



Subject benchmark statement

Anthropology

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Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**¹. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards. Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement represents a revised version of the original published in 2002. The review process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of a periodic review of all subject benchmark statements published in this year. The review and subsequent revision of the subject benchmark statement was undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The revised subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

¹ This is equivalent to the honours degree in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (level 10) and in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006². The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has published guidance³ to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure⁴, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the DRC revised *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education*⁵, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit⁶ which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

² In England, Scotland and Wales

³ Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty*, guidance for principals, vice-chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further education colleges and HEIs in England, Scotland and Wales, may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/library/publications/disabilty_equality_duty/further_and_higher_education.aspx

⁴ An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure

⁵ Copies of the DRC revised *Code of practice: Post-16 Education* may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education.aspx

⁶ Equality Challenge Unit, www.ecu.ac.uk

Foreword

In September 2006, QAA sent requests for comment on the review of the published benchmark statement to the principal subject associations, the Association for Social Anthropology and the Royal Anthropological Institute, and also to the Higher Education Academy, Subject Centre for Anthropology (C-SAP). The consensus was that a minimal level of revision was necessary. Following the receipt of replies, further discussions took place at C-SAP, where representatives from institutions and subject associations approved the conduct of the revision, with responsibility given to members of the previous benchmarking group.

Honours degrees in anthropology focus, to varying degrees, on social or biological anthropology and the interactions between these disciplines. This diversity of content enriches subject provision overall. Numbers of students on such programmes have increased in recent years, which indicates the potential appeal of studying the subject.

The amendments to the original benchmark statement have derived from developments in the subject, most notably a renewal of the emphasis on respecting the knowledge and contributions of those peoples with whom researchers have traditionally worked. Respect and understanding between cultures can be seen as supporting the ethics of the subject. The bulk of the changes have been in section 3 (Nature and extent of anthropology) and 4 (Subject knowledge and understanding).

A number of relevant developments have been taken into account since the subject benchmark statement was first drafted, notably the publication of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2001)* and its equivalent in Scotland.

In reviewing the section of the subject benchmark statement on standards, the review group has retained the existing levels of attainment: 'threshold' equating to the minimal acceptable level of performance expected of an honours degree student and 'typical' relating to the standard expected of the majority of honours degree students.

This document seeks to make explicit the nature and standards of higher education programmes which carry the word anthropology in their title, or in which anthropology is included as a significant component in the programme leading to the award.

May 2007

1 Introduction

1.1 Anthropology encompasses the biological and social study of humans as complex organisms with the capacity for language, thought, and culture. Its commitment to the integrated study of both diversity and commonality among people throughout the world gives it a distinctive place in the field of learning. Anthropology is a subject that seeks to be holistic and comparative as well as critical and reflexive.

1.2 Anthropology can be located in the humanities, social sciences and the life sciences, and has been described as the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences.

1.3 As in humanities subjects, anthropology may focus on the uniqueness of each group and their cultural products. It can extend to the study of individual lives or to approaches familiar in the humanities, such as seeing cultures as text or performance.

1.4 As in science subjects, anthropologists have investigated the substantive processes and contexts that underlie human diversity, delineating these through principles, conditions and rules. Such studies have proposed developmental models for biological and social aspects of humanity and have attempted to identify laws and universals. Yet other anthropologists remain deeply sceptical about extending this type of generalisation to social phenomena.

1.5 Some of the most lively debates within the subject are the product of the diversity of epistemological positions that its practitioners embrace and defend in pursuing their common goal of understanding what it is to be human.

2 Defining principles

2.1 All anthropological investigation and theory is defined by its adherence to two broad principles underlying human complexity. First, the great commonalities that all individuals and groups possess - in particular, genetic and other biological traits, sociality, language and a powerful symbolising capability; and second, the diversity and capacity for transformation that is the hallmark of human culture. As a result, a comparative approach serves the entire range of anthropology.

2.2 Degree programmes in anthropology aim to develop a critical awareness and understanding of human cultural and/or biological diversity from socio-cultural, evolutionary and adaptive perspectives. Given the subject's continually changing scope, programmes also seek to develop the learner's appreciation of the dynamic character of anthropology and its constituent disciplines.

2.3 Besides availability as a single honours subject, anthropology frequently features in joint and combined honours degrees, and as a constituent subject within modular programmes. These combinations are valuable for the educational diversity and intellectual vigour they promote, and nothing in what follows is intended to prescribe or constrain closely the form and content of such fractional anthropology programmes and their subject mixes.

3 Nature and extent of anthropology

3.1 Anthropology is a dynamic subject, characterised by rapid change and diversification, so that the present statement, or any similar exercise, can only represent a rough mapping at a particular moment in time. As such it is not intended to be complete and final. The description that follows is a guide for teaching and developing the subject at undergraduate level, but it should be understood that there may be good intellectual reasons for maintaining programmes that cover only some part of the range indicated in this subject benchmark statement or for extending the views set out in these guidelines.

3.2 Anthropology as a subject is concerned with the study of the social, cultural and biological diversity of humans. Its various branches embrace the study of human relations (both biological and social), historical and evolutionary changes, ways of making a living and governing, relations with the natural and non-empirical world, bodies, artefacts, knowledge, emotion and cognition.

3.3 Anthropology can be divided into a number of specialisations, although the boundaries between these are rarely exclusive and change over time. Currently, the major disciplinary-based divisions are social anthropology and biological anthropology. These are further sub-divided and combined to form other specialisations, including environmental anthropology, ethnomusicology, medical anthropology, palaeoanthropology, ethnobotany, development anthropology, visual anthropology and others.

3.4 Social and biological anthropology constitute coherent disciplines in their own right, and so are often studied separately. The importance of their interactions, and the breadth of perspective on human diversity that their combined study provides, is the prime justification for unified programmes that incorporate both dimensions of the subject.

Social anthropology

3.5 Social and cultural anthropology covers virtually every aspect of human social activity, from kinship, material culture or cognition to economics, politics and religion. The distinction between social and cultural anthropology indicates a historic divergence between the genealogies of (British) social anthropology and (North American) cultural anthropology. Social anthropology was principally concerned with the study of society, the functioning of social groups, and social organisation. Cultural anthropology constituted (along with archaeology, linguistics, and physical anthropology) one of the 'four fields', and was concerned with cultural forms and with systems of meaning. This divergence was greatest in the mid-twentieth century, since when the interests and concerns of both British and American anthropology have tended to merge. The boundaries between social and cultural anthropology are accordingly neither specific nor distinct, and within UK higher education they are usually subsumed under the single heading of 'social anthropology'.

3.6 Anthropologists focus on human interaction: with other humans and with animals, gods, and machines. They may study the organisation of social life in small rural communities as well as in large metropolitan cities. They work at various levels of scale, ranging from individual biographies to studies of nations, regions or transnational networks.

3.7 Anthropology's focus is on the relations that connect social and cultural phenomena, including seemingly disparate entities - from poetry, gift exchange or gender to bureaucracy, mass media and nationalism. It thus characteristically links or cross-cuts the subject limits of other disciplines.

3.8 Social anthropology is therefore well-placed to defy conventional wisdom. Where other disciplines might assume regularity (for example, in economic behaviour) anthropologists have found diversity; where others might assume difference (as in racial designations), anthropologists have found regularity.

3.9 Anthropologists are characteristically interested in the practical workings and effects among ordinary people of large-scale social phenomena such as state plans, nationalisms, or religious ideologies. In a contemporary so-called 'global' world, they seek to identify local differences of understanding and interpretation, while recognising ways in which local processes are shaped by wider forces.

3.10 Many anthropologists engage in applied and policy aspects of the subject and advise government and non-government organisations, health, social welfare and development agencies, the media and legal professions.

3.11 Relative to the size of the discipline, anthropology has had a disproportionate influence on many social, economic and political policies for much of the twentieth century, and can be expected to do so in the twenty-first century.

