TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

Integrated Skills in English examinations

Preparing for the Portfolio and the Controlled Written examination

ISE Text Definitions

Conventions associated with different text types vary between different native-speaker communities, from decade to decade and setting to setting. Trinity cannot be prescriptive about writing conventions, however the following guidelines have been provided to assist teachers and students in the preparation of the ISE Portfolio and Controlled Written examination.

Section 1 - Correspondence

A. Postcards (ISE 0 only)

Organisation and presentation
- Present in a postcard format
- May include the recipient's address and the date (not included in word count)
- Have a greeting (followed by an optional comma)
- The message should be brief and clear
- Have a suitable closing

Language
- Use the relevant language items of ISE 0 as required e.g. Past simple tense, *Going to* future
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

Style and register
- Postcards are informal in nature
- Keep the sentences short and simple

B. Memos (ISE 0 only)
A memo is a short note normally used within the workplace.

Organisation and presentation
- Present in a memo format
- Include the names of the writer and receiver of the memo
- May include the date (not included in word count)
- There is no need for an address
- May include a short and clear subject title (not included in word count)
- Writers can use bullet points or numbered lists
- Have a suitable closing

Language
- Use the relevant language items of ISE 0 as required e.g. Past simple tense, *Going to* future
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

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Style and register
- Memos are normally more formal in nature as they are used within the workplace
- The style should be factual
- Keep the sentences short and simple

C. Notes (ISE 0 only)
A note is an informal, short piece of writing.

Organisation and presentation
- Present in a note format
- Include a greeting and closing
- There is no need for the date or an address
- The message should be brief and clear

Language
- Use the relevant language items of ISE 0 as required e.g. Past simple tense, *Going to* future
- In real use there may be tolerance of spelling, grammar and punctuation deviations. In the context of examination submissions however, accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

Style and register
- A note is informal in nature
- Keep the sentences short and simple

D. Informal letters (All levels)

Organisation and presentation
- May (or may not) include the sender's address (not included in word count)
- The recipient's address is not necessary and considered inappropriate for this type of letter
- Date optional (not included in word count) positioned above greeting
- Include an appropriate greeting e.g. 'Dear John' and closing e.g. 'Best Wishes'
- The letter should be well-organised with appropriate use of paragraphs and cohesive devices
- Sign off with first name only

Language
- Include the relevant language items of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Punctuation conventions to be observed and consistent, including address, greeting and signing-off e.g. Dear Mary(,) i.e. comma optional but not Dear Mary!
- Capitalisation must be observed, as appropriate

Style and register
- Informal in nature e.g. contractions, abbreviations, exclamation marks
- Style and register should be consistent

E. Formal letters (ISE I, II, III & IV)

Organisation and presentation
- Include sender and recipient's address, positioned at top of letter (not included in word count)
- Include date, below addresses (not included in word count)
- Subject of letter (optional), positioned before greeting on left or centred

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- Include an appropriate greeting e.g. 'Dear Mr Young', 'Dear Sir/Madam' and closing e.g. 'Yours faithfully', 'Yours sincerely'
- The letter should be well-organised into appropriate paragraphs e.g. an opening paragraph which gives the reason for writing, the body of the letter and the final concluding paragraph
- Sign off with signature and full name printed underneath

Language
- Include the relevant language items of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Punctuation conventions to be observed and consistent, including address, greeting and signing-off e.g. Dear Mary, (comma optional) but not Dear Mary!
- Capitalisation must be observed, as appropriate

Style and register
- Formal and more impersonal in nature e.g. relative clauses, passives, signposting words
- Style and register should be consistent

F. Emails (All levels)

Organisation and presentation
- Present in an email format. Ideally, the email should be produced on an email package (with a hardcopy printed for marking by the examiner)
- Customised prompts, such as the recipient's email address and subject line may be included and completed (not included in word count)
- Include a suitable greeting and closing
- The message should be brief and clear
- Layout is flexible, but the text should be well-organised with appropriate use of paragraphs and cohesive devices

Language
- Include the relevant language items of the level as required
- In real use there is great tolerance of spelling, grammar and punctuation deviations. In the context of examination submissions however, accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Emoticons e.g. 'smilies' and conventional abbreviations e.g. ASAP are acceptable (not included in word count)
- Text-messaging conventions are not acceptable, e.g. 'R', 'U'

Style and register
- Choose a style and register appropriate for the audience
- Style and register should be consistent

G. Blogs (ISE IV only)
A Blog (a portmanteau of web log) is a website where entries are written in chronological order by various participants. Blogs provide commentary on a particular subject such as education, politics or international events.

Organisation and presentation
- Present in a blog format.
- Candidates should write a series of short entries in which various contributors express different viewpoints in a variety of language styles.
- The text should have an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.

Language
- Use a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely differentiating finer shades of meaning
- In real use there is great tolerance of spelling, grammar and punctuation deviations. In the context of examination submissions however, accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Emoticons e.g. 'smilies' and conventional abbreviations e.g. ASAP are acceptable (not included in word count)
- Text-messaging conventions are not acceptable, e.g. 'R', 'U'
- Highly accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

Style and register
- Use a variety of appropriate and effective language styles to reflect the various participants

Section 2 - Factual Writing

A. Instructions (ISE 0 only)
Instructions give advice and information about how to do or use something.

Organisation and presentation
- Provide a title to help the reader determine what the instructions will help them do e.g. 'Instructions on how to …' (titles are not included in the word count)
- Think about the best order for the instructions
- Bulleted and numbered lists can be used. A numbered list should be used when the order is important, a bulleted list when the order is not important
- The writer may include simple diagrams to support their instructions (however, only written work is assessed)

Language
- Use the relevant language items of ISE 0 as required e.g. Present simple tense, *Going to* future
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Start each instruction with an imperative verb form that instructs the reader to do something e.g. 'Open the door', 'Add the butter'

Style and register
- Choose a style appropriate for the audience
- Keep the sentences short and simple
- Use a level of detail that is appropriate to the audience

B. Directions (ISE 0 only)
Directions tell the reader how to get from one place to another or how to find a particular place.

