AS-LEVEL
ANTHROPOLOGY

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

2110
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Version: 1.0

ANTH2

General

Overall, based on a small, but growing number of scripts, most students performed well, with some schools, colleges and students performing particularly well. The standard of responses this year reflects the fact that centres are becoming more and more comfortable with the material and thus students feel more and more confident with the material. Students were able to manage the time effectively and complete all of the questions; very few students missed any questions. Unfortunately, some students wrote a disproportionate amount for question 02, which meant that they had less time for their final other questions. Students generally wrote an appropriate amount for question 03 which is encouraging as in the past people have been tempted to over write for this question. Students often wrote the same amount for question 04 as question 05 or 06, and this is clearly an issue as the 30 mark question does require a more detailed response. The responses to this paper showed that schools, colleges and students had clearly responded to the feedback from the previous series. There continues to be 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.
- Some students had clearly prepared well for the new compare and contrast question and as a result were also often better at comparing and contrasting in the other longer questions.
- Ethnographic films were used to increasingly good effect, often with correct titles and the directors' names, as well as some consistently good application of the study to the question.
- There was use of detailed, well contextualised ethnographic studies. Many students drew on studies encountered in the other units and applied them successfully to Unit 2.
- There was definitely greater awareness of the need to address theoretical interpretations of the debates within responses with some success.
- 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 found it difficult to interpret question 02, and as a result were unable to gain partial or full marks.
- Many students used theories in a basic descriptive way without applying them to the question or making them relevant.
- 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.
- Among some centres and candidates 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 questions 05 and 06.
- There continues to be 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 is a tendency to make assumptions about British society which simply are not true, such as that there are no rituals in the UK.
- 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 material culture involves a significant object but many failed to develop their answer to explain that this object has cultural significance. Some students confused their definition with materialism or a materialistic attitude.

Students who gave an example of material culture that was based on ethnography were much more likely to receive the second two marks. The students who simply mentioned an item from western culture, such as a wedding ring were far less likely to develop their example successfully.

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 was quite challenging for many students. The specification clearly states that students should be expected to understand the 'the extent to which human beliefs and practices are changing and the consequences of these changes'. However it was clear from many responses that students were unsure what this meant in relation to rituals. Some students were clearly able to answer the question although their examples were often too similar and did not support their identifier. The most common responses by far were that rituals cause a change for the individual undergoing the ritual, for example a change in status, or identity, but this change was far less likely to be linked to the changes relating to the wider social group. Successful responses included ethnographic examples which were used to explain that a ritual is changing in response to the spread of western ideas, a change in the hierarchy of the group and political situation as a result, as well as responses which reflect for example, changing attitudes to women. Some well used studies included Ton Otto's study *Ngat is Dead*, Llewelyn-Davies' study of the Masai and Simon Chambers' ethnographic film*, Every Good Marriage Begins with Tears*.

In a few schools and colleges, students attempted to answer the question by giving one example of how there were wider changes for men and another example for women. This is problematic since they overlap. The responses to this question reflect the wider general issue that students tend to regard processes involved in becoming a person in a static way; in fact these processes are dynamic and fluid in reality.

Question 03

This question produced generally reasonable and good responses. Many students scored in the middle mark band as they successfully explored the technology side of the question, without connecting this to what it means to be a person. So, many responses were implicitly linked to personhood, instead of talking about new forms of technology such as cyborgs. Some students placed knowledge of technology next to knowledge of personhood and did not connect the two, which means that they were much less able to score highly.

It is encouraging that so many students are able to discuss the increasing use of technology. Weaker responses tended to describe what it means to be a cyborg, for example, or describe different examples of transhumanism, for example, pacemakers.

Stronger responses referred to specific examples of technology using ethnographic detail to illustrate the points made, for example, exploring the work of Tom Boelstorff and his work on how people shape their identities selectively and the implications of this in terms of personhood. In stronger answers, students discussed the characteristics of western personhood and explored how these are being challenged by technology, for example, challenging the ideas of agency in self-selecting identity, life and death.

Question 04

It was clear that many students interpreted this question as an opportunity to discuss rituals generally without linking them explicitly to kinship. Weaker responses simply described a ritual or two, without any reference to kinship.

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 Turner, Hua Cai, Ton Otto, Chambers and others. Some students also used examples drawn from their own experience to good effect.

Section B

Question 05

This question was chosen by around half of the students. There was a very wide range in the quality of responses, most answered very well, and with some students reaching full marks. It was a little disappointing that many students' responses for this question were shorter than their responses to question 04. This is something that should be avoided, as the 30 mark question is where students should really begin to develop depth and detail. Weaker students explored ideas about boundaries in general, attempting to define them and their answers lacked ethnographic detail. Alternatively, students with weaker answers tended to limit their discussion to one or two examples of boundaries existing such as in the Second World War. Some students spent a long time describing different examples of conflict resulting from boundaries without focussing on the effects in a focussed way. This meant that the responses were not sufficiently analytical or evaluative to meet the demands of a 'compare and contrast' style question satisfactorily. A few students' answers were tangential and drifted into accounts of political boundaries in the UK, or the differences between male and female.

Stronger responses drew out a number of differences and similarities between the effects of boundaries, either by juxtaposing these examples or explaining the difference. For example, students discussed the effects of conflict, such as displaced persons, the oppression of minority groups along with a range of different types of physical and non-physical boundaries. Stronger responses cited particular ethnographic studies which directly address the issue of the effects of boundaries, both on the small scale (for example boundaries of the body, Douglas and Okley) also drew out similarities about the effects of different boundaries within and between societies.

Question 06

This question was answered by just under half of the students, generally well, with some students able to explore a range of ethnographic studies in relation to the ways symbols are used to create and maintain identity. Students generally began by defining symbol and then went on to focus on cross cultural evidence of different symbols in different societies. However, many responses simply listed material on various symbols rather than focussing on the issue of how they are used to maintain and express identity. There were some successful attempts to compare and contrast the role of symbols as well as a discussion of the way in which individuals may negotiate their own identity through symbols. Some students successfully discussed the ways in which symbols are used to express a change in identity, for example within a ritual, with varying degrees of success.

Stronger responses focused on ethnographic studies of symbols, with explicit reference to maintain and creating identity at a group and individual level, for example exploring the role of the Milk tree among the Ndembu (Turner) where the tree is a symbol both of female solidarity and the transition from becoming a girl to becoming a woman. 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