

# Exam Information: Integrated Skills in English (ISE)

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# ISE II

B2 CEFR

## Candidate profile

A candidate who passes ISE II can:

- ▶ understand the main ideas of complex spoken and written English on both concrete and abstract topics
- ▶ use active and passive vocabularies sufficient to cover a wide range of subjects, including technical topics within his or her field of specialisation
- ▶ interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with speakers of English quite possible without strain for either party. Language production is spontaneous and natural
- ▶ explain his or her viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options
- ▶ read, respond to and write clear, detailed texts on a wide range of subjects.

This profile is based on the second stage of the level Independent User, B2, in the Common European Framework of Reference.

## The Portfolio

Trinity publishes a full list of the portfolio task options on its **website**. Candidates **must** select their portfolio tasks from the ISE II task list for the current exam year (January to December). This is determined by the year in which the final Interview component takes place. No other tasks are acceptable.

Here are some examples of the three portfolio task types at ISE II:

Portfolio section	Example text output types	Example task
Correspondence	Letter/email	You have received an email from a friend who has moved to a new city and is very homesick. Reply to your friend and give her some advice on how she can make new friends and settle into her new surroundings. (120-150 words)
Factual writing	Report/article/ review	Write an article for a local newspaper describing how the region where you live has changed since you were born. Describe how life used to be different, with examples from your own experience and comment on whether or not life has changed for the better. (170-200 words)
Creative/ descriptive writing	Story/diary/ description	If you were stranded on a desert island and could only bring three things, what would they be? Describe the three items and explain why you wouldn't want to be without them. (170-200 words)

A full list of the current ISE II portfolio tasks and sample portfolio answers written by ISE II candidates can be found on the Trinity website.

## The Controlled Written exam

The ISE II Controlled Written exam consists of two tasks that have equal weighting. Candidates must complete both tasks. There is no choice given. The time allowed is **2 hours**.

### Exam format

- ▶ **Task 1** – Reading into writing task: approximately **250 words**
- ▶ **Task 2** – Writing task: approximately **250 words**

For further information about the ISE II Controlled Written exam tasks please see pages 10-12.

## Sample of the Controlled Written paper for ISE II

Time allowed: 2 hours

This exam paper contains two tasks. You must complete both tasks.

### Task 1 – Reading into writing task

Read the text below and then, **in your own words**, write an article (approximately 250 words) for a social affairs publication:

- i) saying why the writer decided to have the party and what the results were **and**
- ii) giving your own views on what you think it means to be a good neighbour.

### The night I met my neighbours

I have been living in the same West London street for eight years, and the number of people I know in that street could be counted on the fingers of one hand. I simply haven't got to know the neighbours. It therefore came as no surprise when a recent survey revealed that the majority of people in England have very little contact with their neighbours. The survey aroused a certain curiosity. If the reasons for not knowing the neighbours are mostly of my own making, then I should be able to reverse the situation by actively doing something about it. So I decided to have a party.

After much thought, a dozen invitations seemed like the right amount. The invitations were pushed through letter boxes by hand and more or less at random. The drinks party would commence at 6.30pm and eventually people did start to arrive. Women came with small children, single men turned up with bottles which I tried not to accept. There were couples and young teenagers from across the road. As dusk began to fall, we had around 30 people, including children. Within a couple of hours, I had met two accountants, a photographer, a builder, a teacher, a fitness instructor, a charity worker, an advertising executive and someone in oil.

I asked everyone the same question, which was how many people they knew in the street. Most knew only a couple of others, usually their next-door neighbours. They were also in agreement about something else – they all liked being invited to a drinks party.

This is the truth of it: we don't socialise in the street any more like they used to do in the old days, though we are as sociable as we ever were, just a little more cautious.

(Source: Adapted from the *Evening Standard* newspaper)

*Use your own words as far as possible. No marks for answers copied from the reading texts.*

### Task 2 – Writing task

Write a description (approximately 250 words) for a general interest magazine of your favourite national customs. Describe the origin and history of these customs and say if you think they will continue in the future.

Past Controlled Written exam papers and sample answers written by ISE II candidates can be found on the Trinity website.