Organisation and presentation
- Provide a title or a brief introduction to help the reader determine which place he/she will find e.g. 'Directions from the train station to my house' (titles are not included in the word count)
- Think about the best order for the directions
- A numbered list can be used
- The writer may include simple maps to support their directions (however, only written work is assessed)

Language
- Use the relevant language items of ISE 0 as required e.g. Present simple tense, *Going to* future
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Start each direction with an imperative verb form e.g. 'Turn left at the supermarket', 'Continue on this road for five kilometres'

Style and register
- Choose a style appropriate for the audience
- Keep the sentences short and simple
- Use a level of detail that is appropriate to the audience

C. Reports (ISE I, II, III & IV)

A report is a factual description of an event or situation. It may be written for a superior (e.g. teacher, manager), a peer group (e.g. colleagues) or a general audience (e.g. a committee). A report will certainly contain some factual descriptions and explanations and possibly some suggestions, justifications or recommendations. Due to the factual nature of reports, they would not normally include the writer's opinion.

Organisation and presentation
- A clear sequence is expected
- Where appropriate include a heading (not included in word count)
- Begin with an introduction stating the purpose of the report
- The report should be clearly organised into paragraphs with section headings
- May use bullet points, tables, diagrams (only written work assessed) etc.
- There should be clear sign-posting, with unambiguous forward and backward referencing
- Reports are usually the result of research and may contain percentages and statistics
- Where appropriate end with a conclusion, which would normally be a summary of the points listed in the report

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Use wording and terminology appropriate to the intended audience
- There is a greater tolerance of technical language as the audience for a report is likely to be restricted and to some extent informed
- Cohesive devices, discourse connectors, linking expressions can be used

Style and register
- Content by nature is formal and therefore attracts a more formal register
- Reports are more objective than articles (they should not be personal)
- The style should be factual
- The style and register should be consistent

D. Articles (ISE I, II, III & IV)

An article is a piece of writing on a particular subject in a newspaper, magazine or journal. Articles are written to arouse interest and win over an audience who are not necessarily knowledgeable about the subject matter. It will usually include the writer's opinion, commentary or interpretation.

Organisation and presentation
- Include an interesting and informative title (not included in word count), which introduces the subject and makes the reader want to read the article.
- Clearly introduce the subject that will be discussed in the article

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- The main text should be clearly divided into paragraphs with one topic discussed in each paragraph
- Conclude the article with a brief summary

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Cohesive devices, discourse connectors, linking expressions can be used
- Descriptive language, language of opinion and rhetorical questions can also be used

Style and register
- The style and register will depend on the medium where the article is being reported and the intended audience
- The writer must choose the most appropriate style e.g. informal, witty, serious, etc.
- Style and register should be consistent

E. Reviews (ISE I, II, III & IV)
A review calls on the candidate to react to an event, performance, work of art or literature, film, drama, product and so on.

Organisation and presentation
- Include a title (not included in word count) to introduce the subject which has been reviewed
- Clearly introduce the subject that will be discussed in the review
- The main text should be clearly divided into paragraphs. It may contain a descriptive summary of the object under review, an evaluation of it (e.g. the weak and strong points), a comparison with other examples in the genre etc.
- A final recommendation to the reader may be included

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Cohesive devices, discourse connectors, linking expressions can be used
- Descriptive language and language of opinion can be used

Style and register
- The writer must choose the most appropriate style e.g. witty, serious, etc.
- Style and register should be consistent

F. Summary (ISE I, II, III & IV)
A summary is a short clear description that gives the main facts or ideas about something.

Organisation and presentation
- A summary should not contain repetition or irrelevant details from the original document
- It should cover every important aspect of the original document
- The text should be well-organised with appropriate use of paragraphs and cohesive devices

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

Style and register
- The writer must choose the most appropriate style for the intended audience
- Style and register should be consistent

Section 3 - Creative and descriptive writing (ISE 0, I, II & III)

A. Creative writing
By definition, creative writing requires originality of approach.

Organisation and presentation
- Layout is flexible and will vary according to the genre concerned
- Include a title where appropriate (not included in word count)
- The text should be well-organised with appropriate use of paragraphs and cohesive devices

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- A variety of verb tense may be used
- Descriptive language should be used to add interest e.g. adjectives and adverbs

Style and register
- Style and register will vary according to type of creative writing and the intended reader
- Style and register should be consistent

B. Descriptive writing
Descriptive writing requires the writer to describe something, especially in a detailed and interesting way.

Organisation and presentation
- Include a title where appropriate (not included in word count)
- The text should be well-organised with appropriate use of paragraphs and cohesive devices

Language
- Use the relevant language of the level as required
- Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected
- Descriptive language should be used to add interest e.g. adjectives and adverbs

Style and register
- Style and register will vary according to type of descriptive writing and the intended reader
- Style and register should be consistent

Section 3 – Critical/analytical writing (ISE IV only)

A. Critical/analytical writing
Critical/analytical writing requires the writer to respond to a prompt or quotation and then present a case with an effective logical structure in a way that will inform and engage the target reader.

Organisation and presentation
- Include a title (not included in word count)
- The text should have an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.

Language

- Use a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely differentiating finer shades of meaning
- Highly accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation is expected

Style and register

- Use an appropriate and effective formal style
- Style and register should be consistent