accredited qualification certificate
◗ Candidates who pass both modules (Speaking & Listening and Reading & Writing) at the same level receive accredited ISE certificates. The certificate lists the grades achieved for each of the skills tested. In order to be awarded a full qualification certificate, candidates must achieve a minimum of a pass in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Accredited ISE certificates are only given to candidates who have passed both modules at the same level.

Support available for teachers, candidates, parents and centres

◗ There are two handbooks available to enable candidates to prepare for ISE – a Guide for Teachers and a Guide for Students. The guides are available for each level of the exam.
◗ The Guide for Teachers includes information about the exam including the exam format and sample papers.
◗ The Guide for Students contains information about the exam and what to expect on the day of the exam.
◗ There are also professional support materials available online including schemes of work and preparation activities to help teachers practise the skills with their students that they will be expected to demonstrate in the exam.
◗ Also available online is a Portfolio Toolkit to support teachers in developing students' writing skills in the classroom.
◗ An ISE Centre Best Practice Guidebook is available to registered Trinity College London centres and contains all relevant operational and exam administration information.
◗ These support materials can be found at trinitycollege.com/ISE and are regularly updated.

Introduction to the tasks of the ISE Speaking & Listening exam

The Topic task

Before the exam, the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice. This is used as a basis for the discussion in the exam. The Topic task provides the candidate with the opportunity to:

◗ demonstrate to the examiner what they can do in English (not just what they know about English)
◗ talk about a topic which is of personal interest or relevance to them and which they feel confident about
◗ have some degree of autonomy and control over this task
◗ show they can link sentences together to talk about a subject at some length
◗ demonstrate the language functions of the level.

Candidates are required to complete a topic form at ISE Foundation and ISE I. This form will support them in preparing for the task. At ISE II candidates do not use a topic form but are encouraged to use notes or mind maps. At ISE III the candidate must prepare a formal handout to accompany their topic presentation. If the candidate is unable to prepare their own topic form, a teacher may complete this for them.

Level	Support
ISE Foundation	Topic form with four points
ISE I	Topic form with four points
ISE II	Candidate may use notes or a mind map
ISE III	Formal handout to accompany presentation

The topic form at ISE Foundation and ISE I is also used by the examiner to ask the candidate questions. This encourages spontaneous conversation and discourages recitation by the candidate as the examiner may ask questions about any point on the topic form in any order.

For details on the specific examiner input and expected candidate response, please see the specifications at each level in this document.

For sample topic forms see appendix 1. For information and advice on preparing for the Topic task please see the Guide for Teachers and the Guide for Students. The Trinity College London website also has support materials and advice on choosing a topic and completing the topic form.

The Collaborative task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to interaction which is controlled and maintained by the candidate.

This task only takes place at ISE II and ISE III. The examiner reads a prompt chosen from a list of several options. The prompt presents a dilemma, circumstance or opinion. The candidate needs to take the initiative to discover more about the background of the examiner's circumstances or position and engage in a sustained discussion about it.

The Collaborative task provides the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate his or her communicative competence, requiring the candidate to initiate turns and control the direction of the interaction. It is an authentic exchange of information and opinions, with the language functions listed at each ISE level arising naturally out of the task.

For details on the specific examiner input and expected candidate response, please see the specifications at each level.

The Conversation task

The Conversation task is a meaningful and authentic exchange of information, ideas and opinions, rather than a formal 'question and answer' interview. The Conversation task takes place at all levels.

The examiner selects one subject area for discussion from the list of the subject areas provided in the specifications for each ISE level.

The subject areas have been carefully selected to offer a progression through the levels from the concrete to the abstract.

The candidate is expected to take more responsibility for initiating and maintaining the conversation as he or she progresses through the ISE levels.

The candidate is expected to ask the examiner questions. These questions should arise naturally out of the conversation and are used to further the interaction.

For details on the specific examiner input and expected candidate response, please see the specifications at each ISE level.

The Independent listening task

While the whole exam requires listening skills in order for the candidate to take part in a conversation with the examiner, this task enables the candidate to demonstrate the kind of listening skills required in lectures and lessons.

The candidate listens to recordings and responds to questions that require either non-verbal responses or conversation with the examiner, depending on the ISE level. The candidate listens to the same recording(s) twice.

Note-taking, at specific points in the task, is encouraged while listening to the audio to encourage the development of the candidate's listening and study skills. Notes are not assessed.

For details on the specific examiner input and expected candidate response, please see the specifications at each ISE level.

Task specifications, sample exams & rating scales

ISE Foundation

Format: Two speaking and listening tasks and a listening phase with two tasks

Timing: 13 minutes (12 minute exam plus 1 minute examiner administration time)

Level: A2 of the CEFR

A sample ISE Foundation Speaking & Listening exam can be viewed at trinitycollege.com/ISE

ISE Foundation task specifications

Topic task	
Task type and format	The Topic task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The candidate prepares a topic for discussion and a topic form with four points which they may use to help them in the discussion. The examiner uses the same form to ask the candidate questions about their chosen topic.
Timing	4 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected to show his or her ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Giving personal information about present and past circumstances/ activities ◗ Describing routines ◗ Describing ability and inability ◗ Describing future plans ◗ Expressing likes and dislikes ◗ Describing people, objects and places ◗ Expressing simple comparisons ◗ Asking for information (eg simple questions about everyday life) ◗ Asking for clarification ◗ Responding to requests for clarification
Examiner role	The examiner uses the topic form to ask the candidate questions in order to elicit the language functions of the level (see sample exam for example stem questions). The examiner choses which points to talk about, in no fixed order, and may also interrupt the candidate where necessary to discourage recitation and encourage spontaneous conversation. The candidate should ask the examiner a question.
Assessment	The Topic task and Conversation task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery

Conversation task

Task type and format	The Conversation task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner selects one conversation topic from the list of ISE Foundation subject areas and asks the candidate questions to start a conversation about the topic.
Timing	2 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected to show his or her ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Giving personal information about present and past circumstances/activities ◗ Describing routines ◗ Expressing ability and inability ◗ Describing future plans ◗ Expressing likes and dislikes ◗ Describing people, objects and places ◗ Expressing simple comparisons ◗ Asking for information (eg simple questions about everyday life) ◗ Asking for clarification ◗ Responding to requests for clarification
Examiner role	The examiner uses the list of subjects and their own test plans to ask questions and elicit the target language functions of the level (see sample exams on trinitycollege.com/ISE for example stem questions). The candidate should ask the examiner a question.
Subject areas	◗ Shopping ◗ Holidays ◗ School and work ◗ Hobbies and sports ◗ Food ◗ Weekend and seasonal activities
Assessment	The Conversation task and Topic task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery Please see the rating scales on page 20 for the full performance descriptors for each criterion and level of performance.

ISE Foundation task specifications

Independent listening task	
Task type	The Independent listening tasks are audio recordings. The candidate listens to the recordings and responds verbally.
Task 1	
Task format	The candidate listens twice to a basic informational text and completes five blanks in a graphic accordingly.
Total task time	2 minutes 15 seconds (approximately)
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to process facts at word level and recognise content words.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recording and reads an instruction (see sample exam on page 22). The examiner may repeat instructions once if necessary.
Expected task outcomes	Selecting required lexical and factual information.
Assessment	Objective scoring – number of correct responses out of a total of five.
Task 2	
Task format	▶ The candidate listens twice to a factual, documentary-style text such as a radio programme, educational podcast, lecture, or teacher talk. They report five facts from the recording to the examiner and then answer three oral examiner questions about the recording. ▶ The candidate is provided with blank notepaper and a pen/pencil they can use to write notes on. The notes are optional and not assessed. ▶ The recording is approximately 1 minute long.
Timing of task	3 minutes 45 seconds (approximately)
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to process facts, mainly at word level, recognise content words and understand whole utterances.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recording and reads an instruction (see sample exam on page 24). The examiner asks three follow-up questions to the facts reported by the candidate.
Expected task outcomes	Identifying and selecting the required lexical and factual information and reporting verbally.
Assessment	This task is assessed using a rating scale of 0-4. The number of facts reported correctly is taken into account as well as the promptness with which the candidate responds. Please see Independent listening rating scales for more detail.

Listening text specifications	**The audio recording** **Speech rate:** Slow conversational speech. Short utterances with frequent pauses. Very rhythmic delivery with clear emphasis on important words. **Pattern:** Monologue. **Articulation:** Precise, with some assimilation and reduced forms of words. Natural rhythm. **Accent**: Southern British English. **Content:** Task 1 contains only the targeted information. Task 2 contains eight distinct facts. **The audio content** **Subject area:** Factual information similar to that provided in secondary school teaching (ie information already familiar through the first language) **Type and structure:** Narrative, descriptive, instructional, simple facts presented sequentially. Examples: radio, podcast, teacher talk, lecture, announcement. **Syntactic complexity:** Short utterances averaging seven words. Mainly standard subject–verb–object sequence with active verbs. Range of tense and aspect. Linked mainly by co-ordination. Use of simple relative clauses. **Information density and complexity:** Generally one idea unit per utterance, maximum two. **Redundancy and rephrasing:** Some repetition of information and some rephrasing. **Speech rate:** Around 140 words per minute. **Length of recording:** Task 1 – 45 seconds Task 2 – 1 minute.

ISE Foundation Speaking & Listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the speaking exam (the Topic and the Conversation tasks).