3.12 Social anthropology explores the role of meanings, ambiguities and contradictions of social life, patterns of sociality, violence and conflict, and the underlying logics of social behaviour. Anthropologists are particularly skilled in the interpretation of narrative, ritual and symbolic behaviour not merely as 'text,' but with communication examined in relation to action, practice, and the historical context in which it is embedded. Anthropologists address the diversity of positions and perspectives to be found within any social group.

3.13 The subject has both ethical and reflexive dimensions. It has developed an awareness of the sense in which scholars create their objects of study and the ways in which anthropologists themselves may contribute to processes of change in the societies they study.

3.14 Social anthropology is distinguished from subjects such as economics or political science by its holistic range and the attention it gives to the diversity of culture and society across the world, and the capacity this gives the discipline to re-examine Euro-American assumptions. It is differentiated from sociology both in its main methods (based on long-term participant observation and linguistic competence), its commitment to the relevance and illumination provided by microstudies, and its extension beyond strictly social phenomena to culture, art, individuality, and cognition.

3.15 Specialisations within social anthropology shift as its objects of study are transformed and as new intellectual paradigms appear; ethnomusicology and medical anthropology afford examples of well-defined specialisms.

3.16 Ethnomusicology is the study of world musics, relating sounds, practices and ideas to their broader social and cultural contexts. Through fieldwork and participant observation as well as musical analysis, it investigates styles and genres, composition and performance, to illuminate issues of aesthetics, gender, power, meaning and social organisation.

3.17 Medical anthropology is concerned with experiences of health, illness and trauma in different social and cultural settings as with, for example, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) transmission in Africa, or the consequences of war and ethnic conflict. Its comparative perspectives are increasingly relevant as relationships between western and other healing systems change, while new areas of the subject emerge as drug and technologically based care impacts upon culturally specific notions of body, health, illness and ageing. This generates new ethical dilemmas.

3.18 Other emergent areas within social anthropology include the relation between cultural diversity and new findings in cognitive development; social and ethical understandings of new technologies; emergent forms of 'the family' and other new socialities modelled on kinship; the ongoing social fall-out of the demise of state socialism; the politics of resurgent religiosity; analysis of audit cultures, bureaucracy and accountability.

3.19 The subject has been enlivened by, and has contributed to, approaches from other disciplines, such as philosophy (eg ethics, phenomenology, logic), the histories of science and art, politics, geography, psychoanalysis and linguistics, and plays a central role in interdisciplinary fields, such as science and technology studies, cultural studies and development studies.

Biological anthropology

3.20 Biological anthropology draws upon and connects with other disciplines within the life sciences. As with these, its subject matter is unified by evolutionary paradigms, and there is a corresponding focus on evolutionary mechanisms and adaptive perspectives.

3.21 Major, well-defined areas of study include primatology, covering the evolutionary systematics, ecology and adaptive diversity of non-human primates; and biological anthropology has extensive links to ethology, psychology and other life sciences. Palaeoanthropology focuses on interpreting the human evolutionary record and reconstructing the ecology and behaviour of earlier hominid groups, and has similarly strong links with archaeology, and earth and evolutionary sciences. Comparative human biology encompasses the study of contemporary human genetic and phenotypic diversity, with auxology - the study of human growth patterns - as one particularly well established aspect. Human adaptability includes biological aspects of human ecology, such as responses to climatic stressors, nutrition and disease, and is a major contributor to anthropological studies of population structure and demography.

3.22 Biological anthropology also displays obvious overlaps of method and subject matter with medical sciences such as anatomy, physiology, epidemiology and nutrition. However, biological anthropology differs from such cognate subjects in important respects. The scale and detail of available information exceeds that of other life sciences, and human biological patterning contrasts with that of most other species. Biological anthropology is distinguished from the medical sciences not only by the absence of any clinical prioritisation, but also by an emphasis on variability and a bias towards the group as the focus of study. It also differs from medicine in its explicit emphasis on comparative and adaptive frameworks within which to set its findings.

3.23 Another distinguishing feature of biological anthropology reflects the necessity to incorporate socio-cultural perspectives within its analyses. Since humans are invariably social, any study of human biological diversity cannot afford to ignore

social influences. Biology also affects the ways in which humans respond to their environments, including social environments, and social structures are founded upon systems of cognition, communication and behavioural flexibility that have an underlying biological basis. There are accordingly complex and deep interactions between the social and biological dimensions of human variability that are not only of interest in their own right, but which have extensive applications in, for example, areas of health, food policies and development projects.

