



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**Anthropology**

**ANTH1**

**(Specification 1111)**

**Unit 1: Being Human: Unity and Diversity**

***Report on the Examination***

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# ANTH1

## General

There was a significant variation in the quality of answers and notable differences between centres. On the whole, despite the increased use of ethnography, many answers seemed to consist primarily of AO1 Knowledge and Understanding, with little focus on the 'analyse', 'examine', or 'assess' part of the questions.

### Positive features:

- Ethnographic material was a central focus for many answers, while almost all students used ethnographic examples to illustrate their points. Some used research that had been done by the class.
- There was some use of concepts and theories to analyse, examine and assess.
- Most answers were of suitable length, with many students seeming to grasp what is required by the different trigger words.
- A few students were able to give more detail about the anthropologists and the context of the ethnographic examples that they referred to in their answers.

### Key Issues:

- The main concern was the focus on knowledge, with some students throwing points at the question rather than writing considered answers. Even if students did make points that would have gained AO2 marks, they were often to be unconnected to the ethnographic-based aspect of the answers. Students must focus on the question, which includes writing with AO2 criteria in mind, using detailed, contextualised ethnographic examples to illustrate the points they are making.
- Many answers continued to demonstrate a tendency to over-generalise.
- Some students tended to present a 'world cultures' approach to the questions rather than an anthropological approach. Material for answers should be specifically related to anthropological studies, which will include not just description but analysis, interpretation, application and evaluation. Students should try to identify exactly where a study was done, the historical context in which it was produced and who conducted it.
- Better answers called on a range of perspectives and concepts in order to help them analyse and discuss the ethnographic examples. However, the connections were not always made between the theoretical perspectives and the ethnography.
- There was not enough actual comparison, with too many students simply juxtaposing two cultures in their answers.
- In some cases, centres seemed to have taught model answers, with all students giving very similar responses.
- Students should be aware that anthropology is not just about the study of tribes, as contrasted with 'western' culture. Examples can and should be selected from a range of societies and social groups; the key is that the method of gathering information must be anthropological/ethnographic.

### **Question 01**

Some students showed the ability to be clear and concise in their answers and achieve full marks. There was a tendency for students to repeat one or other aspect of the concept to be defined – either ‘culture’ or ‘evolved’ – rather than offer a clear and full definition.

### **Question 02**

Most students were able to give cultural reasons why people eat what they do, with examples to illustrate, often selecting from religious examples. Some of the better answers had actual ethnographic examples rather than generalised examples. Most students were able to come up with a biological reason but many answers were very simplistic, eg ‘to stay healthy’, rather than based on knowledge of our biological evolution.

### **Question 03**

Most students were able to answer this question satisfactorily with a range of differences, including kinship and technology. Most answers included specific examples to illustrate, though often there were sweeping generalisations about ‘western’ societies being ‘modern’. Some of the better answers were able to gain AO2 marks for discussing the problems of actually defining ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ or for pointing out that the differences did not necessarily mean ‘better’.

### **Question 04**

This question posed problems for some students. They were unable to interpret what they knew in relation to the issue of ‘distribution’, often simply talking about production. Answers often gave examples rather than identifying specific ‘ways’ in which humans organise the distribution of what they produce. Some answers, however, identified a way and then gave ethnographic examples as illustrations of this.

### **Question 05**

Students were largely able to answer this question well, using a range of ethnographic material. The main issue, however, was that students tended simply to give examples of the different ways in which culture and the natural environment were related, with little attempt actually to ‘examine’ the relation. As a consequence, these students did not gain many marks for AO2. For example, better answers considered whether it was primarily the natural environment that affected culture or the other way around. In addition, students did not draw out what it was about culture that actually creates a specific relationship to the environment. There were too many generalised comments about western culture that did not explain what it is about western culture that might lead to certain beliefs or practices. In other words, there was not enough examination of why there was the specific relationship that was being described.

### **Question 06**

The responses to this question were disappointing compared with responses to Question 06 on previous papers. Most students did not present a sense of debate but simply agreed with the view expressed in the question. Some answers merely asserted personal opinions about the need for 'leaders'. The Items were often not effectively used and, in some cases, not used at all.

Most answers simply listed examples of social and political power without doing any analysis or assessment. Theories such as functionalism, Marxism and feminism were often mentioned but with little attempt to use them in relation to an analysis of the ethnographic data and the question itself. The best answers recognised that there is evidence both for and against the view that unequal social and political power is an essential part of all human societies. They were able to draw from a range of ethnographic examples, the Items, and relevant theories to argue either for or against the view expressed in the question. The more sophisticated answers showed understanding of the role that anthropology plays in questioning commonsense assumptions, eg just because most societies have unequal power does not mean that it is 'essential'.

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