Score	Communicative effectiveness ▶ Task fulfilment ▶ Appropriacy of contributions/ ▶ Turn-taking ▶ Repair strategies	Interactive listening ▶ Comprehension and relevant response ▶ Level of understanding ▶ Speech rate of examiner interventions ▶ Speed and accuracy of response	Language control ▶ Range ▶ Accuracy/precision ▶ Effects of inaccuracies	Delivery ▶ Intelligibility ▶ Lexical stress/intonation ▶ Fluency ▶ Effects on the listener
4	▶ Fulfils the task very well ▶ Maintains simple exchanges ▶ Says or signals in basic ways that he/she did not follow (eg 'Can you repeat?')	▶ Understands short and simple interventions with little repetition ▶ Identifies factual information ▶ Follows conversational speech, sometimes slowed ▶ Sometimes responds slowly	▶ Uses a sufficient range of basic grammatical structures/lexis and memorised phrases to deal with topics at this level ▶ Shows a sufficient level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision to deal with simple exchanges ▶ Makes basic mistakes, but most errors do not impede communication	▶ Mostly intelligible despite noticeable use of non-standard phonemes ▶ Uses basic lexical stress and intonation appropriately ▶ Speaks slowly with frequent pausing and hesitation ▶ Requires some careful listening
3	▶ Fulfils the task appropriately ▶ Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Some examiner support is necessary ▶ Attempts to say or signal in basic ways that he/she did not follow (eg 'Repeat?', 'mm?' with a facial expression)	▶ Understands short and simple interventions but may need repetition ▶ Identifies factual information, sometimes incomplete ▶ Follows slow conversational speech ▶ May make slow responses due to the need to make sense of the input	▶ Uses a range of basic grammatical structures/ lexis and memorised phrases to deal with topics at this level ▶ Shows a basic level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision to deal with simple exchanges ▶ Makes basic mistakes and major errors occasionally impede communication	▶ Mostly intelligible despite noticeable use of non-standard phonemes ▶ Uses basic lexical stress and intonation enough to follow ▶ Speaks slowly with frequent and extended pausing and hesitation ▶ Requires careful listening
2	▶ Fulfils the task acceptably with support ▶ Examiner support is necessary to keep the interaction going ▶ Attempts to signal in basic ways that he/she did not follow	▶ Does not always understand interventions, quite often needs repetition ▶ Identifies factual information just enough to respond ▶ Follows slow conversational speech in places ▶ Makes slow responses due to difficulty in making sense of the input	▶ Uses an acceptable range of basic grammatical structures/lexis and memorised phrases to deal with topics at this level ▶ Shows a basic level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision just enough to follow ▶ Makes basic mistakes, major errors sometimes impede communication	▶ Sometimes unintelligible ▶ Use of non-standard phonemes is very evident ▶ Uses some basic lexical stress and intonation ▶ Speaks slowly with frequent and noticeable pausing and hesitation ▶ Requires careful listening. Sometimes difficult to follow
1	▶ Does not fulfil the task even with support ▶ Difficult to keep the interaction going even with examiner support ▶ May attempt to signal in basic ways that he/she did not follow	▶ Understands few or no examiner interventions ▶ Does not identify factual information ▶ Has difficulty in following even slow conversational speech ▶ Makes slow responses due to failure to understand input	▶ Uses some basic grammatical structures/ lexis, but does not manage to deal with topics at this level ▶ Does not show an adequate level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision for simple exchanges ▶ Makes basic mistakes, and major errors often impede communication	▶ Sometimes or often unintelligible ▶ Does not use basic lexical stress or intonation ▶ Speaks very slowly with frequent and noticeable pausing and hesitation ▶ Requires careful listening. Often difficult to follow
0	No performance to assess (candidate does not speak, or does not speak in English). Also use if no topic is prepared.			

ISE Foundation Independent listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in task 2 of the Independent listening tasks.

CEFR benchmark: Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (eg very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment) provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.

4	▸ Identifies and reports all/almost all relevant facts accurately (eg eight or more) ▸ Responds to questions with promptness ▸ Needs no/little repetition or rephrasing of questions
3	▸ Identifies and reports required number of relevant facts accurately (eg five to seven) ▸ Responds to questions with relative promptness ▸ May need some repetition or rephrasing of questions
2	▸ Identifies and reports some relevant facts, despite gaps in understanding (eg three to four) ▸ Responds to questions after some hesitation ▸ May need some repetition or rephrasing of questions
1	▸ Identifies and reports limited number of relevant facts (eg zero to two) ▸ Responds to questions only after noticeable hesitation ▸ May need extensive repetition and/or rephrasing of questions
0	▸ No performance to assess (eg candidate does not speak)

ISE Foundation sample exam

Before the exam starts
The examiner greets the candidate and checks their name and exam level.

Topic task
Before the exam, the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice which is used as the basis for the discussion.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:
'*We'll start with the topic. What are we going to talk about?*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions to elicit the language functions of the ISE Foundation level.

If the candidate does not ask a question, the examiner prompts him or her, eg by saying:
'*Please ask me a question.*'

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:
'*Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Conversation task.*'

Conversation task
This task presents an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner chooses one of the subject areas from the list below:
▹ Shopping
▹ Holidays
▹ School and work
▹ Hobbies and sports
▹ Food
▹ Weekend and seasonal activities.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:
'*Let's talk about…*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions to elicit various functions of the ISE Foundation level.

At the end of the Conversation task, the examiner says:
'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Listening task.*'

Independent listening task
The candidate listens to two recordings and responds to questions in writing and in conversation with the examiner.

Task 1
The candidate is handed a listening exam form and should write their name at the top.

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification. Below is an example from the sample exam:

'*This is a map of an island. Here, it shows north, south, west and east* [The examiner points to the compass].

You're going to hear a talk about the island. You'll hear the talk twice. These pictures [the examiner points at the pictures] *show some places on the island. The talk will tell you where the places are.*

Each picture has a letter. Write the correct letters in the circles on the map. There's one circle that you do not need to write in.

There's an example to show you what to do [the examiner points at both Picture A and the circle]. *Please look at the map and the pictures now. You have 15 seconds* [the examiner waits 15 seconds]. *Are you ready?*'

The examiner plays the recording for Task 1. While the recording is playing, the candidate completes the task.

The candidate has up to 15 seconds after the recording has finished playing for the second time to complete the task if necessary.

Approximate time for Task 1 – 2 minutes and 15 seconds.
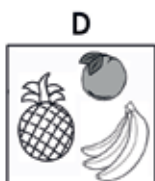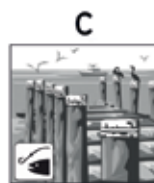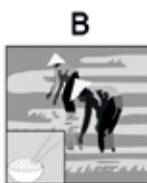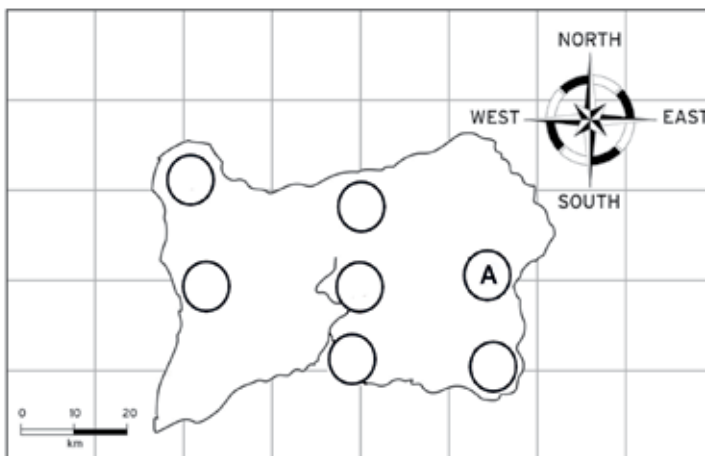
Task 1 Sample audio script

This map shows an island in the Pacific Ocean. There is only one village, which is on the east of the island. The people who live here mainly eat rice and fish. The rice is grown in the centre of the island which is very flat. A river runs through the rice fields, and there is a small fishing port where the river meets the sea. The people grow fruit in the north-west of the island, especially oranges and bananas. There are also small farms in the north where the farmers keep goats. The west side of the island is mainly covered by trees.

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Integrated Skills in English – ISE Foundation
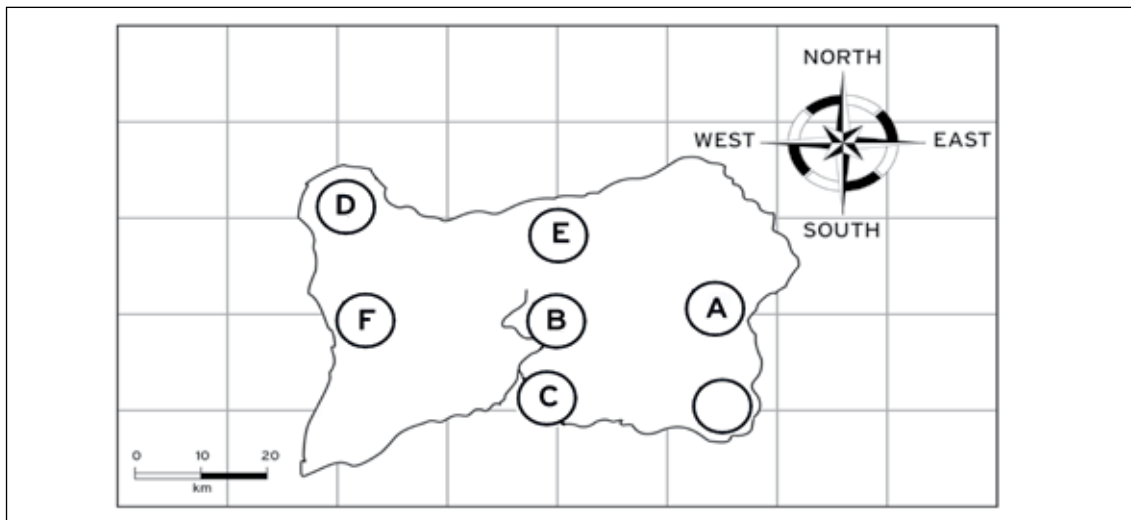Listening exam form

Candidate name: _____

Task 1

The pictures show some places on the island. Each picture has a letter. Write the correct letters in the circles on the map. There is an example to show you what to do.