3.24 Biological anthropology has been characterised by the rapid development and expansion of new sub-areas: examples include the growth of primatology to encompass aspects of behavioural ecology and socio-biology; the development of molecular, life history and community ecology perspectives within human evolutionary studies; and the rapid expansion of biosocial investigations of contemporary human groups, including such aspects as energetics, lifestyle and well-being, parent-infant interactions, as well as the more established areas of medical anthropology and nutrition. Incorporation of perspectives from social anthropology is an especially prominent feature of such studies.

4 Subject knowledge and understanding

Constituents of an anthropology degree

4.1 Reflecting its multidisciplinary nature, the elements of an anthropology degree programme will depend on whether the degree is in social anthropology, biological anthropology or a combination of the two. Some programmes have a specific focus on a sub-area of the subject (eg ethnomusicology, museum studies and material culture, development studies or medical anthropology).

4.2 Depending on the programme design, specific focus and intended outcomes, some of the following areas are likely to be studied in a single honours degree, but the list is not prescriptive and should not be viewed as such. The original benchmarking group's view was that great importance should be attached to the principle that universities are free to design their anthropology programmes according to their own subject priorities, and this continues to be supported in the subject community.

4.3 Joint and combined honours students, and those studying anthropology within a broader modular programme, will necessarily cover a more limited range of topics than those studying single honours.

4.4 Anthropology is both evidence-based and theoretical. The following are areas of core knowledge that may be expected of students studying anthropology, but their representation and weighting may legitimately vary significantly according to the aims and scope of particular degree programmes. The following identification of subject areas is neither exclusive nor definitive, and does not constitute a 'checklist' that all programmes must cover.

Knowledge and understanding

Social and biological anthropology

4.5 Depending upon their programme, students may be expected to develop some or all of:

- an understanding of social anthropology as the comparative study of human societies, and of biological anthropology as the study of past and contemporary human and non-human primates in evolutionary and adaptive perspectives
- an appreciation of the importance of empirical fieldwork as the primary method of gathering data and as a basis for the generation of anthropological theory. Depending on the focus of study this might include, for example, participant observation and other qualitative means of data gathering among contemporary populations, excavation and contextual studies in palaeoanthropology, the observation of non-human primate groups, and the collection of data on aspects of human biological diversity, diet and other factors affecting the biological health of human populations
- a detailed knowledge of specific themes in social and/or biological anthropology and the intellectual debates concerning them, such as gender, religion, kinship, nationalism, exchange, material culture, human genetics, evolution and primate behaviour
- a realisation that knowledge is contested; that anthropology by its nature is dynamic, constantly generating new priorities and theories; and that the peoples with whom anthropologists have traditionally worked may have studies of themselves from which we might also learn
- an informed awareness of and sensitivity to human diversity, an appreciation of its scope and complexity, and recognition of the richness of experience and potential that it provides.

Social anthropology

4.6 Depending upon their programme, students may be expected to develop some or all of:

- an acquaintance with the theory and history of anthropology, including the achievements associated with British, French and North American scholarship. Since important schools of anthropology have developed outside Europe and North America, and are sometimes critical of 'metropolitan' perspectives, attention may also be paid to these developments as far as possible within linguistic constraints
- an ability to recognise, assess and make use of different theoretical approaches within the discipline, and an awareness of links to cognate bodies of theory, such as sociology, philosophy, history, linguistic and feminist theory, and the natural sciences
- a knowledge of the values, ethics and traditions of different cultures, including a detailed knowledge of particular areas of the world presented as regional courses (such as South Asian anthropology, European ethnography, the anthropology of West African societies or the ethnography of Japan). Areas covered in particular departments will vary with staff expertise, and no single department is likely to offer comprehensive coverage of all areas of the world
- a familiarity with a range of methods of representing data, which might include primary and secondary texts, film and other visual media, oral sources, statistical data and multimedia

