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AQA

**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Anthropology **ANTH2**

(Specification 1111)

**Unit 2: Becoming a Person: Identity and
Belonging**

Report on the Examination

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ANTH2

General

Overall the vast majority of candidates performed reasonably well, with some centres and candidates performing particularly well. Candidates were able to manage the time effectively and to complete all questions. Answers were largely of sufficient length, although some candidates wrote a disproportionately large amount for Questions 01 and 02. There did not appear to be any one question that caused particular difficulties for candidates. There was a significant range in the quality of responses, both within and between centres, to this first examination for GCE Anthropology Unit 2.

Positive features:

- An awareness of the specific demands of Unit 2.
- Use of detailed, well contextualised ethnographic studies (drawing on studies encountered in Unit 1 and applying them to Unit 2 was also successfully done by many candidates).
- Use of relevant concepts.
- Knowledge of the work of specific anthropologists (both ethnographic and theoretical).
- A wide range of material was present, both between and within centres, indicating that candidates were not merely memorising 'model' answers. Anthropology is a broad subject and examiners should expect to see considerable variation in the ethnographic material presented.

Key Issues:

- There was a disappointing lack of use of anthropological concepts in some candidates' work.
- There was a lack of analysis and evaluation in some work, with some answers being overly descriptive.
- There was a lack of critical understanding of the discipline itself; while candidates are not expected to know about the history of anthropology in depth it is useful for them to appreciate the context in which classical and contemporary fieldwork and theoretical work has been carried out.
- There were too many references only to western societies and Britain, with the odd reference to an unidentified 'tribe'.
- There was a tendency for candidates to over-generalise rather than to point out the complexities in cultural differences and similarities. A greater sensitivity in discussing other cultures through ethnographic detail is required to achieve the very best marks.
- Although the mark scheme does allow for examples that are not specifically anthropological, some candidates relied on common sense and on over-generalised examples, possibly from other subjects.
- Better answers applied a range of perspectives and concepts in order to develop their analysis and discussion of the ethnographic examples.
- Where candidates did explain the concepts and ideas in general terms, their answers were often lacking in ethnographic examples.
- There was not enough explicit comparison – in many cases, answers were simply a juxtaposition of descriptions of two cultures.

Question 01

Many candidates were successful in explaining 'rites of passage' and in providing an example. Often, however, weaker candidates failed to develop the example; for instance simply stating the rite of passage without explaining which threshold/status had been crossed. Therefore a significant number of candidates failed to gain the full four marks available. Candidates who gained the full marks available tended to use examples drawn from ethnographic studies. Candidates should be encouraged, where possible, to use anthropological examples because their meaning will be clearer in relation to anthropological concepts and issues.   Most candidates wrote the right amount for this question and the better answers generally received full marks in about 5-6 lines.

Question 02

This question was very poorly answered in some centres. There was some confusion between philosophical knowledge and anthropology, for example listing the traits of personhood according to philosophy.   Borrowing ideas from another discipline worked against these candidates as anthropological ideas are distinct and particular. Furthermore, there was some misinterpretation of the question, with some candidates attempting to describe differences between western and philosophical concepts of personhood.

Candidates need to be aware of the structure of the marks: one for identifying and a further two for unpacking and offering examples. Some candidates did not realise that they had to provide a contrast to gain the first mark. Candidates who used the word 'whereas' to demarcate the two concepts were by and large more successful.   The two differences most successfully used were, firstly, that western philosophical concepts of personhood regard the individual as separate or egotistical whereas relational concepts of personhood define a person in terms of his/her relations with others and secondly that the western philosophical idea of personhood regards the individual as complete from birth whereas relational concepts regard personhood as developing over a period of time.   Again, ethnographic studies, where used to support a difference, often produced highly successful responses.