## The Interview

### Interview format

Total Interview time: 12 minutes

The Interview at ISE II consists of three assessed phases:

- ▶ Candidate-led discussion of a topic prepared by the candidate (up to 4 minutes)
- ▶ Interactive task (up to 4 minutes)
- ▶ Conversation with the examiner including a discussion of the portfolio and one subject area selected by the examiner (up to 4 minutes).

### Communicative skills for the Interview

The candidate is expected to demonstrate the following communicative skills during the Interview.

#### Communicative skills for the Interview

##### In the Topic phase

- ▶ Show understanding of the examiner by responding appropriately
- ▶ Communicate facts, ideas, opinions and explain viewpoints about a chosen topic linked across a series of extended turns
- ▶ Maintain coherence and cohesion throughout the phase by organising discourse
- ▶ Handle interruptions by using recovery strategies
- ▶ Engage the examiner in discussion of the topic
- ▶ Be prepared to ask and answer questions about the content of and views about the topic, and respond to requests for further information, clarifications and explanations

##### In the Interactive phase

- ▶ Take control of the interaction
- ▶ Maintain the discourse by asking for information and commenting on the responses obtained
- ▶ Help the discussion along by encouraging comment and opinion from the examiner
- ▶ Take, give up and offer turns when appropriate to do so
- ▶ Take the opportunity to use the language functions listed for ISE II, as appropriate to the individual task

##### In the Conversation phase

- ▶ Show understanding of the examiner by responding appropriately
- ▶ Share responsibility for the maintenance of the interaction with the examiner
- ▶ Follow up on comments from the examiner in order to develop the conversation
- ▶ In case of a breakdown in communication, take steps to repair it
- ▶ Discuss both the process of writing the portfolio and its contents

### Interview procedure

- ▶ The examiner begins by greeting the candidate, trying to set him or her at ease and asking to see the candidate's identification.
- ▶ The candidate is invited to introduce the topic and initiate the discussion by presenting information on the topic. During the **Topic phase**, the discussion is led by the candidate who provides most of the input. This is in the form of sustained long turns. This phase lasts no more than four minutes.
- ▶ The examiner brings the Topic phase to a close and introduces the **Interactive phase** by informing the candidate of what he or she is required to do. The examiner provides an oral prompt to which the candidate has to respond by questioning the examiner in order to find out more information and by making comments. Once the examiner has set up the situation, the candidate takes the responsibility for maintaining the interaction. The phase lasts up to four minutes. If the candidate fails to initiate or to maintain the interaction, the phase will not extend to the full four minutes.



- ▶ The examiner then introduces the **Conversation phase**. Firstly, the candidate's portfolio is discussed, with the candidate sharing the responsibility of maintaining the conversation with the examiner. Following this the examiner initiates a conversation on one of the ISE II subject areas. This phase lasts no more than four minutes.
- ▶ The examiner indicates the end of the Conversation phase and Interview.

Sample ISE II Interviews can be found on the Trinity website. A DVD showing examples of ISE Interviews at all levels is also available to Registered Exam Centres.

## Guidance for the Interview

### Candidate-led discussion of topic

The purpose of the Topic phase is to give candidates the opportunity to display their command of the language of the level while talking about self-selected and personally relevant topics.

