A-LEVEL

ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH2 Becoming a Person: Processes, Practises and Consequences
Report on the Examination

2110
June 2014

Version: 1.0

ANTH2

General

Overall, based on a small, but growing number of scripts, the vast majority of students performed well, with some schools, colleges and students performing particularly well. Students were able to manage the time effectively and complete all of the questions. Unfortunately, many students wrote a disproportionate amount for questions 03 and 04, which meant that they had less time for their final 30 mark essay. For example, students often wrote a similar length response for question 04 as they did for 05 or 06. Although length is not necessarily an indicator of time spent on the question or indeed quality, this is something that needs to be avoided since the longer essay attracts significantly more marks. The responses to this paper showed that schools, colleges and students had clearly responded to the feedback from the previous series. There are some cases of particular ethnographic studies being overused in several different questions, or being used in the same way in more than one question.

Positive features:

- Almost all students attempted every question in section A and one of the two questions in section B. However, some students were unable to explain what is meant by transhumanism.
- Ethnographic films were used to good effect, often with correct titles and the directors' names.
- There was use of detailed, well contextualised ethnographic studies. Many students drew on studies encountered in Unit 1 and applied them successfully to Unit 2.
- There was greater, more appropriate use of theoretical knowledge, applied to the question.
- There was definitely greater awareness of the need to address theoretical interpretations of the debates within responses.
- An increased awareness of the need to use anthropological concepts, unpack them and interpret them to the specific demands of the question was observed.
- There was evidence of greater confidence in drawing information from different areas of the specification to answer a question.

Key Issues:

- Some students were unable to explain what transhumanism is, nor give a developed example of it. Many students only scored one out of two for a partially developed example.
- Many students copied from the items without going beyond them, thus limiting their responses.
- Some students borrowed theoretical views from other disciplines which were not relevant or applied to the question.
- Many students did not apply their knowledge to the specific demands of the questions.
- There was a disappointing lack of use of anthropological theories in some students' work, especially in the longer essay questions.
- There was an over reliance on non-anthropological concepts and examples.
- There was a lack of analysis and evaluation in some work, with some answers being overly descriptive, especially relating to question 05 and 06.

- There were too many references to western societies and Britain, with the odd reference to an unidentified 'tribe', especially in weaker answers.
- There was a tendency for students 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.
- There was not enough explicit comparison and, in many cases, answers were simply descriptions of two or more cultures.

Section A

Question 01

Many students were partially successful in explaining that transhumanism involves the fusion of human and machine. However, fewer students went on to say that this was to improve/enhance human life.

Some students failed to develop the explanation or the example, for instance simply suggesting 'a bionic limb' without developing this to say how it had improved/enhanced that person's life. Therefore a significant number of students failed to gain the full four marks available.

Most students wrote the right amount for this question and the better answers generally received full marks in about five to six lines.

Question 02

This question continues to challenge students in terms of layout. Students are far more likely to gain the full six marks if they set out their responses clearly, ie if their identifier is distinct from the explanation. Many students were able to come up with two ways in which rituals maintain stability in society although their examples were often too similar and did not support their identifier. The most common responses by far were that rituals reinforce roles, thus maintaining stability in the social hierarchy, and also that rituals reinforce social stability through reinforcing social status. Some students managed to use the same ethnographic example to explain both identifiers. However, this was generally less successful than students who chose two separate ethnographic studies to explain and develop the separate identifying points. Some well used studies included Turner's study of the Ndembu, Llewelyn-Davies' study of the Masai and Simon Chambers' ethnographic film*, Every Good Marriage Begins with Tears*.

In a few schools and colleges, The Nacirema were used as an example, without an accurate understanding of Miner's study, taking the Nacirema at face value rather than understanding that the Nacirema is in fact, American backwards.

Question 03

This question produced a range of responses. Some students interpreted the question to mean examine two different types of boundaries, rather than views on boundaries. Many students recognised the need to discuss the structure/agency views on boundaries, although these ideas were often not very thoroughly developed. For example, students often mentioned that individuals can negotiate some boundaries and not others, but this was not developed through ethnographic examples.

There was a range in the quality of responses to this question. Weaker students mentioned national boundaries without applying anthropological knowledge, instead providing a historical perspective. Students were generally able to discuss two or three examples of boundaries. Weaker responses recycled information in Item A without developing it further. There was a tendency to be descriptive rather than analytical, listing examples of different boundaries rather than exploring different views on them.

Stronger responses referred to specific examples of boundaries using ethnographic detail to illustrate the points made, for example, Maalki's research and views on the imposition of national boundaries in Rwanda. Okley's study of gypsies was also well used to demonstrate the ways in which boundaries can be reinforced through small scale boundaries, linked to ideas of pollution and purity. In stronger answers, students discussed the ways in which boundaries that appear to be structural may also be negotiated, for example, caste boundaries.

Question 04

It was clear that some students did not feel adequately prepared for this question, and simply recycled information from the item. There were some successful attempts to explore a range of ways in which identity is expressed but not negotiated, or vice versa, but often without ethnographic knowledge. Some student borrowed material from sociology or psychology without using anthropological knowledge, examples or concepts, which is disappointing.

Many students understood the question but did not have the ethnographic examples to support an informed discussion. However, in some schools and colleges, students were clearly well prepared and referred to the work of Hall (beyond the item), Turner, the Kayapo, Miller, Hoskins, and Dan Bruun's film Skerrit Bwoy. Some students also used examples drawn from their own experience to good effect.

Section B

Question 05

This was the more popular question in section B with around two thirds choosing to answer it. There was a very wide range in the quality of responses, most answered very well, and with some students reaching full marks. Weaker students explored ideas about personhood being granted at birth or conception without detail or depth, and their answers lacked ethnographic detail. Alternatively, students with weaker answers tended to limit their discussion to one or two concepts of personhood without providing accurate and contextualised ideas about when and how someone acquires full personhood status. Some students spent a long time describing different concepts of personhood without focussing on the exact wording of the question. This meant that the responses were not sufficiently analytical or evaluative to meet the demands of an 'assess' style question satisfactorily.

Stronger responses discussed a number of different arguments and examples about when a person becomes a full person, not just at birth but also before and after birth, using referenced evidence and ethnographic detail, drawing out the differences and similarities between these examples. For example, students discussed the role of rituals in defining when an individual becomes a full person, backed up with specific anthropological research, such as the work of Canessa and Llewelyn-Davies. Stronger responses cited particular experiences and relationships as being a necessary prerequisite for full personhood. Stronger responses also questioned and challenged the view that full personhood is in fact granted to individuals at birth in the west, arguing that even in the west, personhood is only granted when a person has particular responsibilities and has reached a socially defined level of maturity.

Question 06

This question elicited a variety of responses, with some students able to explore a range of ethnographic studies in relation to gender identity and the categories of male and female. Students focused on cross cultural evidence of different concepts of gendered identity. However, many responses simply listed material on alternative genders rather than focussing on the issue of the extent to which male and female categories help to understand gender identity. There were some successful attempts to compare contrasting societies' views on gender as well as a discussion of the way in which individuals may negotiate their own ideas about male and female categories. Some students successfully discussed the ways in which roles and rituals reinforce what it means to be male or female, with varying degrees of success.

Stronger responses focused on ethnographic studies of alternative genders and explored a range of different ways of being male or female, for example exploring the performative aspects of gender. When used, ethnographic studies were often very well linked to the question. Concepts were more numerous and 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.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

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