- an awareness of ethical issues concerned with the study of social worlds and representation of others
- self-reflection regarding both the nature of our knowledge of the social and of the role of the anthropologist or ethnographer in the collection and presentation of data
- a familiarity with ethnographic and material culture collections in museums and other educational institutions, and awareness of current discussions concerning the collection, presentation and curation of these collections
- an awareness of different interpretations of sickness, health, disease and curing in different cultures and of the complex interrelationship between social, biological and environmental influences in the health of human communities
- an awareness of the ways in which anthropological knowledge can be applied (and misapplied) in a range of practical situations
- an awareness of social and historical change, and knowledge of some paradigms and modes (including indigenous ones) for explaining it
- an ability to recognise and analyse contexts in which relations of power, gender, ethnicity, racism and exclusion affect the forms taken by human communities
- an appreciation of the interconnections between various aspects of social and cultural life, belief systems, global forces, individual behaviour and the physical environment.

Biological anthropology

4.7 Depending upon their programme, students may be expected to develop an awareness of evolutionary principles relevant to the study of human evolution and adaptation, which inform understanding of the following:

- major aspects of human evolution, including the significant fossil evidence and its contextual associations, and behavioural and ecological reconstructions based on these
- the similarities and contrasts between humans and other primates, and their significance for human adaptive success
- selected aspects of primate diversity, and acquaintance with relevant concepts of primatology
- aspects of human genetic and/or phenotypic diversity, their evolutionary implications and significance for schemes categorising human variability
- the range and flexibility of individual biological responses, and awareness of the distinction between such adaptability and population adaptation
- biosocial perspectives on human ecology, for example, subsistence and dietary diversity, and comparative study of health, well-being and disease across societies and/or over time
- consideration of human life history patterns, reproductive influences, and population size and structure, and aspects of applied anthropology, including development studies.

4.8 Whatever the details of their programme, students will be aware of the nature, complexity and richness of human biological diversity and have an appreciation of its social and ethical implications.

5 Subject-specific skills and generic skills

5.1 The abilities and qualities of mind that a student studying anthropology is expected to acquire incorporate both subject-specific and generic skills, which include those set out in the following sections.

Subject-specific skills

Social anthropology

5.2 Depending upon the proportion of social anthropology within their degree programme, students will be able to demonstrate some or all of the following:

- an ability to understand how human beings are shaped by and interact with their social, cultural and physical environments, and an appreciation of their social, cultural and biological diversity
- the ability to formulate, investigate and discuss anthropologically informed questions
- a competence in using major theoretical perspectives and concepts in anthropology
- the capacity to provide an ethnographic description and analyse it
- the ability to engage with cultures, populations and groups different from their own, without foregoing a sense of personal judgement. An awareness of cultural assumptions, including their own, and the ways in which these impact on an interpretation of others
- the ability to read and interpret texts (print, oral, film, multimedia) within their historical, social and theoretical contexts
- a recognition of the politics of language, indirect forms of communication, forms of power, theoretical statements and claims of authority, and an ability to analyse them
- the ability to apply anthropological knowledge to a variety of practical situations, personal and professional
- the ability to plan, undertake and present scholarly work that demonstrates an understanding of anthropological aims, methods and theoretical considerations.

Biological anthropology

5.3 Depending upon the proportion of biological anthropology within their degree programme, students will be able to demonstrate some or all of the following:

- an acquaintance with and ability to interpret varied information on aspects of human biological diversity
- the ability to analyse and evaluate relevant qualitative and quantitative data utilising appropriate techniques
- the ability to design and implement a project involving data collection on some aspect(s) of human biological diversity, and to display relevant investigative, analytical and communication skills
- a deepened understanding of the subject, and qualities of mind associated with intellectual reflection, evaluation and synthesis.