Question 03

This question prompted some very strong responses, although there was a range in the quality within and between centres. It was clear that in some centres only two of the three possible areas (animals, spirits and cyborgs) had been taught. Weaker candidates tended to take the concept of boundaries very literally, discussing physical boundaries between animals and humans in a quasi commonsensical way. Alternatively, some weaker candidates listed material on the three possible areas without discussing boundaries.   In a few cases, candidates misinterpreted the question and discussed differences among humans rather than between humans and other entities.

Stronger responses referred to the dynamic and changing role of boundaries, and to the blurring and/or shifting of boundaries, including ethnographic detail to illustrate the points made.   In stronger answers, concepts such as anthromorphism were frequently used along with named theoretical sources including Leach, Hale, Douglas, Case and Boellstorff. This question elicited some impressive, analytical and well organised responses.

Question 04

It was clear that some candidates did not feel prepared for this question. There were very few successful attempts to define ethnicity, for example, and there was often confusion over the nature of ethnic conflict, with some candidates discussing 'conflict' in general using examples that had no ethnic basis. For instance, there was some attempt to use material relating to conflict over the environment from Unit 1. Alternatively, candidates discussed examples from a historical or political perspective without focusing on ethnicity using specific anthropological knowledge. There was often a lack of awareness that ethnic conflict can be dormant or revitalised, and of the fact that ethnic conflict is relational and situational. There was a tendency for candidates to recount knowledge and understanding about the general facts surrounding an example of ethnic conflict without exploring ethnographic work in relation to the conflict, for example using Maalki on Rwanda.

Very few candidates took the opportunity to highlight the ways in which ethnic conflict can occur within societies and not just between them. Candidates frequently understood the question but did not have the ethnographic examples to support the reasons that they gave for ethnic conflict. Frequently used examples included Rwanda, the Second World War and apartheid in South Africa. Stronger answers considered a range of reasons and linked these to ethnicity, for example deterritorialisation, conflict over land rights, ethnic conflict manifested as economic exploitation, colonialism and post-colonialism.

Question 05

Fewer candidates chose this question and there was a very wide range in the quality of responses. There appeared to be two kinds of answer. Stronger responses used a range of symbols located within ethnographic studies in order successfully to highlight the ways in which identity is created. The other, weaker, response typically discussed symbols generically, at best describing a symbol drawn from their own lives without any anthropological development. In both cases, there was generally a lack of discussion of alternative resources that establish and change identity, such as language or history. This meant that the responses were not nearly analytical or evaluative enough to meet the AO2 demands of an 'assess' question satisfactorily.

Question 06

This question elicited some excellent responses, with candidates able to argue the two sides the debate comfortably (although there was often more evidence cited for the view that women have less power). There were two main ways in which candidates approached this question, both of which were acceptable within the mark scheme. Some essays took a theoretical stance, examining for example the views of Ortner, Whitehead and other feminists. The majority of answers, however, examined a range of ethnographic material and applied it with differing degrees of success to the specific demands of the question. Candidates were generally successful in distinguishing gender from sex and most were comfortable in discussing the socially constructed nature of gender. Some weaker answers simply recycled sociological debates on gender inequality in the west.

Most candidates failed to acknowledge the way that women themselves can reinforce their own powerlessness. Many candidates simply asserted or implied that the social construction of gender in the west no longer reinforces gender inequalities because relationships between men and women are now equal. There was little awareness of the neglect of gender and power in early anthropological work. It was also disappointing not to see more discussion of the issues surrounding cultural relativism – for example, the imposition of western concepts such as oppression in contexts where such concepts have no suitable local equivalent. It would also have been useful for candidates to employ evaluative examples of cases where, although women appear to have little status and power, they are in fact central to decision-making and are powerful in less obvious ways.

Stronger responses focused on ethnographic exceptions and cross-cultural examples of patriarchal societies as well as allegedly more egalitarian societies. These ethnographic studies were often very well linked to the question. Concepts were numerous, integrated and explained, and appropriately applied to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website.

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UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion