

# Subject Benchmark Statement: Anthropology

## The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Anthropology for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and practice.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



## Why study a degree in Anthropology?

As a subject discipline, anthropology provides students with approaches to explore different cultures, ways of life and how they relate to broader social, political, biological and environmental contexts. Anthropologists are therefore well positioned to address the wide range of complex problems that different communities face today.

Anthropology degrees explore what it means to be human through theoretical and practical learning methods. Anthropology is a broad field of study that aims to understand the experiences of past and present peoples and to predict future developments, on multiple scales - from the microscopic to the global. The discipline recognises multiple belief systems and ways of being in this investigation, and utilises a unique blend of insights (including from the student's own lived experiences and cultures), methods and theoretical perspectives from a range of related disciplines.

Because of this wide scope and the engagement of diverse contexts and ideas, courses may be designed to focus on one sub-field or take a general approach to the discipline.



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Anthropology?

As a practical subject discipline, all Anthropology degree courses are likely to cover significant elements of empirical and practical work, and data collection. The content of individual degree courses within departments and providers is likely to vary depending on focus and expertise. However, this might include training and potentially also experience in the field and/or the laboratory - for example, in the form of participant observation, interviews, surveys, the collection of data on aspects of human or other primate biological diversity, diet and health, and/or other practical, hands-on engagement - such as, with objects and materials.

All Anthropology degree courses will include material on the history of the discipline (including both social and biological anthropology). This will usually include understanding the development of theoretical trends, the history of fieldwork and other practical techniques as well as the interpretation and use of anthropological data in historical discourses, and the ways that anthropology has increasingly come to take an active stance in contemporary social, economic and environmental issues.



## How are students assessed?

Given the strongly practical and applied nature of anthropology and its focus on the diversity of human experience, assessment styles have become extremely diverse. As a result, students can expect to encounter a wide range of assessment styles during Anthropology degrees, depending on the specific learning outcomes of different programmes and modules. Such work may be individually completed and assessed, or may involve group work, in which case marking schemes will provide clear guidance regarding the distribution of credit among individuals.

Regardless of the specific mode of assessment, all Anthropology degrees will emphasise the development of reflective, critical analysis skills, and the evaluation and appropriate use of different sources of evidence, as well as potential applications for addressing real-world problems. Given the applied nature of much anthropology, practical, real-world tasks will be the basis of many assessments, which may therefore include the production of policy documents, media and press releases, briefings (both verbal and/or non-verbal presentations) and technical reports.

The assessment of Anthropology courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to disabled students and students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds within different learning situations.

Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered in discussion with the student concerned, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree course.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Anthropology are outlined on **pages 17-23** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 25** of the full Statement.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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