ISE Foundation sample exam

Task 1 answer key

Sample Independent listening task 2

Audio script for Independent listening task 2

You are going to hear a short talk about a writer. You will hear the talk twice. As you listen, write down some facts about the writer on your notepaper, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me five facts about the writer. Are you ready?

Roald Dahl was a famous writer. He was born in Wales in 1916. His parents were from Norway. When he was 23 years old he became a pilot. Everybody called him 'Lofty' because he was very tall. Dahl wrote mystery stories for adults at first. Later when he had children he started writing children's stories. Dahl worked in a small building in his garden. He wrote for four hours every day. He always used pencil and yellow paper. When he had an idea for a story he wrote it in an old red notebook. Dahl loved chocolate and his most famous book was about a chocolate factory.

Answers

Facts from the recording

1	Born in Wales 1916
2	Parents from Norway
3	Age 23 he became a pilot
4	Called 'Lofty' – very tall
5	First wrote mystery stories for adults
6	Had children – wrote children's stories
7	Worked in small building in his garden
8	Wrote for 4 hours every day
9	Used pencil/yellow paper/old red notebook
10	Loved chocolate/wrote about chocolate factory

Sample examiner questions

1	Where/when was he born?
2	Where were his parents from?
3	What did he do when he was 23? How old was he when he became a pilot?
4	Why was he called 'Lofty'?
5	What did he write first?
6	When did he start writing children's stories?
7	Where did he work?
8	How often/When did he write?
9	What did he use?
10	What food did he love?

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ISE I

Format: Two speaking and listening tasks and a listening phase with two tasks

Timing: 18 minutes (16 minute exam plus one minute examiner administration time)

Level: B1 of the CEFR

A sample ISE I Speaking & Listening exam can be viewed at trinitycollege.com/ISE

ISE I task specifications

Topic task	
Task type and format	The Topic task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The candidate prepares a topic for discussion and a topic form with four points which they may use to help them in the discussion. The examiner uses the same form to ask the candidate questions about their chosen topic.
Timing	4 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected to show his or her ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Describing past actions in the indefinite and recent past ◗ Describing the future, informing and expressing intentions ◗ Predicting and expressing certainty and uncertainty ◗ Giving reasons, opinions and preferences ◗ Expressing obligation ◗ Asking for information and opinions
Examiner role	The examiner uses the topic form to ask the candidate questions in order to elicit the language functions of the level (see sample exam for example stem questions). The examiner may also interrupt the candidate where necessary to discourage recitation and encourage spontaneous conversation. The candidate should ask the examiner a question.
Assessment	The Topic task and Conversation task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery

Conversation task

Task type and format	The Conversation task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner selects one conversation topic from the list of ISE I subject areas and asks the candidate questions to start a conversation about the topic.
Timing	2 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected to show his or her ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Describing past actions in the indefinite and recent past ◗ Describing the future, informing and expressing intentions ◗ Predicting and expressing certainty and uncertainty ◗ Giving reasons, opinions and preferences ◗ Expressing obligation ◗ Asking for information and opinions
Examiner role	The examiner uses the list of subject areas below to ask questions and elicit the target language functions of the level. The candidate should ask the examiner a question.
Subject areas	◗ Travel ◗ Money ◗ Fashion ◗ Rules and regulations ◗ Health and fitness ◗ Learning a foreign language
Assessment	The Conversation task and Topic task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery Please see the rating scales on page 30 for the full performance descriptors for each criterion and level of performance.

ISE I task specifications

Independent listening task	
Task type	The Independent listening tasks are audio recordings. The candidate listens to the recordings and responds verbally.
Task 1	
Task format	The candidate listens twice to basic information (descriptive or narrative) and responds in one or two words to six questions asked by the examiner. The recording is approximately 1 minute long. The candidate may take notes.
Total task time	4 minutes 30 seconds (approximately)
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to process and report facts that are partly derived from understanding whole utterances and partly inferred from recognising content words.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recording and reads an instruction and questions (see sample exam on page 32). The examiner may repeat the instruction once if necessary.
Expected task outcomes	Reporting lexical and factual information, with basic links between facts.
Assessment	Objective scoring – number of correct answers out of a total of six.
Task 2	
Task format	The candidate listens to a factual text (exposition) and reports orally the gist of what they have heard. They listen a second time and report six facts from the recording and answer four oral examiner questions about the recording. The candidate is provided with blank notepaper and a pen/pencil they can use to write notes with while they listen for the second time. The notes are optional and not assessed. The recording is approximately 1 minute 15 seconds long.
Timing of task	5 minutes 30 seconds (approximately)
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to process and report facts that are partly derived from understanding whole utterances and partly inferred from recognising content words. The candidate shows they can identify some links between facts (eg cause and effect) and identify main points and detail.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recording and reads an instruction (see sample exam on page 34). The examiner may repeat the instruction once if necessary. The examiner asks a gist question and four follow-up questions to the facts reported by the candidate.
Expected task outcomes	Identifying main points with some limited supporting detail. Reporting lexical and factual information, with basic links between facts.
Assessment	This task is assessed using a rating scale of 0-4. The number of facts reported correctly is taken into account as well as the promptness with which the candidate responds. Please see Independent listening rating scales for more detail.

Listening text specifications	**The audio recording** **Speech rate:** Medium speech rate. Relatively short utterances with some pausing. Rhythmic classroom-style delivery. **Pattern:** Monologue. **Articulation:** Natural, with assimilation and reduced forms of words. **Accent:** Mainly southern British English. **Content:** Task 1 contains six to seven distinct pieces of information. Task 2 contains a minimum of 10 distinct facts and no more than 12. **The audio content** **Subject area:** New factual information of the kind provided in the classroom. **Type and structure:** Narrative; descriptive; facts with '*but*' and '*because*' connections. Examples include a radio programme, podcast, lecture, teacher talk, documentary. **Syntactic complexity:** Utterances of up to 10 words. May include some passive verbs. Range of tense and aspect. Use of some subordinate clauses. **Information density and complexity:** Maximum two ideas per utterance. **Redundancy and rephrasing:** Natural repetition and rephrasing characteristic of classroom language. **Speech rate:** Around 150 words per minute. **Length of recording:** Task 1 – 1 minute Task 2 – 1 minute 15 seconds.

ISE I Speaking & Listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the speaking exam (the Topic and the Conversation tasks).

Score	Communicative effectiveness ‣ Task fulfilment ‣ Appropriacy of contributions/turn-taking ‣ Repair strategies	Interactive listening ‣ Comprehension and relevant response ‣ Level of understanding ‣ Speech rate of examiner interventions ‣ Speed and accuracy of response	Language control ‣ Range ‣ Accuracy/precision ‣ Effects of inaccuracies	Delivery ‣ Intelligibility ‣ Lexical stress/intonation ‣ Fluency ‣ Effects on the listener
4	‣ Fulfils the task very well ‣ Initiates and responds appropriately both actively and receptively ‣ Maintains and contributes to the interaction by elaborating their utterances spontaneously ‣ Says or signals in basic ways that he/she did not follow. These signals are always effective	‣ Understands interventions with little repetition or rephrasing ‣ Identifies factual information accurately ‣ Has little difficulty in following speech at a normal conversational rate ‣ Sometimes responds slowly to consider examiner input	‣ Uses a good range of grammatical structures/lexis to deal with topics at this level ‣ Shows a relatively high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision to deal with most familiar topics ‣ Errors occur, but they do not impede communication	‣ Intelligible despite some noticeable use of non-standard phonemes ‣ Uses lexical stress and intonation appropriately ‣ Speaks relatively slowly with some pausing and hesitation ‣ Requires some careful listening
3	‣ Fulfils the task appropriately ‣ Initiates and responds appropriately when prompted ‣ Manages to maintain the interaction, but topic development is somewhat dependent on the examiner ‣ Says or signals in basic ways that he/she did not follow – although sometimes awkward, these signals are effective	‣ Understands interventions but may need some repetition or rephrasing ‣ Identifies factual information though it may be short on detail ‣ Sometimes needs examiner speech slowed down ‣ Responds slowly due to some uncertainty about examiner input	‣ Uses an appropriate range of grammatical structures/lexis to deal with topics at this level ‣ Shows a reasonable level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision to deal with most familiar topics ‣ Errors are frequent (eg tenses, agreement-markers) but they do not usually impede communication	‣ Intelligible despite some noticeable use of non-standard phonemes ‣ Generally uses lexical stress and intonation appropriately ‣ Generally speaks slowly with some pausing and hesitation ‣ Requires some careful listening
2	‣ Fulfils the task acceptably with support ‣ Acceptably initiates and responds when prompted ‣ Manages to maintain the interaction, but topic development is overly dependent on the examiner ‣ Says or signals in basic ways that he/she did not follow. Sometimes awkward, and these signals are not always effective	‣ Understands short interventions but may need repetition or rephrasing ‣ Identifies some factual information, possibly incomplete ‣ Has difficulty following speech at a normal conversational rate ‣ Responds quite slowly due to uncertainty about input	‣ Uses an acceptable range of grammatical structures/lexis to manage topics at this level, but grammatical/lexical gaps cause some noticeable hesitation and circumlocution ‣ Shows an acceptable level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision to deal with most familiar topics ‣ Errors are frequent but they do not usually impede communication	‣ Mostly intelligible despite some noticeable use of non-standard phonemes ‣ Uses lexical stress and intonation acceptably ‣ Generally speaks slowly with frequent pausing and hesitation ‣ Requires careful listening
1	‣ Does not fulfil the task even with support ‣ Does not initiate or respond adequately ‣ Does not maintain the interaction sufficiently ‣ Contributions are inappropriate and/or overly dependent on the examiner ‣ Has difficulty in resolving communication problems	‣ Has difficulty understanding interventions ‣ Identifies some random factual information but without an overall context ‣ Does not follow any speech at a normal conversational rate ‣ Consistently responds slowly due to difficulty in understanding input	‣ Uses a limited range of grammatical structures/lexis that is not always adequate to deal with topics at this level ‣ Does not show an adequate level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ‣ Some or many errors impede communication	‣ Generally intelligible or sometimes unintelligible. Use of non-standard phonemes is evident ‣ Uses lexical stress and intonation enough to follow ‣ Speaks slowly with frequent and noticeable pausing and hesitation ‣ Requires careful listening – may be difficult to follow
0	No performance to assess (candidate does not speak, or does not speak in English). Also use if no topic is prepared.			

