

Introduction to ISE Speaking & Listening tasks

The Speaking & Listening exam consists of several tasks and increases in length as the level increases. The table below shows the progression across the levels.

	ISE Foundation	ISE I	ISE II	ISE III
CEFR level	A2	B1	B2	C1
Total exam time	13 minutes	18 minutes	20 minutes	25 minutes
Topic task	4 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes	8 minutes
Collaborative task	–	–	4 minutes	4 minutes
Conversation task	2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes	3 minutes
Independent listening task	6 minutes	10 minutes	8 minutes	8 minutes
Examiner administration time	1 minute	2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes

The Topic task

What is the Topic task?

Before the exam the candidate prepares a topic of his or her own choice, and may use notes or a mind map to aid the discussion of the topic in the exam. The Topic task provides the candidate with the opportunity to talk about a topic which is of personal interest or relevance to him or her and which he or she feels confident about. This task gives the candidate a degree of autonomy and control.

What language skills can the candidate demonstrate in the Topic task?

The candidate can demonstrate the ability to:

- ▶ link sentences together to talk about a subject at some length
- ▶ use the language functions of the level
- ▶ engage in a one-to-one, unscripted discussion with an expert speaker of English
- ▶ understand and respond appropriately to examiner questions and comments
- ▶ take some responsibility in initiating and maintaining a discussion.

Can the candidate bring notes with them?

In the ISE II exam the candidate does not need to complete a topic form as in ISE Foundation and ISE I. They are advised to bring their notes or mind maps to the exam. The notes are used by the examiner to ask questions and make comments. The examiner does not choose the points on the handout in a fixed order. This encourages spontaneous conversation and discourages recitation by the candidate.

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 must accompany the presentation

The Collaborative task

What happens in the Collaborative task?

The examiner reads the candidate a prompt. The candidate responds to the prompt by starting, leading and maintaining the interaction. For example, the candidate can ask questions to find out more information, respond to information and comments from the examiner and demonstrate skills in turn-taking. It is essential for the candidate to initiate, interact and collaborate with the examiner. The candidate should not wait for the examiner to lead the conversation, and monologues from the candidate will receive a low mark.

What is the examiner's prompt?

The prompt presents a dilemma, a situation or an opinion. The candidate then needs to take the initiative to find out more about the background of the examiner's circumstances or opinion and engage the examiner in a sustained discussion about his or her circumstances or views. All of the examiner's prompts are prepared in advance by Trinity.

What language skills can the candidate demonstrate in the Collaborative task?

The task provides the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate his or her ability to take control of the interaction through the use of questioning techniques and language functions such as requesting information and clarification. This task allows the candidate to show that they can initiate 'turns' and control the direction of the interaction. The Collaborative task produces an authentic exchange of information and opinions, with the language functions listed at ISE II arising naturally from the interaction. The language functions for ISE II are on page 40.

The Conversation task

What is the Conversation task?

The Conversation task is a meaningful and authentic exchange of information, ideas and opinions. It is not a formal 'question and answer' interview. In this task, the examiner selects one subject area for discussion with the candidate.

What are the possible subjects for discussion?

The subject areas have been carefully selected to offer a progression from the 'concrete' subjects at ISE Foundation to the 'abstract' at ISE III. For the subject areas for the Conversation task at ISE II, please see page 23.

What does the interaction in the Conversation task involve?

The examiner asks a question or makes a comment to start the conversation but the candidate is expected to take some responsibility for initiating and maintaining the conversation. The candidate is expected to ask the examiner questions in order to develop the interaction. These questions should arise naturally out of the conversation.

The Independent listening task

What is the Independent listening task?

Listening skills are tested in an integrated way together with speaking skills in the Topic task, Collaborative task and Conversation task. In the Independent listening task the candidate has the opportunity to demonstrate the kind of listening skills that are required in lessons and lectures. The candidate listens to a recording, and talks about the content of the recording.

What is the procedure for the Independent listening task?

The examiner plays an audio recording. The candidate listens once and the examiner asks the candidate to say in one or two sentences what the recording was about. The examiner then asks the candidate a question that requires listening for detail. The examiner plays the recording for a second time, and then asks the question again. The candidate responds orally, and has one minute to talk. Candidates may take notes while they are listening for the second time. Notes are optional and are not assessed.