- ▶ When **choosing the topic**, candidates should select a topic of their own choice and plan the areas of the topic which they would like to inform the examiner about and discuss. Candidates should prepare the topic on a subject they are personally interested in, knowledgeable about and able to talk about.
- ▶ Please note the topic should not be chosen directly from the list of ISE II subject areas for the Conversation phase or linked to any of the tasks in the portfolio. Instead, candidates should be strongly encouraged to prepare a **personalised** topic. This is to enable candidates to show a wide range of language throughout the Interview.
- ▶ The topic should provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate the language requirements of the level. Therefore, candidates should be strongly encouraged to incorporate language items of the level into their contributions.
- ▶ When **preparing the topic**, candidates are advised to think carefully about the amount of material necessary for their topic, bearing in mind the time available. They should prepare enough material to sustain a discussion of the topic for up to four minutes, but not more.
- ▶ One of the main objectives of the Topic phase is to allow the candidate and examiner to have a spontaneous discussion about a subject that interests the candidate. Therefore, candidates **must not** prepare their topic as a written script as this inevitably results in a memorised recital which prevents the candidate from demonstrating the necessary communicative skills. Recitation will have a negative effect on the assessment of this phase.
- ▶ In preparing their topic, candidates are advised to anticipate questions the examiner might ask. They should be prepared to give further examples, explanations and clarifications as requested by the examiner.
- ▶ Candidates are not required to complete a Topic form. However, candidates are strongly encouraged to produce some **brief notes, mind maps or diagrams** to help them remember what they want to discuss in the Interview. These notes should be brought into the exam room and a copy given to the examiner. They will facilitate the discussion of the topic and allow the examiner to make relevant contributions. Notes, diagrams, etc. do not form part of the assessment.
- ▶ At ISE II, the candidate is responsible for engaging the examiner in discussion of the topic and must be prepared to ask and answer questions, handle interruptions and respond to requests for clarification.
- ▶ Please note a candidate who fails to prepare a topic for discussion cannot be assessed for Task fulfilment for this phase, and this may result in a fail being awarded for the exam as a whole.

### The Interactive phase

The purpose of the Interactive phase is for candidates to demonstrate their ability to initiate, take control over and maintain the interaction while expressing the language functions of the level.

- ▶ In the Interactive phase, the emphasis is placed upon the candidate's ability to use functional language rather than upon the accurate use of the grammatical structures listed for the level.
- ▶ In addition to general functions such as requesting information, some of the language functions listed for the level should arise naturally from each task prompt. Therefore, candidates must be able to understand and use the language functions of the level to take a full part in the exchange.
- ▶ It is important that, once the examiner has set up the situation, the candidate takes responsibility for the interaction by asking questions and commenting on the examiner's responses. The interaction will take the form of multiple turns, with the examiner's turns being much shorter than those of the candidate.

- ▶ In some cases the interaction may involve role play but the examiner and candidate are free to 'be themselves' so as to create as authentic an exchange as possible.
- ▶ In the Interactive phase, the responsibility for maintaining the interaction is the candidate's. If a candidate fails to initiate or to maintain the interaction of this phase, the examiner will not intervene and take control. In such a case, the phase will not extend to the full four minutes and the candidate's performance will not be rated highly.
- ▶ Candidates may ask the examiner to repeat the initial oral prompt if necessary.

**Those responsible for preparing candidates for the Interactive phase are strongly advised to help them practise:**

- ▶ question formations using the grammatical structures of the level and preceding levels
- ▶ expressing the functions of the specific ISE level in a variety of ways
- ▶ holding conversations which naturally result in the use of the language functions of the specific ISE level
- ▶ strategies to maintain the flow of conversation
- ▶ taking the initiative and controlling the direction of the conversation.

Sample interactive prompts for ISE II can be found on the Trinity website.

### The Conversation phase

The purpose of the Conversation phase is to give candidates the opportunity to discuss their portfolio and to participate in a genuine and interesting exchange of information, ideas and opinions while demonstrating their ability to use the language of the level.

- ▶ In the **discussion of the portfolio** candidates must be ready to discuss points of detail arising out of their portfolio and to explain why they chose to do particular tasks and how they completed them. Candidates may, if they wish, bring to the Interview other material which contributed to the portfolio, particularly if this helps to illustrate how the portfolio tasks were completed. The portfolio itself will be in the possession of the examiner, who will have already studied it for assessment purposes, and thus it will be available for reference by both examiner and candidate. The candidate must ask the examiner at least one question about their portfolio. This must relate to the content of the portfolio and must not include questions designed to find out the examiner's opinion of the work.
- ▶ The next section of this phase consists of a **discussion of one subject area** as selected by the examiner from the list provided for ISE II. Although the examiner will only select one subject area, candidates need to be prepared to talk about all of them.
- ▶ At ISE II, candidates will be capable of initiating and sustaining the conversation.

**Although candidates' interests may still limit the scope and direction of the conversation, they will be expected to:**

- ▶ take more responsibility for the content
- ▶ contribute opinions and ideas as well as information on the subject areas listed for the level
- ▶ maintain the flow of the exchange
- ▶ demonstrate to the examiner the range and quality of the language of the level at their command.