ISE I Independent listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in task 2 of the Independent listening task.

CEFR benchmark: Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent. Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc, including short narratives.

4	▶ Identifies and reports all/almost all key information accurately (main points and supporting detail) (eg nine or more) ▶ Shows good understanding of links between key information ▶ Responds to questions with promptness ▶ Needs no/little repetition or rephrasing of questions
3	▶ Identifies and reports the number of key information points required accurately (main points and supporting detail) (eg 6 to 8) ▶ Shows understanding of links between key information ▶ Responds to questions with relative promptness ▶ May need some repetition or rephrasing of questions
2	▶ Identifies and reports some key information points accurately (main points and supporting detail) (eg 4 to 5) ▶ Shows limited understanding of links between key information ▶ Responds to questions after some hesitation ▶ May need some repetition or rephrasing of questions
1	▶ Identifies and reports limited number of key information points (eg 0 to 3) ▶ Shows little/no understanding of links between key information ▶ Responds to questions only after noticeable hesitation ▶ May need extensive repetition and/or rephrasing of questions
0	▶ No performance to assess (eg candidate does not speak)

ISE I sample exam

Before the exam starts
The examiner greets the candidate and checks their identification against a passport or ID card, and the exam level.

Topic task
Before the exam, the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice which is used as the basis for the discussion.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:
'We'll start with the topic. What are we going to talk about?'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions to elicit the language functions of the ISE I level.

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:
'Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Conversation task.'

Conversation task
This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner chooses one of the subject areas from the list below:
◗ Travel
◗ Money
◗ Fashion
◗ Rules and regulations
◗ Health and fitness
◗ Learning a foreign language.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:
'Let's talk about…'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit the language functions of the ISE I level.

At the end of the Conversation task, the examiner says:
'Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Listening task.'

Independent listening task
The candidate listens to two recordings and responds to questions in writing and in conversation with the examiner.

Task 1
The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task and gives the candidate some blank notepaper to write notes on if they want to. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification.

Below is an example from the sample exam:

'You're going to hear a short talk about a type of bird called an 'emu'. You will hear the talk twice. As you listen, write down some notes about what you hear, if you want to. After, I will ask you six questions on some facts about the emu.

Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording for Task 1. The recording is played twice. While the recording is playing, the candidate can make notes.

After the recording has played twice, the examiner asks the candidate the following questions:

1. Where do emus live?

2. What kind of places do emus like living in?

3. How fast can they run?

4. Can you tell me something they eat?

5. What colour are emus?

6. What can you tell me about their eyesight?

Task 1 sample audio script

The emu is one of the strangest birds on our planet. It's very large. In fact, it's the second tallest bird in the world. It's found in Australia where it lives in open country and avoids forests and towns. Emus can't fly but they have very long legs which means they can run very fast, up to 50 kilometres an hour. They travel a lot, especially in search of food. They feed on insects and plants but can live without food and water for a long time.

Both the male and the female emu are brown in colour which can make it difficult to see them. They also have very good eyesight which helps them to escape from animals and birds that might attack them. Young emus reach full size after six months and emus can live up to 20 years in the wild.

Answer key

1	Australia
2	Open country
3	50 (kilometres per hour)
4	Plants and/or insects
5	Brown
6	(they have) very good (eyesight)

Task 2

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification once.

Below is an example from the sample exam:

'*You're going to hear a short talk about science. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me in a few words what the speaker is talking about.*

Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording for Task 2 once.

After the recording has played once, the examiner says:

'*Now tell me in a few words what the talk is about.*'

After the candidate has responded, the examiner says:

'*Turn over your paper. Now listen to the talk again. Write down some notes about what you hear, if you want to.*

Then I'll ask you to tell me six pieces of information about how children learn to speak. Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording again. The candidate may make notes while they listen. The examiner then says:

'*Now tell me six pieces of information about how children learn to speak.*'

The candidate reports to the examiner six pieces of information that they have heard in the recording. They may refer to their notes.

While the candidate is responding, the examiner checks which facts the candidate has correctly or incorrectly reported. When the candidate has finished, the examiner selects four follow-up questions from a list in the examiner materials.

Task 2 sample audio script

Babies begin to speak at about one year old. To start with they learn words very slowly. For some time they only know about 50 words mainly words for objects and people, then when they are about 18 months old their vocabulary suddenly begins to grow very fast. They begin to use verbs and adjectives and they may learn as many as 10 new words every day. Some people say that this is because children suddenly recognise what a word is. They realise that each word refers to something in the real world.

It is strange that children do not need to hear a word many times. Sometimes they have only heard it two or three times before they begin to use it. By the time they are six years old, children can use about 6,000 words and they can understand about 14,000.

Answer key

1	Begin speaking at one	When does a baby begin to speak?
2	Learn words slowly	How quickly does a baby learn new words?
3	Knows 50 words at first	How many words does a one-year-old child know?
4	Knows words for objects and people	What are a child's first words about?
5	Vocabulary grows fast at 18 months	What happens when a child is about 18 months old?
6	Learn 10 new words a day at 18 months	How many words can an 18-month-old child learn a day?
7	Suddenly recognise what a word is/refers to real world	Why does a child's vocabulary suddenly grown at 18 months?
8	Don't have to hear many times	Do children have to hear a word often in order to learn it?
9	Use 6,000 words by the age of six	How many words can a child use at the age of six?
10	Understand 14,000 words by the age of six	How many words can a child understand at the age of six?

ISE II

Format: Three speaking and listening tasks and a listening phase with one task

Timing: 20 minutes (18 minute exam plus 2 minute examiner administration time)

Level: B2 of the CEFR

A sample ISE II Speaking & Listening exam can be viewed at trinitycollege.com/ISE

ISE II task specifications

Topic task	
Task format	The Topic task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The candidate prepares a topic for discussion and may use notes or a mind map to aid the discussion.
Timing	4 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected to show his or her ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ 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
Examiner role	The examiner uses the mind map provided by the candidate to invite comments and ask the candidate questions in order to elicit the language functions of the ISE II level and co-construct the discussion with the candidate. The examiner may interrupt the candidate where necessary to discourage recitation and encourage a spontaneous conversation.
Assessment	The Topic task and Conversation task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery

ISE II task specifications

Collaborative task	
Task format	The Collaborative task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner reads a prompt which creates an information gap. The prompt may present a dilemma or opinion. The candidate needs to ask the examiner questions to obtain more information and keep the conversation going.
Timing	4 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected, in this task and throughout the speaking exam, to show their ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ 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
Examiner role	The examiner reads a prompt presenting a dilemma or opinion. The examiner responds naturally to the candidate's questioning and comments, to encourage him or her to keep the conversation going. The examiner will not give away too much information in one turn, or restrict information unnaturally.
Assessment	The Collaborative task, Topic task and Conversation task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery

Conversation task

Task format	The Conversation task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner selects one conversation topic from the list of the ISE subject areas and asks the candidate questions to start a conversation.
Timing	2 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected in this task and throughout the speaking exam to show their ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ 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
Examiner role	The examiner uses the list of subjects and their own test plans to ask questions and elicit the target language functions of the level.
Subject areas	◗ Society and living standards ◗ Personal values and ideals ◗ The world of work ◗ National environmental concerns ◗ Public figures past and present
Assessment	The Conversation task, Collaborative task and Topic task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery Please see the rating scale on page 39 for the full performance descriptors for each criterion and level of performance.