Generic skills, abilities and qualities of mind

5.4 Depending upon the nature and focus of their degree programme, student attainment will include some or all of the following:

- an ability to understand their strengths and weaknesses in learning and study skills and to take action to improve one's capacity to learn
- the capacity to express their own ideas in writing, to summarise the arguments of others, and to distinguish between the two
- independence of thought and analytical, critical and synoptic skills
- information retrieval skills in relation to primary and secondary sources of information
- communication and presentation skills (using oral and written materials and information technology (IT))
- scholarly skills, such as the ability to make a structured argument, reference the works of others, and assess historical evidence
- time planning and management skills
- the ability to engage, where appropriate, in constructive discussion in group situations and group-work skills
- statistical and computing techniques.

6 Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning

6.1 Reflecting its scope, approaches for promoting student learning in anthropology are appropriately diverse, and are intended to develop students' analytical, problem-solving and communication skills as well as familiarising them with subject content. The particular combination of learning and teaching approaches adopted will depend upon the content, aims and foci of individual degree programmes.

6.2 Given its absence from the school curriculum, the majority of undergraduates encounter anthropology for the first time at university. Mature and other non-traditional students may well have experiential learning of aspects of the subject, but only rarely as a result of formal academic study, and may not be academically confident. These considerations reinforce the need for supportive learning environments to assist students' initial encounters with anthropology, as well as with teaching and learning strategies that are far less prescriptive and syllabus-based than those that students will have experienced in previous study.

6.3 In addition to imparting subject knowledge, degree programmes aim to cultivate students' intellectual curiosity, and develop their capabilities as active and effective independent learners and reflective thinkers.

6.4 The requirements to support student learning include:

- academic staff whose teaching is informed by research and scholarly activity
- a wide range of easily accessible learning materials such as texts, monographs, videos, and sample collections, available through libraries, archives, museums or in electronic formats
- programmes that combine coherence and progression with opportunities for flexibility and student-centred learning
- clear, informative documentation on course outlines, content and requirements, programme rationales and progression, associated resources, etc.

6.5 The range of topics encompassed by anthropology affords multiple possibilities for communicating study material and engaging students. Lectures are likely to be used to introduce basic terms, concepts and debates, and the sign-posts that will direct students to further reading and investigation, as well as the directions of future study. Lectures also offer the opportunity for staff to develop more complex arguments and themes, often illustrated through their research or specialist interests. In seminars and tutorials, students are given the opportunity to develop their own understanding through delivery of papers and presentations, as well as engaging in discussion and debate with tutors and fellow students. Other methods of teaching may include the use of film, video, web-based and electronic tutorials.

6.6 Practical activity is important to the quality of experience on an anthropology programme. Where there is a biological anthropological component to a programme, this may take the form of laboratory work and/or field trips involving observations, measurements and experiments. In social anthropology, practical activities may include visits to museums, galleries, performances, cultural celebrations and other places and events which provide students with the opportunity to experience expressions of social and cultural diversity.

6.7 While there are differences of opinion within the anthropological community about the appropriateness and value of undergraduate fieldwork, it is now the case that many programmes provide the option of small-scale, supervised project work. In such projects, students have the opportunity to design and carry out a piece of work involving the collection and manipulation of primary data (for example, in the form of ethnographic descriptions, observations, recorded interviews, personal narratives or life histories, measurements, etc). Where these exercises are combined with a substantial piece of written work, such as a dissertation, they offer an important opportunity for students to experience all stages of the research process from definition, through to design, analysis and production of a final write-up.

6.8 Students themselves have also played an active part in the teaching and learning of anthropology. Many programmes now incorporate experiential learning of some kind in which the experience, values and biography of students are used to complement the more orthodox material that comprises the anthropological canon. A sense of reflexivity is also cultivated through encouraging students to work together and, in some respects, to create their own learning environment through discussion and engagement with one another. This community of learning may be further supported by electronic means, such as email discussion groups.

