

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Activity – teacher’s notes

Description

An activity which demonstrates what is expected of students from Academic Writing Task 1 by analysing both the task and a sample answer. It includes a timed writing of the task.

Time required: 70 minutes

Additional materials required:

- assessment criteria for Task 1 (on OHT or sufficient handouts for students)
- coloured pens

Aims:

- to introduce task 1 on the Academic Writing paper
- to clarify the instructions and to raise awareness of the task itself.
- to help students understand what is required from the examiners’ point of view by analysing a sample answer.
- to practise writing an answer under timed conditions.

Procedure

1. Hand out the sample task 1. Allow students to study it for 1 minute.
2. Put the students into pairs and ask one student in each pair to explain the basic requirements of the task to their partner and what they have to do. Their partner should listen and see if they have understood the task in the same way. Monitor and elicit the correct answer from one of the students.
3. Ask the other student in the pair to explain the main features of the graph to their partner. Encourage the other student to fill in any missing details.
4. Hand out the worksheet and ask the students to answer the questions 1 – 7 in Exercise 1 ‘Understanding the task and data’ in pairs. When they have finished, elicit answers from the class and add any further necessary detail.
5. Hand out the sample answer. Allow students time to read it. Tell students to imagine they are the examiner and to give their partner some feedback about it. Then ask students in pairs to answer the questions in Exercise 2, ‘Analysing a sample answer’. When they have finished, elicit answers from the class and add any further necessary detail.
6. Give out photocopies of the assessment criteria or use an OHT of these on the whiteboard. Elicit from students good examples of where the criteria are fulfilled by the sample answer. Correct and add further points where necessary.

7. Collect in the sample answer and ask students to write their own answer. Explain that they are not expected to reproduce the sample answer word for word but to use the best aspects of it as a model. Give a time limit of 15 minutes.
8. Ask students to exchange their answers and give feedback to each other on them. Encourage them to use the assessment criteria.
9. Hand out the sample answer again for the students for comparison and to make any additions or amendments they want to their own answer. Ask them to do this in another coloured pen. Collect in their answers and mark them according to the assessment criteria.

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Activity - answer keys

Key to Procedure steps:

Step 2: Students have to spend a maximum of 20 minutes writing at least 150 words describing the main features of the graph, making comparisons and summarising it in their own words.

Step 3: The graph shows three time periods and both males and females in full and part time education. The main features are that the number of women in part and full time education increased, as did the number of men in part time education. The amount of men in full time education fluctuated.

Step 6: The assessment criteria for task 1 are:

Task achievement – in the sample task all the main features of the graph are considered, nothing irrelevant is included and there are 179 words

Coherence and Cohesion – The answer has been divided into logical paragraphs and uses cohesive devices e.g. while, overall, as far as women are concerned...

Lexical resource – the vocabulary is varied e.g. went up, rose, increased, women, females, gradually, dramatically

Grammatical range and accuracy – there is a fairly good range and accurate use of grammatical structures e.g. comparatives – was lower than, adverbs – (increased) dramatically, past continuous – was fluctuating, passives – were involved

Key to Exercise 1

1. What four pieces of information do you learn from the four sentences above the chart?

The time you should spend; the introductory description of the chart; the instructions for the task; and the word count.

2. Should candidates just copy the information on the question paper for their introductory statement?

No. Candidates should use their own words at all times. Words and phrases copied directly from the question paper will not be assessed. They should try to paraphrase the information written on the question paper.

3. Is the information about High School students?

No. The information is about men and women studying in further education. The information in the first part of the question will help you to find out exactly who or what you are going to describe.

4. Is the information about one period of time only?

No. There are 3 different periods of time represented here 1970/71, 1980/81 and 1990/91. You will need to compare and contrast this information. You should always be sure to look carefully at the information written along the sides of the chart, table, graph or diagram.

5. Does the data in the darker colour refer to full-time students?

Yes. Always be sure to read any keys, labels or footnotes under the chart or table.

6. Do the first three pairs of bars and figures refer to men only?

Yes. Make sure that you understand how all of the figures relate to each other on the chart or table.

7. According to the table, were 200 males in full-time education in Britain between 1990 and 1991?

No. The note along the side of the graph tells us that these figures refer to 'Thousands in further education', so there were 200,000 males in full-time education in Britain at this time. Always take care to present the data accurately and copy the information carefully.

Key to Exercise 2

1. In this answer, does the candidate talk about males or females or both?

Both. It is important to cover all the main information in the graph and not to select only one feature to discuss.

2. Does it focus on one specific year in each separate sentence?

No, the information is organised according to different time periods in each separate sentence, but the general trends of this particular bar chart are described by comparing and contrasting the changes in different years.

3. Is the answer written in bullet points or note form?

No. You should always present your information in the form of cohesive paragraphs. You will lose marks if you write in note form or provide a list of unconnected sentences.

4. Is there a separate introduction or conclusion?

Yes. You need to begin your descriptive summary with an introductory statement. Similarly, although you are not required to explain or draw any conclusions from the data, a final statement summarising the main trends or features is an appropriate ending to the report.