ISE II task specifications

Independent listening task	
Task format	During this task, the candidate listens to a recorded monologue twice. The first time, the examiner asks for the gist of the recording. The second time, the examiner asks a question that requires listening for detail. The examiner asks the question both before and after playing the audio recording, and the candidate responds orally after listening. The candidate may take notes while they are listening for the second time. Notes are optional and are not assessed.
Total task time	8 minutes
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to process and report information, including main points and supporting detail, placing information in a wider context, inferring information not expressed explicitly, reporting speaker's intentions and inferring word meaning.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recordings and reads an instruction (see sample exam on page 41), a gist question and a more detailed question.
Expected task outcomes	◗ Distinguishing main points and supporting detail ◗ Use of world knowledge to interpret what is said ◗ Accurate use of inference and reference ◗ Interpretation of speaker's standpoint
Assessment	This task is assessed using a rating scale of 0-4. The number of relevant points reported correctly is taken into account as well as the promptness with which the candidate responds. Please see Independent listening rating scales for more detail.
Listening text specifications	**The audio recording** Speech rate: Conversational speech rate, with only natural pausing. Classroom-style delivery. Pattern: Monologue. Articulation: Natural, with extensive assimilation and reduced forms of words. Accent: Southern British English, general American, some other first language varieties which can quite easily be matched against familiar forms. **The audio content** Topic: New factual information of the kind provided in the classroom. Type and structure: Exposition; discussion. Quite complex links between points of information indicated by connectives. Examples include lectures, podcasts, radio programmes and documentaries. Syntactic complexity: Full range of tense and aspect. Subordinate clauses widely used. Information density and complexity: Maximum three ideas per utterance. Redundancy and rephrasing: Limited repetition and rephrasing characteristic of classroom language and lectures. Speech rate: Normal, conversational rate. Length of recording: 2 minutes 45 seconds.

ISE II Speaking & Listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the speaking exam (the Topic, Collaborative and Conversation tasks).

Score	Communicative effectiveness ▸ Task fulfilment ▸ Appropriacy of contributions/turn-taking ▸ Repair strategies	Interactive listening ▸ Comprehension and relevant response ▸ Level of understanding ▸ Speech rate of examiner interventions ▸ Speed and accuracy of response	Language control ▸ Range ▸ Accuracy/precision ▸ Effects of inaccuracies	Delivery ▸ Intelligibility ▸ Lexical stress/intonation ▸ Fluency ▸ Effects on the listener
4	▸ Fulfils the task very well ▸ Initiates and responds with effective turn-taking ▸ Effectively maintains and develops the interaction ▸ Solves communication problems naturally, if any	▸ Understands all interventions on a first hearing ▸ Interprets examiner's aims and viewpoints accurately by making links with earlier information ▸ Makes immediate and relevant responses	▸ Uses a wide range of grammatical structures/ lexis flexibly to deal with topics at this level ▸ Consistently shows a high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Errors do not impede communication	▸ Clearly intelligible ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation effectively ▸ Speaks promptly and fluently ▸ Requires no careful listening
3	▸ Fulfils the task appropriately ▸ Initiates and responds appropriately ▸ Maintains and develops the interaction appropriately (eg expanding and developing ideas, and showing understanding of what the examiner said) ▸ Deals with communication problems well	▸ Understands most interventions on a first hearing ▸ Interprets examiner's aims and viewpoints accurately ▸ Makes prompt and relevant response	▸ Uses an appropriate range of grammatical structures/ lexis to deal with topics at this level ▸ Shows a relatively high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Errors do not impede communication	▸ Clearly intelligible despite some use of non-standard phonemes ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation appropriately ▸ Generally speaks promptly and fluently – occasionally affected by some hesitancy ▸ Requires almost no careful listening
2	▸ Fulfils the task acceptably with support ▸ Initiates and responds acceptably ▸ Maintains and develops the interaction, but contributions are not always appropriate and/or somewhat dependent on the examiner ▸ Manages to solve communication problems, but requires more than one attempt and/or does not always do this naturally (eg 'What?')	▸ Usually understands interventions; occasionally needs clarification ▸ Shows occasional uncertainty about examiner's aims or viewpoints ▸ Makes relatively prompt responses	▸ Uses an acceptable range of grammatical structures/lexis to manage topics at this level, but grammatical/lexical gaps still cause hesitation and circumlocution ▸ Shows an acceptable level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Most errors do not impede communication	▸ Intelligible despite some use of non-standard phonemes ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation acceptably ▸ Speaks promptly and fluently enough to follow ▸ Requires some careful listening
1	▸ Does not fulfil the task even with support ▸ Does not initiate or respond adequately ▸ Does not maintain and develop the interaction sufficiently ▸ Contributions are inappropriate and/or overly dependent on the examiner ▸ Has some difficulty in resolving communication problems	▸ Has difficulty in understanding interventions ▸ Frequently misinterprets examiner's aims and viewpoints ▸ Responds slowly due to difficulty in understanding input	▸ Uses a limited range of grammatical structures/ lexis that is not always adequate to deal with topics at this level ▸ Does not show an adequate level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Some errors impede communication	▸ Generally intelligible or sometimes unintelligible. Use of non-standard phonemes is sometimes or frequently evident ▸ Sometimes or often misuses focal stress and intonation ▸ Speaks slowly. Sometimes or often halted by hesitancy ▸ Requires (some) careful listening
0	No performance to assess (candidate does not speak, or does not speak in English). Also use if no topic is prepared.			

ISE II Independent listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the Independent listening task.

CEFR benchmark: Can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand. Can understand the main topics of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is signposted by explicit markers.

4	▷ Identifies and reports all important points relevantly ▷ Shows full understanding of main points, and how they relate to the message as a whole ▷ Makes sense of connected English speech rapidly and accurately with confidence ▷ Fully infers meanings left unstated (eg speaker's viewpoints)
3	▷ Identifies and reports most points relevantly ▷ Shows good understanding of main points and is aware of the line of argument linking them ▷ Makes sense of connected English speech quite rapidly and accurately ▷ Infers meanings left unstated (eg speaker's viewpoints)
2	▷ Identifies main points but incompletely or in a general way ▷ Shows understanding of recording, but does not always grasp the line of argument ▷ Makes sense of connected English speech with some degrees of promptness and accuracy ▷ Infers some meanings left unstated (eg speaker's viewpoints)
1	▷ Does not succeed in identifying main points ▷ Shows incomplete understanding, limited to factual level information
0	▷ No performance to assess (eg candidate does not speak)

ISE II sample exam

Before the exam starts

The examiner greets the candidate and checks their identification against a passport or ID card, and exam level.

Topic task

Before the exam, the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice and in the exam this is used as a basis for the discussion.

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'*We'll start with the topic. What are we going to talk about?*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions to elicit the language functions of the level.

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Collaborative task.*'

Collaborative task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to interaction controlled and maintained by the candidate.

The examiner chooses a prompt from one of several. These prompts are changed annually. An example is given below. Before reading the prompt the examiner will read the following instructions:

'*For the next part, I'll tell you something. Then, you have to ask me questions to find out more information and make comments. You need to keep the conversation going. Are you ready?*'

Sample prompt:

'*I have a friend who's studying English. He thinks the best way to improve his language skills is to watch lots of films in English. I'm not sure I agree with him.*'

The candidate is then expected to ask questions and make comments in order to elicit further information from the examiner and develop and maintain the conversation.

At the end of the Collaborative task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Conversation task.*'

Conversation task

This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner chooses one of the subject areas from the list below:

◗ Society and living standards
◗ Personal values and ideals
◗ The world of work
◗ National environmental concerns
◗ Public figures past and present

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'*Let's talk about...*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit various functions of the level. The candidate and the examiner share responsibility for maintaining the conversation.

When the Conversation task is complete, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Listening task.*'

Independent listening task

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification. Here is an example:

'*You're going to hear a talk about wind energy. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?*'

The examiner then plays the recording once. After the recording has played once, the examiner will say:

'*Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?*'

When the candidate has answered the question, the examiner hands them blank notepaper and says:

'*Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the reasons the speaker gives for and against the use of wind energy.*

Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording again.

After the recording has played for a second time, the examiner says:

'*Now tell me the reasons the speaker gives for and against the use of wind energy.. You have one minute to talk.*'

The candidate has up to one minute to respond and may refer to their notes.

Sample audio script

When it comes to investing in wind turbines to create electricity, there are various factors that need to be considered. Most obviously, the creation of wind energy is 'clean'. Unlike the use of coal or oil, generating energy from the wind doesn't produce pollutants or require harmful chemicals, and it's this factor which weighs most heavily with those worried about the future of our planet. Moreover, wind will never run out, unlike other natural, non-renewable resources. So it would seem to be a winner in at least two very significant areas.

There are those, however, who continue to argue against the use of wind turbines – but it has to be said their arguments tend to focus on much more detailed issues, and largely ignore the bigger overall picture. It's claimed, for example, that the blades of wind turbines can sometimes be dangerous to wildlife, particularly birds. This may be true, but it seems a small price to pay compared to using other means of power generation, which could end up destroying the habitats of those very same birds. In addition, the sound turbines create can, admittedly, be a problem for those nearby. Perhaps a more significant point, though, and certainly one often mentioned by those who object to turbines, is that it requires a lot of open land to set them up, and cutting down trees seems to defeat the green purpose.

Those who criticise wind energy point out that the wind doesn't always blow consistently. And that's certainly a drawback right now – turbines typically operate at only 30% capacity. If the weather isn't in your favour, you may end up without electricity. And when there is wind, well, severe storms or extremely high winds might damage turbines, especially when they're struck by lightning. As such weather already damages existing methods of power production, however, this line of attack seems to be without much merit.