Assessment

6.9 Assessment in anthropology is intended to test knowledge and understanding of the theory, content and methods of anthropology. According to the combinations of subjects comprising any particular anthropology programme, assessment will be made up of an appropriate mix of some or all the following:

- unseen and seen timed, written exams, which are designed to test students' knowledge and understanding of a module or course's subject matter
- essays, to allow the opportunity for students to develop a more discursive account or argument, which is supported by reference to primary or secondary literature, and completed within a prescribed word limit
- seminar presentations, to encourage students to present an argument or a point of view to a peer audience and offer clarification and a reasoned defence, if necessary
- dissertations or extended essays, to give students the opportunity to identify a topic and carry out a sustained piece of research (based on library sources, original or secondary data) within a prescribed word length and under the supervision of a member of staff
- oral examinations, for example of dissertations, which allow students to defend and discuss their work in detail with examiners
- demonstrations, displays and posters, involving work being prepared in specified ways that demand, for example, presentational, graphical or performance skills
- other writing exercises, including project reports, notebooks and fieldwork reports, which are designed to test students' observational and recording skills
- where programmes have a material culture element, students may be required to produce museum and gallery displays
- where programmes have an element of biological anthropology, student performance in laboratory-based or other project work will often be assessed.

6.10 Increasingly, students have the opportunity to produce IT-based projects within assessment, perhaps using particular software packages in the analysis and presentation of data as well as in the communication of findings to tutors and peers.

6.11 Many of the above assessment methods may be carried out by students working in groups.

6.12 It is important that a range of suitably varied assessment modes matched to course outcomes are incorporated into programme design, and in particular that opportunities are provided for students to engage in formative and synoptic exercises, and not just ones that are exclusively summative or analytical.

7 Benchmark standards

7.1 The benchmark standards listed in table 1 are intended to be compatible with the wide range of curricula and assessment methods that currently characterise the delivery of honours level anthropology in the UK. They constitute a general set of reference points to be used in conjunction with individual programme specifications, but are not intended to constrain the latter (see also section 3). Particular programmes may well differ in their representation and weighting of the benchmark standards, and may include additional standards according to their aims and foci.

The table should be interpreted, and, where relevant, applied, in the context and spirit of the entire subject benchmark statement and not be extracted for use as a separate checklist, as stated previously (see paragraph 4.4).

7.2 The 'threshold' standard represents the minimal acceptable knowledge and capabilities of an honours graduate - students able to demonstrate a degree of proficiency in a majority of these.

7.3 Students achieving 'typical' outcomes (here envisaged as the modal performance of undergraduates), or better, will generally have been able to demonstrate a greater breadth and depth of knowledge and capability. This will usually be evident in the demonstration of qualities such as analytical ability, perceptiveness, intellectual rigour, creativity and independence of thought.

Table 1 Subject knowledge and understanding

Social anthropology

Benchmark standard	Threshold	Typical
An understanding of the nature and extent of human diversity and commonality as seen from a variety of perspectives (eg social, cultural, ecological, biological).	Demonstrate a basic understanding of the nature and extent of human diversity and commonality as seen from a variety of perspectives.	Demonstrate an understanding of the nature and extent of human diversity and commonality and account for this using a variety of analytical perspectives.
An awareness of the repertoire of concepts, theories and key research methods used in anthropological analysis.	Show a basic awareness of the repertoire of concepts, theories and key research methods used in anthropological analysis.	Show understanding and facility in the use of the repertoire of concepts, theories and key research methods.
An appreciation of the relationship between local social and cultural forms in relation to global processes and broader temporal developments.	Show some appreciation of the relationship between local social and cultural forms in relation to global processes and broader historical developments.	Show an appreciation and understanding of the relationship between local social and cultural forms in relation to global processes and broader historical developments.
An awareness of how anthropology articulates with cognate subjects.	Indicate some awareness of how anthropology articulates with cognate subjects.	Indicate a critical awareness of how anthropology is related to other subjects.
Alertness to the potential applications of anthropological knowledge in a variety of contexts.	Demonstrate some awareness of the potential applications of anthropological knowledge in a variety of contexts.	Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the potential applications of anthropological knowledge in a variety of contexts.
An understanding of how human beings shape and are shaped by social, cultural and environmental contexts.	Be able to describe the ways in which human beings shape and are shaped by social, cultural and environmental contexts.	Be able to describe and analyse the ways in which human beings shape and are shaped by social, cultural and environmental contexts.

