

Exam Information: Integrated Skills in English (ISE)

Specifications | Guide for Teachers | Regulations



ISE I

B1 CEFR

Candidate profile

A candidate who passes ISE I can:

- ▶ understand the main points of clear standard English that they hear or read on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.
- ▶ deal with most everyday situations likely to arise while travelling in an English-speaking country
- ▶ describe experiences and events
- ▶ give brief reasons and explanations for his or her plans and opinions
- ▶ read, respond to and write simple, connected texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.

This profile is based on the first stage of the level Independent User, B1, 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 I 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 I:

Portfolio section	Example text output types	Example task
Correspondence	Letter/email	You have decided to join a new fitness centre. Write a letter to the manager explaining why you want to join. Give details of your present level of fitness and describe what physical activities you have done in the past. (70–80 words)
Factual writing	Report/article/review	Write an article for a teenage magazine about next season's fashions. Describe what clothes will be fashionable for teenage boys and girls next season and give your opinion on the new styles. (110–130 words)
Creative/descriptive writing	Story/diary/description	Write your diary entry for the best day of your life. Describe what happened and explain why it was so special. (110–130 words)

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

The Controlled Written exam

The ISE I 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 **1 hour 30 minutes**.

Exam format

- ▶ **Task 1** – Reading into writing task: approximately **150 words**
- ▶ **Task 2** – Writing task: approximately **150 words**

For further information about the structure of ISE I Controlled Written exam tasks please see pages 10–12.

Sample of the Controlled Written paper for ISE I

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

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 150 words) for a health magazine:

- i) telling readers what they need to do if they want to feel good in the morning
- ii) saying which of the things below you do personally **and**
- iii) explaining how it helps you start the day.

Start the day in a positive way

If you start the morning feeling refreshed and calm, you will enjoy the rest of your day. Here are some healthy lifestyle habits to incorporate into your morning routine.

- Move the alarm clock so you have to stretch to reach it. Then lie still in bed and see how you feel about the day. Try to be positive. Each day is a new start and another chance for good things to happen.
- Don't have tea or coffee. Try a lemon drink or a glass of freshly squeezed orange or grapefruit juice.
- Get some fresh air! Breathe slowly by an open window, on a balcony or in a garden. If you can, do your breathing while you look at some green things – parks and gardens, trees and plants. This will help to make you feel good about the day.
- Put on some music! Listening to music as you get ready will create positive energy and a sense of peace (or a sense of fun if you play party music).
- If you are a morning person and feel like exercising before work or school, that's great. A morning walk can get you ready for the day, reduce stress and help you sleep better at night.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so make sure you eat plenty of protein and fruit in the morning and avoid sugary foods.

(Source: Adapted from *Muller Vitality – Feel Good* leaflet)

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

Task 2 – Writing task

You've just won a big prize in a competition. Write an email (approximately 150 words) to a friend:

- i) explaining what you had to do in the competition
- ii) describing what you have won **and**
- iii) telling your friend how you are planning to celebrate tonight.

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

The Interview

Interview format

Total Interview time: 8 minutes

The Interview at ISE I consists of two assessed phases:

- ▶ Discussion of a topic prepared by the candidate (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 to questions
- ▶ Give information about the prepared topic in a series of sustained turns under the four discussion points on the Topic form
- ▶ Make the sequence of events clear by referring back to previous events and forward to forthcoming events
- ▶ Answer questions on the prepared topic, and participate in informal discussion of the topic, responding to the examiner's requests for more information, facts or details
- ▶ Ask the examiner at least one question about the topic area
- ▶ Take the opportunity provided to include samples of the language functions and language items listed for ISE I, where appropriate

In the Conversation phase

- ▶ Show understanding of the examiner by responding appropriately to questions
- ▶ Provide information and offer opinions where appropriate
- ▶ Start to play a limited part in initiating and maintaining the conversation
- ▶ Ask the examiner at least one question related to the portfolio and at least one question about the subject area
- ▶ Discuss the contents of the portfolio

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 examiner asks the candidate for the **Topic form** and the candidate tells the examiner what he or she is going to talk about.
- ▶ During the **Topic phase** the examiner randomly selects one of the discussion points on the Topic form and asks the candidate questions and makes comments to facilitate a spontaneous discussion about the prepared topic. This continues until all four points on the Topic form have been covered. During the Topic phase the candidate asks the examiner at least one question related to the topic. This phase lasts up to four minutes.
- ▶ The examiner then closes this phase of the exam and moves on to the portfolio discussion and conversation.
- ▶ During the **Conversation phase** the examiner spends approximately two minutes asking the candidate about the contents of his or her portfolio. The candidate must ask the examiner at least one question related to the portfolio. The examiner then selects one of the subject areas listed for ISE I and engages the candidate in genuine conversation for a further two minutes. During the conversation the candidate gives information, makes statements and responds as appropriate. In addition, the candidate must ask the examiner at least one question related to the subject area being discussed. This phase lasts up to four minutes.
- ▶ The examiner brings the Conversation phase and the Interview to an end.