Ultimately, wind is free. In suitable geographical locations, it's there for the taking. While start-up costs are still off-putting for some, it's undeniable that the overall costs of producing wind energy have been dropping significantly in recent years, and as it gains popularity, it'll continue to become more affordable. In many countries, the costs of purchasing and installing turbines are subsidised by government schemes aimed to promote expansion. There are, no question, a number of problems associated with turbines which still require solutions – but in the longer view, the case for them appears beyond doubt.

Answers

Gist: Wind energy may be a good way to reduce damage to the environment, but there are drawbacks. Overall, there is a strong case for using them (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

For
◗ Clean energy – no harmful chemicals or pollutants involved/produced
◗ Will never run out
◗ Doesn't destroy habitats as other power generation means do
◗ Essentially free/any associated costs falling

Against
◗ Turbines dangerous to wildlife, especially birds
◗ Noisy
◗ Requires large area of open land – may lead to cutting down of trees
◗ Supply of wind not consistent – turbines operating at 30% capacity
◗ Bad weather can damage turbines

ISE III

Format: A speaking exam with four tasks and a listening exam with one task.

Timing: 25 minutes (23 minute exam plus 2 minute examiner administration time).

Level: C1 of the CEFR

A sample ISE III Speaking & Listening exam can be viewed at trinitycollege.com/ISE

ISE III task specifications

Topic task	
Task type and format	The Topic task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The candidate prepares a topic and delivers a formal presentation on that topic. The candidate is required to produce a handout for the examiner, and may also use visual aids.
	After the presentation, the candidate and the examiner discuss issues and points arising from the presentation. The candidate should ask the examiner if he or she has any comments or questions.
Timing	4 minutes for presentation
	4 minutes for discussion
Task focus	The candidate is expected, in this task and throughout the speaking exam, to show their ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are:
	◗ Developing and justifying an argument
	◗ Summarising
	◗ Evaluating options, past actions/course of events, different standpoints
	◗ Deducing and inferring
	◗ Staging
	◗ Hypothesising
	◗ Indicating understanding of points made by examiner
	◗ Establishing common ground/purpose or strategy
Examiner role	The examiner makes notes during the presentation of ideas, points or issues to discuss after the presentation is finished.
	During the discussion, the examiner asks questions to elicit the language functions of the level.

Collaborative task

Task format	The Collaborative task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner reads a prompt which creates an information gap. The prompt may express a dilemma or opinion. The candidate needs to ask the examiner questions to obtain more information and keep the conversation going.
Timing	4 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected, in this task and throughout the speaking exam, to show their ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Developing and justifying an argument ◗ Summarising ◗ Evaluating options, past actions/course of events, different standpoints ◗ Deducing and inferring ◗ Staging ◗ Hypothesising ◗ Indicating understanding of points made by examiner ◗ Establishing common ground/purpose or strategy
Examiner role	The examiner reads a prompt presenting a dilemma or opinion. The examiner responds naturally to the candidate's questioning and comments, encouraging them to keep the conversation going. The examiner will not give away too much information in one turn, or restrict information unnaturally.
Assessment	The Collaborative task, Topic task and Conversation task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery

ISE III task specifications

Conversation task	
Task format	The Conversation task is an integrated speaking and listening task. The examiner selects one conversation topic from the list of ISE III subject areas and asks the candidate questions to start a conversation.
Timing	3 minutes
Task focus	The candidate is expected, in this task and throughout the speaking exam, to show their ability to use the language functions of the ISE level. These functions are: ◗ Developing and justifying an argument ◗ Summarising ◗ Evaluating options, past actions/course of events, different standpoints ◗ Deducing and inferring ◗ Staging ◗ Hypothesising ◗ Indicating understanding of points made by examiner ◗ Establishing common ground/purpose or strategy
Examiner role	The examiner uses the list of topics and their own test plans to ask questions and elicit the target language functions of the level.
Subject areas	◗ Independence ◗ Ambitions ◗ Stereotypes ◗ Role models ◗ Competitiveness ◗ Young people's rights ◗ The media ◗ Advertising ◗ Lifestyles ◗ The arts ◗ The rights of the individual ◗ Economic issues
Assessment	The Conversation task, Collaborative task and Topic task are given one score using four criteria: ◗ Communicative effectiveness ◗ Interactive listening ◗ Language control ◗ Delivery Please see the rating scales on page 48 for the full performance descriptors for each criterion and score.

Independent listening task	
Task format	During this task, the candidate listens to a recorded monologue twice. The first time, the examiner asks for the gist of the recording. The second time, the examiner asks a question that requires listening for detail. The examiner asks the question both before and after playing the audio recording, and the candidate responds orally after listening. The candidate may take notes while they are listening for the second time. Notes are optional and are not assessed.
Timing	8 minutes
Task focus	The candidate shows that they are able to place information in a wider context, clearly distinguishing main and subordinate points, recognising the speaker's line of argument, inferring information and links between points of information that are not expressed explicitly, interpreting the speaker's attitude, and inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words.
Examiner role	The examiner plays the recording and reads an instruction (see sample exam on page 50), a gist question and a more detailed question.
Expected task outcomes	◗ Reporting a line of argument ◗ Interpreting what a speaker says and how he/she says it ◗ Very accurate use of inference and reference ◗ Identifying speaker attitude and perspective ◗ Evaluating speaker's comments
Assessment	This task is assessed using a rating scale of 0-4. The number of facts reported correctly is taken into account as well as the promptness with which the candidate responds. Please see Independent listening rating scales for more detail.
Listening text specifications	**The audio recording** Speech rate: Conversational speech rate, with natural speeding up and slowing down. Classroom-style delivery. Pattern: Monologue. Articulation: Natural, with some words foregrounded but others of low prominence. Accent: May include varieties that can be processed using southern British and general American as a point of reference. **The audio content** Topic: Information generally of a discursive nature. Type and structure: Exposition; discussion which weighs points against each other. Quite complex links between points of information, which sometimes have to be inferred. Examples include lectures, complex discussions, debates, podcasts, radio programmes and documentaries. Syntactic complexity: Full range. Subordinate clauses widely used. Information density and complexity: Quite information dense. Redundancy and rephrasing: Limited repetition and rephrasing common to a teaching style. Speech rate: Normal, conversational rate. Length of recording: 2 minutes 45 seconds.

ISE III Speaking & Listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the Speaking exam (the Topic, Collaborative and Conversation task).

Score	Communicative effectiveness ▸ Task fulfilment ▸ Appropriacy of contributions/turn-taking ▸ Repair strategies	Interactive listening ▸ Comprehension and relevant response ▸ Level of understanding ▸ Speech rate of examiner interventions ▸ Speed and accuracy of response	Language control ▸ Range ▸ Accuracy/precision ▸ Effects of inaccuracies	Delivery ▸ Intelligibility ▸ Lexical stress/intonation ▸ Fluency ▸ Effects on the listener
4	▸ Fulfils the task very well ▸ Initiates and responds with effective turn-taking ▸ Contributes to effective topic maintenance and development, by fully incorporating the examiner's utterances into their own contributions ▸ Solves communication problems naturally, if any	▸ Understands interventions including those that are complex in grammar or ideas ▸ Interprets examiner aims and attitude accurately, following the line of argument ▸ Responses are immediate and always to the point	▸ Uses a wide range of grammatical structures/lexis flexibly to deal with topics at this level ▸ Consistently maintains a high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision effortlessly, even when using complex language ▸ Occasional minor slips may occur but difficult to spot	▸ Clearly intelligible ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation very effectively ▸ Effortlessly speaks very promptly and fluently ▸ Requires no careful listening
3	▸ Fulfils the task appropriately ▸ Initiates and responds with effective turn-taking ▸ Contributes to effective topic maintenance and development, by linking contributions to those of the examiner (eg summarising, indicating understanding of points made by the examiner, establishing common ground in the interaction) ▸ Solves communication problems naturally, if any	▸ Understands all examiner interventions on a first hearing ▸ Interprets examiner aims and attitude accurately, following the line of argument ▸ Immediate and relevant responses to interventions	▸ Uses an appropriate range of grammatical structures/lexis to deal with topics at this level ▸ Consistently maintains a high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Occasional minor slips occur	▸ Clearly intelligible ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation effectively ▸ Speaks promptly and fluently ▸ Requires no careful listening
2	▸ Fulfils the task acceptably ▸ Initiates and responds with effective turn-taking ▸ Maintains and develops the interaction appropriately, while indicating understanding of what the examiner has said ▸ Solves communication problems naturally, if any	▸ Understands most interventions on a first hearing ▸ Interprets examiner aims and attitude by making links with earlier information ▸ Prompt responses to the examiner showing relatively quick understanding	▸ Uses an acceptable range of grammatical structures/lexis to deal with topics at this level ▸ Consistently maintains a high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision ▸ Occasional minor slips occur	▸ Clearly intelligible ▸ Uses focal stress and intonation appropriately ▸ Generally speaks promptly and fluently ▸ Requires no careful listening
1	▸ Does not fulfil the task ▸ Initiates and responds adequately ▸ Maintains and develops the interaction acceptably, but does not usually link contributions to those of the examiner ▸ Solves communication problems appropriately or acceptably, if any	▸ Appears to understand interventions but does not always respond appropriately ▸ Occasionally digresses from the examiner's aims ▸ Occasional hesitation in order to make sense of examiner input	▸ Uses a range of grammatical structures/lexis that is not always adequate to deal with topics at this level ▸ Does not show an adequate level of grammatical accuracy and lexical precision at this level ▸ Some or many errors may occur	▸ May not always be clearly intelligible ▸ Does not always use focal stress and intonation appropriately ▸ Does not always speak promptly and fluently ▸ May require some careful listening
0	No performance to assess (candidate does not speak, or does not speak in English). Also use if no topic is prepared.			