An ability to question cultural assumptions	Be able to question cultural assumptions.	Be able to question cultural assumptions critically.
An understanding of the social and historical processes that influence the objects of anthropological study.	Be able to show appreciation of the social and historical processes that influence the objects of anthropological study.	Be able to show appreciation and understanding of the social and historical processes that influence the objects of anthropological study.
An ability to interpret and analyse a variety of textual, oral and visual forms.	Be able to produce basic interpretations and analyses of a variety of textual, oral and visual forms.	Be able to produce critical interpretations and analyses of a variety of textual, oral and visual forms.

Biological anthropology

Students studying biological anthropology may, in addition to relevant benchmark standards listed in the table for social anthropology above, acquire the following knowledge and understanding.

Benchmark standard	Threshold	Typical
An awareness of human biological diversity, its components and influences.	Be able to describe aspects of human biological diversity.	Be able to describe and analyse aspects of human biological diversity and their influences.
An awareness of the interactions of biological, environmental and socio-cultural influences in human ecology.	Be able to describe some aspects of human ecology that illustrate the interactions of biological, environmental and socio-cultural influences.	Be able to analyse the interactions of biological, environmental and socio-cultural influences in selected aspects of human ecology.
An awareness of the similarities and contrasts between humans and other primates and their significance for human adaptation.	Be able to describe some of the similarities and contrasts between humans and other primates.	Be able to describe some of the similarities and contrasts between humans and other primates, and discuss their adaptive significance.

An understanding of selected aspect(s) of human evolution and associated context(s).	Be able to describe selected aspect(s) of human evolution and associated context(s).	Be able to describe and analyse selected aspect(s) of human evolution and associated context(s).
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Subject-specific and generic skills

Benchmark standard	Threshold	Typical
Show some ability to discuss ideas and interpretations with others in a clear and reasoned way.	Show a basic ability to discuss ideas and interpretations with others in a clear and reasoned way.	Show a general ability to discuss ideas and interpretations with others in a clear and reasoned way.
Show ability to recognise some of the ways in which anthropological knowledge is applied.	Show a basic ability to recognise some of the ways in which anthropological knowledge is applied.	Show ability to recognise some of the ways in which anthropological knowledge is applied and offer commentary upon this.
Demonstrate some ability to recognise the ethical implications of anthropological research and enquiry.	Demonstrate some ability to recognise the ethical implications of anthropological research and enquiry.	Demonstrate an ability to assess and analyse the ethical implications of anthropological research and enquiry.
Demonstrate basic skills in information gathering, analysis, communication and presentation.	Demonstrate basic skills in information gathering, analysis, communication and presentation.	Demonstrate developed skills in information gathering, analysis, communication and presentation.
Be able to undertake independent study, including time management, within supportive guidelines.	Be able to undertake independent study, including time management, within supportive guidelines to achieve an acceptable outcome.	Be able to undertake independent study, including time management, within supportive guidelines to achieve proficient and sustained outcomes.
Demonstrate elementary capabilities in planning and executing, within supportive guidelines, an independent dissertation or project.	Demonstrate elementary capabilities in planning and executing, within supportive guidelines, an independent dissertation or project.	Demonstrate proficiency in planning and executing, within supportive guidelines, an independent dissertation or project.

Appendix A: Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for anthropology

Professor Alan Bilsborough (Chair)	University of Durham
Dr F Bowie	University of Bristol
Dr J Edwards	University of Manchester
Professor J Hendry	Oxford Brookes University
Dr B Simpson	University of Durham

Appendix B: Membership of the original benchmarking group for anthropology

Details provided below are as published in the original subject benchmark statement for anthropology (2002).

Professor A Bilsborough (chair)	University of Durham
Dr F Bowie	University of Wales, Lampeter
Dr J Carsten	University of Edinburgh
Dr J Edwards	University of Manchester
Dr M Fischer	University of Kent at Canterbury
Professor J Hendry	Oxford Brookes University
Professor C Humphrey	University of Cambridge
Dr D James	The London School of Economics and Political Science
Dr T Ramnarine	The Queen's University of Belfast
Dr C Shore	Goldsmiths College, University of London
Dr B Simpson	University of Durham
Dr S Thompson	The School of Oriental and African Studies, London