

Exam Review

The Trinity Test

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The ISEJ invited one of the University of Leicester former international students, Ophelia Lu, to take the Trinity Test and share her views on it with our readers. Ophelia is currently a member of the administrative staff at the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) at Leicester has now extensive experience working with and supporting international students in the department. We asked Ophelia some questions related to her exam experience and here are her answers to them.

ISEJ: Were you clear about the levels and what the results can be used for?

Ophelia: There are 6 different levels/types of Trinity exams for UKVI. I didn't really know the differences before I booked a test. On the front page of Tests for UKVI of Trinity exams, it has a table listed of application types, CEFR level required and which Trinity exams you should take. It's clear and easy to find out which exam I needed. The test I chose to do was ISE II.

ISEJ: Were you provided with practice tests or could you easily find them on the internet?

Ophelia: When you know which exam you need, there is a lot of useful information on Trinity exam website to explore. This includes teaching and learning support resources. For the learning support, you can find exam guides, practice Reading & Writing papers, guidance on writing genres, practice audio for listening tasks and sample videos showing the format of the test. It also

ISEJ: How easy/difficult were the questions for you? Do you think the level of the questions was compatible to your level of English?

Ophelia: The test instructions are straightforward for the Reading & Writing tests. I struggled a little bit on the first section of Reading which asking you to choose the best title for each paragraph. I spent a lot more time on that section than I expected. I don't think it was because the questions were difficult or the level was not compatible to my level of English. I just found the options were quite vague. Apart from the first section, it didn't take long for me to move from one question to another.

However, I was not really sure about the Speaking & Listening parts before I booked my test. Although I found the information about the format of the tests, I still had some questions in terms of what actually happens. With the sample videos available on the Trinity exam website, you can see what is involved in each task. These were very useful and also helped me to understand the format better before the test.

ISEJ: Would you have to wait long for the test results?

Ophelia: It says on the website that you usually receive your certificate within 15 working days. I took my test on 3rd October and received my certificate on 18th October.

ISEJ: How does the test compare to IELTS?

Ophelia: I think the test is quite different from IELTS. It takes, in total, about 3 hours to finish IELTS and it takes 2 hours and 20 minutes to finish all four skills of Trinity ISE II. In terms of format, the four skills of IELTS are separate papers, but they are integrated in Trinity exam. Reading is integrated with Writing and Speaking is integrated with Listening.

In my opinion, the most interesting difference is the Speaking part. There are three tasks in the Speaking part; topic task, collaborative task and conversation task. In the topic task, you can prepare a topic you want to talk about in advance. In the exam guide, it advises the candidates to choose a topic that can demonstrate their English skills. This really surprised me that you can actually prepare what you want to say. However, it is important to know that this should be a discussion and not a piece of speech you memorised.

The second task is more likely to test your social skills as well as your speaking. The examiner tells you about a situation and you need to start the conversation, ask questions, get more information or details and keep the conversation going. In the last task, there are a range of subjects which you can find out in the exam guide. You will be asked a question about one subject to start the conversation. You can also ask questions and have a discussion about the subject. It is not like IELTS that the examiners do not get involved in the conversation, they just ask questions.

ISEJ: Would you recommend this test to others?

Ophelia: I would recommend this test to other students. However, I strongly suggest preparing for it before actually taking the test. For example, you may be asked to write in a specific type, such as emails, essay, etc. It would be useful if you know what kind of format and what type of language you should use. The integrated format of Speaking and Listening tests needs more preparation in advance. Make sure that you take advantage of being able to prepare what you are going to say.

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