ISE III Independent listening rating scale

This rating scale is used by the examiner to make a judgement of the candidate's performance in the Independent listening task.

CEFR benchmark: Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts. Can follow extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly.

4	▷ Identifies and reports all important points and supporting details rapidly and accurately with confidence ▷ Shows complete understanding of main points, including relevance to message as a whole ▷ Identifies speaker's attitude and line of argument ▷ Evaluates speaker's arguments in a sophisticated way
3	▷ Identifies and reports most main points and supporting details rapidly and accurately ▷ Shows good understanding of main points, including relevance to message as a whole ▷ Recognises speaker's attitude and line of argument ▷ Evaluates speaker's arguments
2	▷ Identifies main points and reports them briefly but accurately ▷ Shows good understanding of information in recording, but not always their relevance to message as a whole ▷ Does not always grasp speaker's attitude or line of argument ▷ Does not always evaluate speaker's arguments
1	▷ Identifies main points but incompletely or in a rather general way ▷ Shows some understanding of information in recording, but does not differentiate between major and minor points ▷ Does not recognise speaker's attitude or line of argument ▷ Does not evaluate speaker's arguments
0	▷ No performance to assess (eg candidate does not speak)

ISE III sample exam

Before the exam starts

The examiner greets the candidate and checks their identification against a passport or ID card, and exam level.

Topic task

This task gives the candidate the opportunity to display their command of the language of the grade while delivering a formal oral presentation on self-selected and personally-relevant topics. The Topic discussion task is where the candidate and examiner have an authentic discussion on the ideas and opinions given in the formal topic presentation.

The examiner will signal the start of this task by saying:

'*We'll start with the topic presentation. Please begin when you are ready*.'

The examiner will make notes on the content of the presentation for the subsequent discussion. The candidate concludes the presentation by inviting the examiner to ask questions or comment, and the examiner signals the start of the topic discussion task by saying:

'*Thank you. Now I'd like to discuss some of the points you have made*.'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit the language functions of the ISE level.

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Collaborative task*.'

The examiner then signals the start of the Collaborative task as below.

Collaborative task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to interaction controlled and maintained by the candidate.

The examiner chooses one of several prompts. These prompts are changed annually. An example is given below. Before reading the prompt the examiner will read the following instructions:

'*For the next part, I'll tell you something. Then, you have to ask me questions to find out more information and make comments. You need to keep the conversation going. Are you ready?*'

Sample prompt:

'*In the last few years, many previously unspoilt regions of the world have been opened up to tourism. I'm concerned about the long-term effects of this*.'

The candidate is then expected to ask questions and make comments in order to elicit further information from the examiner and develop the conversation, using the language functions of the ISE level.

At the end of the Collaborative task, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Conversation task*.'

Conversation task

This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner will choose one of the subject areas from the list below:

- Independence
- Ambitions
- Stereotypes
- Role models
- Competitiveness
- Young people's rights
- The media
- Advertising

◗ Lifestyles
◗ The arts
◗ The rights of the individual
◗ Economic issues

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'*Let's talk about...*'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit various functions of the ISE level. The candidate and the examiner share responsibility for maintaining the conversation.

When the Conversation task is complete, the examiner says:

'*Thank you. Now we'll move onto the Listening task.*'

Independent listening task

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification.

Below is an example from the sample exam:

'*You're going to hear part of a radio programme about routine. You will hear it twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about.*

Are you ready?'

The examiner then plays the recording once. After the recording has played once, the examiner says:

'*Now can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?*'

When the candidate has answered the question, the examiner will hand them blank notepaper and a pen/pencil and will say:

'*Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion.*

Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording again.

After the recording has played a second time, the examiner says:

'*Now tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion.*'

The candidate has up to one minute to respond and may refer to their notes.

Sample audio script

In my recent book, I discuss the subject of routine and the effects it has on our lives. Actually, my original idea was to look at the working methods of successful creative people like writers and artists to see if there were any helpful lessons to be drawn. The more people I examined, the clearer it became that there was one thing the vast majority of them had in common: they had a regular working routine and stuck to it strictly, even obsessively. Their habits and routines often ended up being more like rituals. To take one example, the composer Beethoven apparently used to start each day with a cup of strong coffee made with exactly sixty coffee beans, which he insisted on counting out personally. And that's by no means the oddest ritual I discovered.

Obviously we don't all have to behave like that, but it does appear that routine is something most of us need. Most humans function better when they have some kind of structure to their lives. In fact, without routines for day-to-day activities, nothing much would get done. Transport wouldn't run on time, schools and workplaces would be in a permanent state of chaos, and so on.

So, society as a whole seems to favour, or even require, people with regular lifestyles. But there's a growing body of research suggesting that too much routine is bad for personal well-being, and it's this aspect that much of the book is concerned with. Breaking up your routine and doing something new, it appears, increases your happiness. It's not just a case of getting bored: routine also increases our sense of time passing by too quickly. When nothing new is happening, we're not so conscious of events and simply don't notice the days and weeks slipping away.

There's also an interesting connection between time and memory, or more exactly two kinds of connection. Firstly, a lot of what people accept as naturally increasing forgetfulness as they get older is actually more to do with their lives becoming predictable. It's not so much that they forget things that have happened but that they didn't really notice them in the first place because they'd become so automatic. The other thing that strikes a chord with me as I get older is the explanation for why childhood memories seem so vivid. When you're young, everything is new and your brain is working overtime to take everything in, so your impressions of events are much more memorable. What we need to do is to try and recapture that sense of newness by disrupting routines and actively seeking out new experiences.

Answer key – examiner checklist

Gist: Routine is beneficial to some extent. But it is important to break routine and try new things for happiness and memory (any broadly similar formulation acceptable).
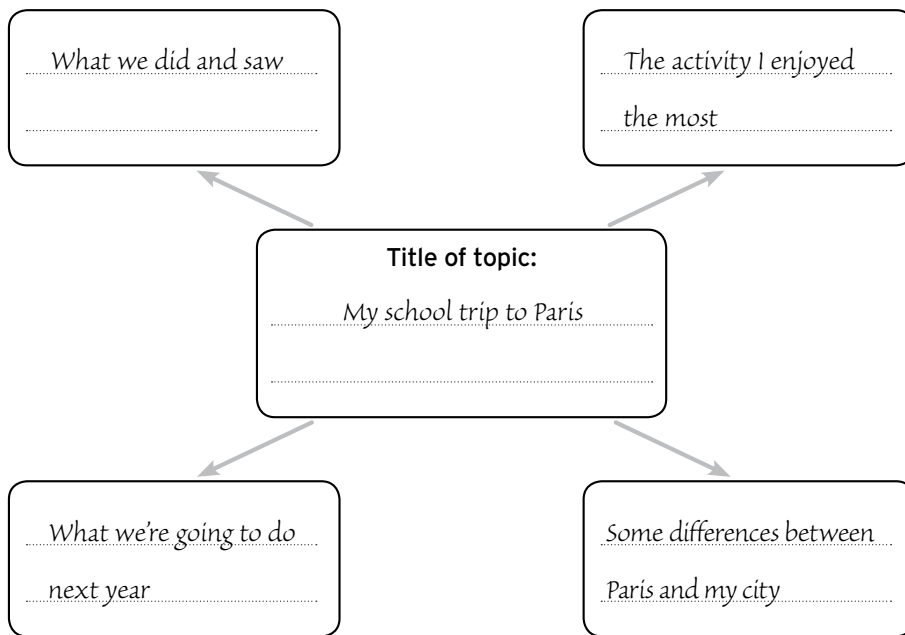
◗ Successful people known to have routine, for example, Beethoven

◗ Not always healthy though – can become like a ritual

◗ Some routine is vital – transport, schools, etc

◗ Also, people seem to need some routine to give structure to lives

◗ Society needs people to have routine

◗ BUT – doing new things is important for happiness/well-being – it means time doesn't seem to pass so quickly

◗ Also, newness important for forming and maintaining memory – memory loss in older age can be due to predictability

◗ Conclusion? Speaker appears to conclude that a degree of routine is important for individuals and society as a whole but that it is very important to avoid becoming too predictable

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sample topic forms
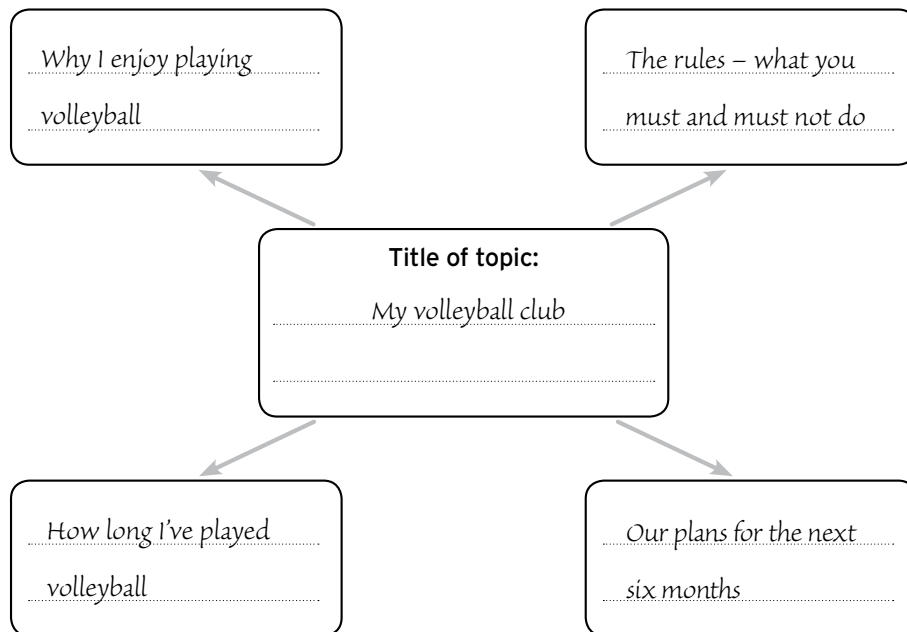
TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

Integrated Skills in English Topic Form – ISE Foundation

What we did and saw	*The activity I enjoyed the most*

Title of topic:

My school trip to Paris

What we're going to do next year	*Some differences between Paris and my city*

The information on this form must be presented to the examiner during the exam.

TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

Integrated Skills in English Topic Form – ISE I

Why I enjoy playing volleyball

The rules – what you must and must not do

Title of topic:

My volleyball club

How long I've played volleyball

Our plans for the next six months

The information on this form must be presented to the examiner during the exam.

Appendix 2 – Language functions

Below is a complete list of all the language functions for each level of the ISE exam.

ISE Foundation

◗ Giving personal information about present and past circumstances/activities
◗ Describing routines
◗ Expressing ability and inability
◗ Describing future plans
◗ Expressing likes and dislikes
◗ Describing people, objects and places
◗ Expressing simple comparisons
◗ Asking for information (eg simple questions about everyday life)
◗ Asking for clarification
◗ Responding to requests for clarification

ISE I

(NB the functions are cumulative through the levels)

◗ Describing past actions in the indefinite and recent past
◗ Describing the future, informing and expressing intentions
◗ Predicting and expressing certainty and uncertainty
◗ Giving reasons, opinions and preferences
◗ Expressing obligation
◗ Asking for information and opinions

ISE II

(NB the functions are cumulative through the levels)

◗ 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

ISE III

(NB the functions are cumulative through the levels)

◗ Developing and justifying an argument
◗ Summarising
◗ Evaluating options, past actions/course of events, different standpoints
◗ Deducing and inferring
◗ Staging
◗ Hypothesising
◗ Indicating understanding of points made by examiner
◗ Establishing common ground/purpose or strategy

Appendix 3 – Regulations and policies

Age and entry requirements

Trinity College London's Integrated Skills in English exams are intended for candidates who have learnt English as a foreign, second or additional language. The lower age limit is five years old, although Trinity recommends that candidates are aged 10 years and above at the time of the exam. There is no upper age limit. Candidates may enter at any level without having previously taken any other Trinity exam at a higher or lower level.

Candidates enrolling for the exam will be accepted by Trinity on the condition that they will be examined according to the requirements of the current specifications. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that they and the candidates are following the current specifications and regulations.

Candidates cannot enter for more than one level in the same exam session. Once candidates have been submitted for an exam no changes to the entries are permitted. Should any exceptional circumstance arise after this time, for example a natural disaster, health issue or bereavement, please contact your National/Area Representative or Trinity's central office. Written evidence may be required.

If a candidate does not reach the level required to pass and wishes to re-sit an exam, a minimum of one month must elapse before the candidate may enter again.

A minimum period of a month must elapse between a candidate attempting a Trinity ISE exam at one level and the same exam at another level. Failure to observe this rule may result in both exams being voided with no refund payable.

There is no restriction on candidates entering for different levels of assessment in other Trinity exam suites, or on candidates entering for exams of other boards.

Candidates must enter through a Trinity Registered Centre, usually the candidate's own place of study. No applications should be made directly to Trinity's central office. Details of how to register candidates for exams are available at trinitycollege.com

Candidate entries received after the relevant closing date cannot be guaranteed and will be subject to a surcharge. These dates can be obtained from National/Area Representatives and Trinity's central office. Trinity Online gives approved individuals and centres in the Trinity network worldwide direct access to their own candidate information held on Trinity's central database. It makes exam administration quicker and easier, and results can be viewed, analysed and printed out for quality assurance and reporting.

Candidates with special needs

Trinity welcomes entries from candidates with particular needs and disabilities. We recognise that many disabled people face barriers to access and achievement and are committed to eliminating discrimination on grounds of disability and promoting equality of opportunity.

We are committed to the following principles:

❱ encouraging disabled people to declare their special needs to us so that we can assist them
❱ eliminating any discriminatory practices
❱ enabling individuals to demonstrate their skills by removing unnecessary barriers
❱ empowering individuals through listening to what adjustments they may need rather than second guessing what will work for them
❱ engaging with people to develop the right solutions
❱ ensuring the standards we examine are not compromised in any way.

Please refer to our Disabled Learners Policy at trinitycollege.com/policies

Reasonable adjustments

In order to support access to our qualifications, we will make changes where practical to the way we do things in order to remove any unnecessary barriers. This is called making 'reasonable adjustments'. We will take reasonable steps to prevent a candidate who has special needs suffering a substantial disadvantage compared with a candidate who doesn't.

In practice, reasonable adjustments are implemented according to:

◗ the individual's particular need, reflecting their usual method of working

◗ the assessment requirements

◗ the guidelines stipulated by regulatory authorities and industry bodies, such as the Joint Council for Qualifications.

The same standard of assessment applies to all candidates, regardless of any particular need/disability, and allowances will only be made, if appropriate, to the conduct of the exam.

Requesting special provision

All requests for reasonable adjustments must be made using the appropriate application form, available by emailing language-csn@trinitycollege.com. Further guidance on how to complete the application form as well as information on the types of provision that can be made can also be obtained by emailing the above. This form must be completed and submitted to Trinity at least one month before the exam date. Additional time must be allowed for requests for braille materials.

Supporting evidence

In certain cases the application must be supported by appropriate documentary evidence. Further details on the type of evidence that can be supplied and when it is necessary to supply this can be obtained by contacting language-csn@trinitycollege.com. Details of medical and psychological reports are not disclosed to anyone, including examiners. If the original evidence is in a language other than English, it must be accompanied by a full English translation. Trinity College London reserves the right to turn down requests for provision if sufficient information is not submitted in time.

Access arrangements

If you have any particular access requirements on the day of your exam please contact the centre or venue where you will be taking the exam for details of how they can assist when using their building and facilities.

Exam monitoring

Trinity examiners will audio record oral exams for monitoring and research purposes. All exams are recorded unless stated otherwise. Trinity reserves the right to allow Trinity monitors into the exam room while the exam is in progress in order to observe the conduct of the exams. Recordings of exams are retained at Trinity's central office and not made available to centres or the candidate.

These procedures are an essential feature of Trinity's commitment to the consistency of marking and administration by its examiners and are in no way detrimental to the candidate. Every effort will be made to give advance notice of such monitoring sessions and arrangements will be discussed with the Registered Centre involved wherever possible. Entrance for the Trinity exams constitutes acceptance of all the quality assurance procedures.

In normal circumstances, no other person is permitted to be present in the exam room. Special arrangements apply, with prior authorisation, in cases where candidates with special needs/disabilities require assistance.

Candidate privacy and data are protected under the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Please see the Trinity College London website trinitycollege.com for the most up-to-date information about our data protection procedures and policies.

Exam delivery

Trinity works with the centre to ensure that the exam session is delivered at the mutual convenience of the centre and the examiner. During the planning process, the centre may be approached regarding alternative dates for delivery.

Trinity reserves the right not to conduct an exam session in the following circumstances:

◗ exam entries are not received prior to the specified closing dates. Closing dates are available from your National/Area Representative or Trinity's central office

◗ exam fees are not paid in full by the closing date

◗ the minimum fee required by Trinity in order to cover the costs of an examiner visiting an exam venue is not met. Details of the minimum fee required can be obtained from your National/Area Representative or Trinity's central office

◗ centres have not used the correct fees for their exam session.

Trinity takes every effort to ensure the delivery of its exams on the dates and at the locations planned. However, there may on occasion be exceptional circumstances that mean we are not able to meet our commitment. This would include, for example, lack of examiner availability, national strikes, labour disputes, industrial disruption, natural disasters, widespread disruption of international travel, terrorist attacks, acts of war or pandemics.

Appeals procedure

Entry for Trinity exams constitutes acceptance of the professional judgement of the examiners. Teachers, schools, parents and candidates who wish to question the outcome of Integrated Skills in English exams should use the procedure set out at trinitycollege.com/appeals. In any other dispute concerning the conduct of any exam, the decision of Trinity's Academic Director shall be final.

Malpractice policy

Trinity takes any attempt on the part of individual candidates or centres to influence the outcome of exams by unfair means very seriously. Please see trinitycollege.com/policies for details of Trinity's Malpractice policy.

Data protection

Trinity College London is registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office in the UK under the Data Protection Act 1998. Please see the Trinity College London website trinitycollege.com for the most up-to-date information about our data protection procedures and policies.