Unit 3 Academic Writing Task 1

Review of last session's homework

Some people say that it is not right for the government to spend so much money on artistic projects such as art galleries and sculptures. What is your opinion on the issue?

How to Answer the Question

Understanding the Material

This question is not quite as simple as the previous one on the death penalty. The death penalty is clearly 'yes' or 'no'. You cannot kill someone 'a little! Here though, the question includes the word 'so much money' (= as much money as now). The question does not ask you to decide whether the government should spend *all* its money on artistic projects, nor does it ask you to decide whether the government should spend *none* of its money on artistic projects. The question is asking 'how much'. It is asking you to decide whether to prioritize spending on artistic projects or not. The question also mentions 'the government'. This can be taken as a second part of the question. Should the *government* be responsible for spending money on artistic projects or should the costs be borne by individuals, private companies, or other organizations?

Organizing the essay

Introduction: The introduction should briefly restate the question, using the student's own words as far as possible. Many students like to place their opinion in the introduction, but this is not strictly necessary. You may like to point out the two different issues discussed in 'Understanding the Question' above.

Body: It is best to use a separate paragraph for each argument. Several arguments are available to both people who want the government to spend money on artistic projects and those who do not. Therefore, you can select the ones which you find it easiest to write about. Each paragraph needs a topic sentence and supporting sentences. Examples are desirable. These examples can be general (looking at your country or other countries you are familiar with) or specific (looking at specific artistic projects). You should point out opposition arguments and counter them where you can. This will prevent your essay from appearing too one-sided. Again, don't worry too much if you can not counter a particular argument. If the issue was totally clear, there wouldn't be a debate about it!

Conclusion: In your conclusion you should clearly state your personal opinion on the issue. You will almost certainly need to express to what extent the government should fund artistic projects, since very few people will agree that the government should spend either all or none of its money on them.

Model Answer

Governments do not have unlimited budgets. They need to prioritize spending and ensure that the money they spend is used wisely and efficiently. At a time when hospitals and schools seem to require more money than ever, many people question whether the government really needs to spend much money on the arts. Personally, I think that the government should concentrate on other issues.

People who support government funding of the arts claim that the arts are part of our culture. I am not entirely sure how much of the art that the government funds is part of our culture. Whilst some certainly is, much of the art on display in my country is not from Britain! Other items of art may be considered as such by experts and artists, but often ordinary people do not think they are artistic at all. Like the clothes we can see at top fashion shows, art is often all very nice, but not the kind of thing most people would have, even if they could afford it. If you asked ordinary British people to brainstorm about British culture, you would probably get responses like 'The Beatles', sarcastic comedies, football, and fish and chips. I doubt that many people would mention Damien Hirst or Benjamin Britten.

To claim that we should fund the arts because they are part of our heritage is a good argument. The government should certainly preserve some of our history for future generations. We need to ensure that a variety of art is preserved, not only traditional arts projects such as paintings in galleries. The government should not fund niche projects that very few people even regard as artistic, such as dead cows in formaldehyde, because the government needs to have the interests of the population at heart.

To reiterate, I believe that the government has higher priorities than art, though relatively small amounts of money should he spent on the arts in order to help preserve our cultural heritage. I believe that most funding for artistic projects should come from the people who go to see them and perhaps also from lottery money, as is done in Britain.

Academic Writing Task 1 sample question

The table shows the number of foreign visitors (in millions) to 7 countries. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Country visited	Total	From the UK	From the USA
Australia	3	0.3	0.3
Canada	15	0.6	12
France	53	7.4	0.1
Ireland	4	2.4	0.4
Italy	20	1.2	1.8
Mexico	7	0.1	5.5
Thailand	6	0.3	0.3

Understanding the Material

The important things to notice are that:
(i) the figures show the total number of visitors (from all countries) as well as the number of visitors from the UK and the USA.
(ii) the figures show the number of people who went to seven selected countries in the world.
(iii) the figures for visitors from the UK and the USA are included in the total figures.
(iv) the figures do not show the total number of British and American people who travelled abroad- only those who travelled to the seven countries listed on the left.
(v) the figures are given in millions of people.

Organising the Report

The best way to organise this report is to work down the list of countries visited and look at the total numbers of visitors and the numbers from the UK and the USA. Before doing that, check to see if there are any similarities between any of the countries.

There are two main examples of similarities between the countries visited. First, visitors from the USA make up about 80 % of the total number of visitors to both Canada and Mexico. Second, the number of visitors from both the UK and the USA to Australia and Thailand are the same (0.3 million in each case). Therefore it may be appropriate to deal with Canada and Mexico together and Australia and Thailand together.

As for the European countries (France, Ireland, and Italy), France and Ireland are similar in that they receive more British visitors than American ones. However the proportions are different.
So, the report could be organised like this:
1. Introduction
2. Canada and Mexico
3. Australia and Thailand
4. France and Ireland
5. Italy
6. Conclusion