## Language requirements for ISE II

In addition to the items specified for ISE O and ISE I, the candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to use the language functions and language items listed below.

### Language requirements

#### Language functions

- ▶ Giving advice and highlighting advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ Making suggestions
- ▶ Describing past habits
- ▶ Expressing possibility and uncertainty
- ▶ Eliciting further information and expansion of ideas and opinions
- ▶ Expressing agreement and disagreement
- ▶ Expressing feelings and emotions
- ▶ Expressing impossibility
- ▶ Reporting the conversation of others
- ▶ Speculating
- ▶ Persuading and discouraging

#### Grammar

- ▶ Second and third conditionals
- ▶ Simple passive
- ▶ *Used to*
- ▶ Relative clauses
- ▶ Modals and phrases used to give advice and make suggestions, e.g. *should/ought to, could, you'd better*
- ▶ Modals and phrases used to express possibility and uncertainty *may, might, I'm not sure*
- ▶ Discourse connectors *because of, due to*
- ▶ Present perfect continuous tense
- ▶ Past perfect tense
- ▶ Reported speech
- ▶ Linking expressions, e.g. *even though, in spite of, although*

#### Lexis

- ▶ Vocabulary specific to the topic and subject areas
- ▶ Cohesive devices, e.g. *so to continue, in other words, for example*
- ▶ Appropriate words and expressions to indicate interest and show awareness of the speaker, e.g. *Really? Oh dear! Did you?*
- ▶ Simple fillers to give time for thought, e.g. *well..., um...*
- ▶ Reporting verbs, e.g. *say, tell, ask, report, advise, promise*
- ▶ Appropriate words and expressions to encourage further participation, e.g. *what about you?*
- ▶ Phrases and expressions relating to the language functions listed above

#### Phonology (Interview only)

- ▶ The correct pronunciation of vocabulary specific to the topic and subject areas
- ▶ Rising intonation to indicate interest and surprise as appropriate
- ▶ Intonation and features of connected speech beyond sentence level
- ▶ Rising and falling intonation to indicate giving up and offering turns
- ▶ Stress and intonation to indicate emotion
- ▶ Stress, intonation and pitch relevant to the language functions listed above

### Subject areas for the Conversation phase of the Interview

One subject area will be selected by the examiner from the list below.

- ▶ Society and living standards
- ▶ Personal values and ideals
- ▶ The world of work
- ▶ Unexplained phenomena and events
- ▶ National environmental concerns
- ▶ Public figures past and present

Please note ISE II candidates should **not** select their topic from the list of subject areas above (see guidance notes on page 37).

### Subject areas for the Portfolio and Controlled Written exam

In addition to the subject areas listed for the Conversation phase of the Interview:

- ▶ Education
- ▶ National customs
- ▶ Village and city life
- ▶ National and local produce and products
- ▶ Early memories
- ▶ Pollution and recycling



## General skills for ISE II (B2 CEFR)

### Speaking

#### Overall spoken production

Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his or her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with relevant examples.

#### Overall spoken interaction

Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction and sustained relationships with English speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party.

### Listening

#### Overall listening comprehension

Can understand standard spoken language 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.

#### Understanding spoken English

Can understand in detail what is said to them in standard spoken English.

### Reading

#### Overall reading comprehension

Can read with a large degree of independence. Has a broad active reading vocabulary but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms.

Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems, in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints.

Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from sources within his or her field of interest.

#### Processing written text

Can summarise a wide range of texts, commenting on and discussing contrasting points of view and the main themes.

### Writing

#### Overall written production

Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his or her field of interest and evaluate information and arguments from a number of sources.

#### Correspondence

Can write personal letters or emails conveying degrees of emotion and highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences and commenting on the correspondent's news and views.

#### Factual writing

Can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.

Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.

Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons for or against the support of a particular point of view.

#### Creative/descriptive writing

Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events, marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text and following established conventions of the genre concerned.

ISE II communicative skills, language requirements and general skills have been mapped to B2 in the CEFR.