Sample ISE I 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

Discussion of a prepared topic

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

- ▶ When **choosing the topic** for discussion, 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 I 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 personal aspect is an important feature of all Trinity exams. Therefore, candidates should be discouraged from selecting the same topic as their peers. Teachers should ensure that if groups of learners do decide to use the same topic, e.g. *football*, every effort is made to personalise the content.
- ▶ The topic should provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate the language requirements of the level. Therefore, candidates should be 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.
- ▶ Candidates **must not** prepare their topic as a written script, as this will inevitably lead to a memorised recitation and result in the candidate not being prepared to use spontaneous spoken English. 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.
- ▶ Before the Interview, the candidate must complete the **Topic form** and bring it to the exam room. The Topic form is designed to help promote a spontaneous discussion which must not include or rely on a memorised recitation.
- ▶ The candidate must complete the Topic form with four points for discussion. One sentence will suffice for each point. An example of a completed ISE I Topic form is provided as Appendix 4.
- ▶ The examiner will refer to the points on the Topic form in no particular order until all four discussion points have been covered. Therefore, all of the points should be thematic and provide an opportunity for discussing different aspects of the topic. Topic forms must not include such general points as 'Introduction', or 'What I did next...'
- ▶ The Topic form can be written by a person other than the candidate as written skills in English are not assessed in the Interview. However, the content of the form should have originated from the candidate.
- ▶ As the Topic form is crucial for the execution of this phase, the phase will not take place if the information contained on the form is not made available to the examiner.
- ▶ It is a requirement of the Interview that candidates ask the examiner relevant and appropriate questions throughout the Topic phase. At ISE I, the candidate must ask the examiner at least one question about the topic.
- ▶ Candidates may bring pictures, photos, diagrams, or other useful objects into the exam room to illustrate the topic and aid the discussion with the examiner. However, live animals or dangerous objects such as knives must not be brought into the exam room.
- ▶ Please note a candidate who fails to prepare a topic for discussion cannot be assessed for Task fulfilment for this phase. The phase will be voided and this will result in a fail being awarded for the exam as a whole.

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 give further examples and clarifications as requested by the examiner. 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. Although the examiner will only select one subject area, candidates need to be prepared to talk about all of them. The examiner may introduce everyday objects or pictures to facilitate the conversation. The candidate must ask the examiner at least one question about the subject area in this section.
- ▶ In this phase, candidates are encouraged to contribute as much as they can to the conversation and make every effort to show the examiner the range and quality of the language required.
- ▶ Candidates must not memorise or recite responses to the examiner's questions as this will lead to the candidate being unable to take part in a genuine conversation with the examiner.

Language requirements for ISE I

In addition to the items specified for ISE 0, the candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to use the language functions and language items listed below.

Language requirements

Language functions

- Describing the future – informing and predicting
- Expressing preferences
- Describing events in the indefinite and recent past
- Giving reasons
- Stating the duration of events
- Quantifying
- Expressing and requesting opinions and impressions
- Expressing intention and purpose
- Expressing obligation and necessity
- Expressing certainty and uncertainty
- Describing past actions over a period of time

Grammar

- Present perfect tense including use with *for*, *since*, *ever*, *never*, *just*
- Connecting clauses using *because*
- *Will* referring to the future for informing and predicting
- Adjectives and adverbials of quantity, e.g. *a lot (of)*, *not very much*, *many*
- Expressions of preference, e.g. *I prefer*, *I'd rather*
- Zero and first conditionals, using *if* and *when*
- Present continuous tense for future use
- Past continuous tense
- Modals connected to the functions listed above, e.g. *must*, *need to*, *might*, *don't have to*
- Infinitive of purpose

Lexis

- Vocabulary specific to the topic and subject areas
- Further expressions relating to the past, e.g. *two days ago*, *the day before yesterday*
- Expressions relating to future time, e.g. *the day after tomorrow*, *in the future*
- Common phrasal verbs
- 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
- The combination of weak forms and contractions, e.g. *I've been to...*
- Sentence stress to clarify meaning
- Basic intonation and features of connected speech at sentence level
- The intonation patterns of more complex questions
- Avoidance of speech patterns of recitation

Subject areas for the Conversation phase of the Interview

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

- Travel
- Money
- Fashion
- Rules and regulations
- Health and fitness
- Learning a foreign language

Please note ISE I candidates should **not** select their topic from the list of subject areas above (see guidance notes on page 30).

Subject areas for the Portfolio and Controlled Written exam

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

- Festivals
- Means of transport
- Special occasions, e.g. birthday celebrations
- Entertainment, e.g. cinema, television, clubs
- Music
- Recent personal experiences

General skills for ISE I (B1 CEFR)

Speaking

Overall spoken production

Can connect sentences in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events.

Overall spoken interaction

Can enter unprepared into conversation on familiar topics, express personal opinions and exchange information on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life.

Listening

Overall listening comprehension

Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday topics, identifying both general messages and specific detail, provided speech is clearly articulated.

Understanding spoken English

Can generally follow clearly articulated speech, although may have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.

Reading

Overall reading comprehension

Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his or her field of interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.

Processing written text

Can collate short pieces of information from different sources and summarise them.

Can paraphrase short written passages in a simple way.

Writing

Overall written production

Can write straightforward connected text on a range of familiar subjects within his or her field of interest by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.

Correspondence

Can write personal letters or emails giving news and expressing his or her thoughts, ideas and opinions.

Can write personal letters or emails describing experiences and events in some detail.

Factual writing

Can write short simple essays on topics of interest.

Can summarise, report and give his or her opinion about factual information matters within his or her field of interest.

Creative/descriptive writing

Can write straightforward detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects.

Can write accounts of experiences in a simple connected text.

Can write a description of an event – real or imagined, e.g. a recent trip.

ISE I communicative skills, language requirements and general skills have been mapped to B1 in the CEFR.