

Version



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2013**

Anthropology

ANTH4

(Specification 2110)

**Unit 4: Practising Anthropology: Methods and
Investigations**

Report on the Examination

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General

A relatively small number of students took the ANTH4 examination and therefore generalisations may be of limited value. However, the following may be noted.

Positive features

- All students attempted all required questions.
- No question appeared to cause any particular difficulties for students. Answers for the most part were of sufficient length.
- All of the students used anthropological methods of participant observation or unstructured interviews.
- Some of the personal investigations (PI) showed considerable reflexivity and awareness of the researcher's position within the studied community.
- There was an awareness of the specific demands of Unit 4, particularly the connections between research methods and the personal investigation.
- There was appropriate use of relevant concepts and anthropological theories in better answers.
- Some answers showed knowledge of the work of specific anthropologists (both ethnographic and theoretical).
- Some students showed explicit knowledge of methodological issues in their personal investigation.

Key Issues

- There was a lack of use of anthropological theory in some students' work. Alternatively, there was the inclusion of theoretical material that was not directly relevant to the question.
- There were some discussions based on apparently common sense assumptions, particularly for questions 05 and 06.
- There was sometimes a lack of precision in contextualising ethnographic material, with too many over-generalised and therefore weak statements about research methods.
- Some students could not relate their personal investigation to wider anthropological knowledge.

Question 01

All students were successful in examining the costs and benefits of interaction between the fieldworker and community they studied. The best answer showed awareness of changes within the history of fieldwork, comparing the attitude of the anthropologists from the past during the colonial period with modern day collaboration between the fieldworkers and their participants. Less successful students used common sense in their answers without the support of any ethnographic examples. Some students showed knowledge of applied anthropology and how interaction between fieldworker and participants always develop in mutual agreement and the benefit of both parties.

Question 02

This question was well answered by all students. It is very important that students are aware of the ethical issues in the process of conducting fieldwork. Stronger answers used ethnographic examples to support their discussions and arguments. However, there was some tendency to be descriptive rather than analytical, listing some of the ethical issues

rather than examining them in more depth. There were references to the Association of Social Anthropologists' guidelines on ethical issues.

Question 03

Some students explored how the personal characteristics of the researcher (such as gender, age, and ethnicity) may shape the relationship with gatekeepers and the people they studied. Less successful answers listed some possible practical problems in accessing the fieldwork but did not explore practical problems of maintaining one's position within the fieldwork. Some answers were loosely based on weak ethnographic examples. Students who focused on the question and included ethnographic examples to support their arguments fared the best.

Question 04

Proximity and access to their fieldwork were the principal reasons for students' choice of their subject. Some less successful answers offered explanations about their access to the place of study and their general interest in certain topics. Students were generally clear in their explanations of the reasons for their choice of subject and for their hypothesis or research question. Students should operationalise their hypothesis/question before they start with their personal investigations. This would help them in being more focused during their observation and interviews.

Question 05

This question was answered well. Students used anthropological research methods of participant observation and/or unstructured interviews. The stronger answers were able to explain the main reasons for choosing their methods of research and how they dealt with any problems associated with their chosen methods. These used anthropological concepts and theories and produced a response that demonstrated an explicit and sound understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen research method. Those students who spent longer period of time conducting their personal investigations were more able to analyse and address the problems they encountered.

Question 06

Unfortunately, this question was not well answered. Some students did not show reflexivity during their fieldwork. It is important to emphasise to students the role of reflexivity during the personal investigations. The less successful students wrote only about findings of their own personal investigations, with no reference to any valid personal reflections. Some students were able to examine the findings of their personal investigation and analyse how their understanding of the subject studied has changed as a result of their personal investigation. Very weak answers tended to suggest that nothing has changed during their personal investigation and that it had been easy to conduct it. Teachers should remind students of the importance of making field notes, and of recording their own reactions, feelings, and judgements during the observation. This would help them to be more reflective and more objective in their reporting and interpreting of other cultural practice.

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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