5. How is the answer organised?

In this answer the information about males and females is divided into separate paragraphs. Each sentence within each paragraph contains a distinct piece of information.

6. Is there a range of structures, vocabulary and grammar?

Yes. Due to the organisation of the answer and the choice of information, there is a wide range of structures, vocabulary and grammar. You should avoid simply repeating one type of sentence throughout your answer.

7. Do you think spelling and grammar have been checked and self-corrections made?

Yes. The accuracy is very good in this answer so the student has probably re-read it and self-corrected. There are just three small mistakes:

- first paragraph – not present perfect but past simple **studied** as the time period has completely finished
- second paragraph – spelling of **approximately**
- third paragraph – missing preposition **similar to**

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Activity – Student’s Worksheet

Exercise 1

Understanding the task and data

1. What four pieces of information do you learn from the four sentences above the chart?
2. Should candidates just copy the information on the question paper for their introductory statement?
3. Is the information about High School students?
4. Is the information about one period of time only?
5. Does the data in the darker colour refer to full-time students?
6. Do the first three pairs of bars and figures refer to men only?
7. According to the table, were 200 males in full-time education in Britain between 1990 and 1991?

Exercise 2

Analysing a sample answer

1. In this answer, does the candidate talk about males or females or both?
2. Does it focus on one specific year in each separate sentence?
3. Is the answer written in bullet points or note form?
4. Is there a separate introduction or conclusion?
5. How is the answer organised?
6. Is there a range of structures, vocabulary and grammar?
7. Do you think spelling and grammar have been checked and self-corrections made?

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Activity – Sample Task

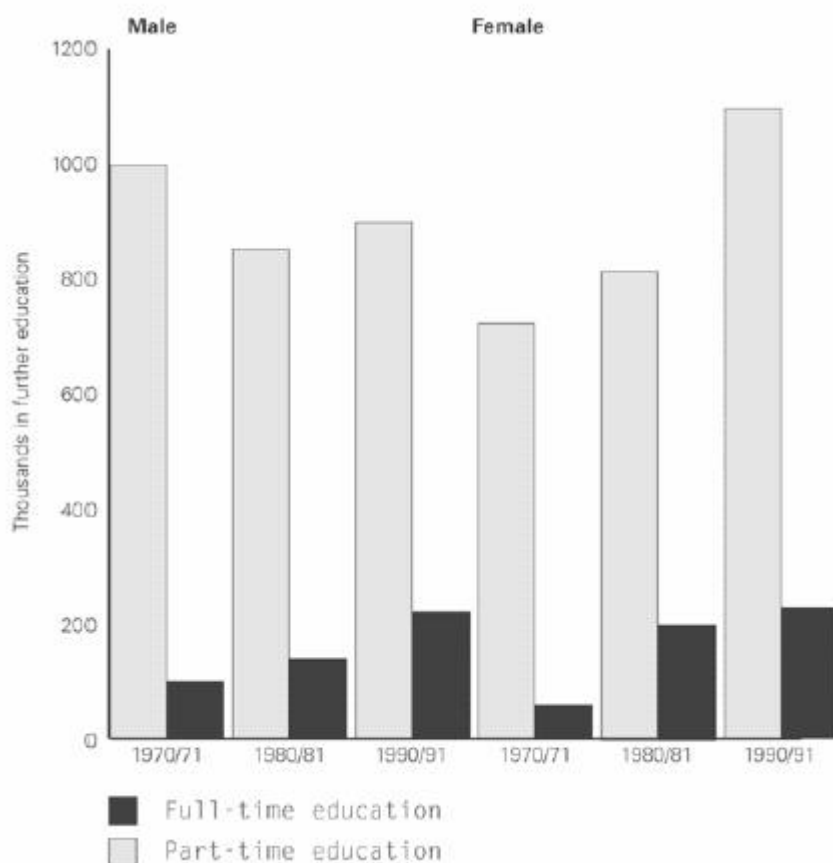
Academic Writing Sample Task 1A

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The chart below shows the number of men and women in further education in Britain in three periods and whether they were studying full-time or part-time.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Activity – Sample Answer

The bar chart illustrates how many males and females have studied in full-time and part-time education in the following years: 1970 to 1971, 1980 to 1981 and 1990 to 1991.

It is clear that in all three time periods more people of both sexes were involved in part-time education than full-time. Overall the number of men in full-time education rose from approximately 100 thousand to 200 thousand, whereas the number of men in part-time education was lower in the early nineties than twenty years earlier.

As far as women are concerned, the numbers increased in both sectors of education. The number of part-time female students increased dramatically from 700 thousand to 1.2 million in the twenty year period. The amount of women in full-time education went up more gradually from 100 thousand in 1971 to just over 200 thousand in 1991. This was similar the increase for full-time male students.

To sum up, the number of women in both sectors increased significantly while it seems that the rate of men entering part-time education decreased a little and was fluctuating.