

November 2017 subject reports

## Social and Cultural Anthropology HL

Overall grade boundaries

### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 37	38 - 50	51 - 63	64 - 75	76 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 9	10 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 20

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

On the whole reports are well written, with very few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. There are also a variety of research questions demonstrating original and engaged thinking. Candidates also show good efforts in terms of engaging with their interlocutors and reflecting upon the broader implications that can be drawn from fieldwork data.

It would be beneficial however if candidates demonstrate a better understanding of the value and ethics of ethnographic fieldwork. Many reports do not make relevant their ethnographic data to the research question. Candidates tend to support the minimal narratives obtained from their interlocutors provided with graphs, surveys or generalisations that are deduced from interviewing. Anthropologists clearly do use these kinds of methods but the most important technique is participant-observation. An understanding of the relevance of everyday life and the importance of documenting it (be it in a workplace or hospital etc) to anthropology is also central to knowing the ethics of the discipline.

Candidates should also be encouraged to make note of their word count on their reports. The maximum word count is 2000.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: identification of an issue or question

Candidates are identifying focused questions with originality and imagination.

### Criterion B: research techniques

Research techniques are usually discussed in length but justification is not always shown. Showing the relevance of their chosen methods is key to the exercise. Candidates must show an understanding of how different techniques can potentially lead to documenting and representing different aspects of daily life. Candidates must also understand the value of ethnographic methods and that surveys and graphs are not anthropological tools. Anthropologists might use quantitative methods to support their ethnographic findings (and not the other way around).

### Criterion C: presentation of data

Presentation of data often becomes problematic because candidates are struggling to identify their ethnographic data. Whereas this might be due to “home blindness”, it is significant that many who are unclear in their presentation are also undervaluing participant-observation in their discussion of research techniques.

### Criterion D: interpretation and analysis of data

Candidates interpret data collected with techniques that are not always clearly justified as anthropological. It is not surprising therefore that when many candidates engage with relevant theory, they are unable to connect it clearly and/or in a relevant way to their data.

### Criterion E: ethical issues

Candidates seem to find the ethics part of their report the most challenging. Candidates rarely reflect upon their own positionality — which could solve the problem of “home blindness”. Few consider issues of doing research with different communities and the politics of consent. Who gives permission for anthropologists to study minors or interlocutors with Alzheimer’s disease?

### Criterion F: anthropological insight and imagination

Many candidates demonstrate a perceptive understanding of anthropology but few are being awarded excellent.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It might be useful for candidates to reflect more critically on the significance of documenting daily life before they embark upon their projects. Candidates might find it beneficial to understand why participant-observation is a distinctive technique to anthropology. Why is it that anthropologists want to focus on what people are doing as they go about their daily tasks for example at work, in the household

or a place of worship. What kinds of understanding of human behaviour can be obtained when we look at the relationship between the individual and society through an ethnographic lens?

Candidates could consider these questions as part of group activities that encourage candidates to think through issues that can bring these questions to the fore. For example, the relationship between globalization and the making of the “local”, history and the tendency to focus on important people, gender and what constitutes work.

Please encourage students to make a note of their word count.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 1	2 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

### General comments

Overall, most candidates were able to demonstrate a general understanding of the text, and in some cases were able to produce insightful and well informed responses which showed good anthropological knowledge. Teachers should be commended for their work in teaching Social and Cultural Anthropology and for ensuring that their candidates are well prepared for their examinations.

This session, the chosen extract presented an ethnographic account which examined migration, through the exploration of the social and geographical routes of young Nepalese migrant men in India and their cultural expectations, imaginings and experiences.

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The examination did not expose any areas of the programme which appeared difficult for the candidates. Although the majority of candidates were able to evidence a general understanding of the extract some answers remained on a descriptive level or were quite dependent on the text. Some candidates appeared unaware that they should be using their own words and incorporating anthropological concepts, theory and theoretical perspectives to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Not all candidates attempted to define or discuss key concepts or theoretical perspectives relevant to the questions, or defined core terms, using their general understanding rather than showing evidence of anthropological knowledge. Some answers were more descriptive than analytical leading to limited arguments and rather superficial comparisons.

Some candidates did not fully contextualize their comparative ethnographic materials. Sometimes a candidate would only mention a very generic reference to a group of people, without any identification in terms of place, author or historical context. Though there has been a steady progress in this aspect, it continues to be a point to consider.

Only a small number of candidates were unable to complete all the questions on the paper. In particular, question 3 was sometimes left unfinished, or so brief as to be too short to gain a good mark.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

In terms of areas of the programme, a great number of candidates appeared to be familiar with anthropological concepts, theories and theoretical perspectives related to the extract chosen. The dynamics of migration processes, social and economic change, culture and socialization, kinship, gender or ritual seem to be areas of study that most schools are working on in class as evidenced by candidates' knowledge and understanding. Thus, the range of achievement was generally related to the ability to discuss and apply specifically anthropological concepts and approaches and to develop answers that were analytical and anthropologically informed.

It is very pleasing to see that many candidates could demonstrate critical thinking, articulating relevant discussions based on concepts, theories and theoretical perspectives in relation to ethnography, and establish insightful comparisons. Also, many candidates were able to make informed statements about the viewpoint of the anthropologist, giving evidence of teachers preparing candidates in this aspect.

The performance of some new centres was quite encouraging, suggesting that good teaching programmes are in place.

It is encouraging to read a good range of well-structured answers drawing on several updated contemporary ethnographies across the candidate cohort.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1

Most candidates seemed capable of giving an account of the explicit reasons given in the text regarding leaving Nepal: poverty, political violence, unemployment and lack of educational opportunities. More sophisticated responses brought in the cultural expectation that young Nepalese men would spend part of their lives away from their homes and/or that India offered a place from which to reach other parts of the world that rank higher in their imaginings.

Most did so by identifying relevant examples. Lower achieving responses relied heavily upon the text and quoted answers rather than summarizing in the candidates' own words. The more successful responses presented relevant generalizations, demonstrating good anthropological understanding.

### Question 2

This response required candidates to explain the link between the change in location and a change in status in young Nepalese men's aspirations, though it was not necessarily realized.

Several theories were used by candidates, including world systems theory and others relating to economic and materialist approaches, also some successful responses acknowledged and discussed the cultural dimension of migration. These introduced the concepts of socialization, identity and social control in relation to kinship obligations and the migrant condition. Some candidates referred to terms drawing from Bourdieu to analyse status. These responses demonstrated an awareness of how individuals are embedded in social structures and cultural dynamics that shape identity, actions and meanings.

In terms of theoretical perspectives, approaches such as structure-centred, agency-centred and idealist or diachronic were identified and used. Almost all candidates were able to offer one theoretical perspective; the better responses offered sustained and coherent discussion of the text. Several offered a clearly identified viewpoint of the anthropologist supported by reasoning, while some just mentioned a vague and general possible viewpoint of the author. Some responses were only descriptive, and demonstrated limited understanding of theoretical perspectives.

### Question 3

Overall, students brought in relevant comparative ethnographies and developed well-structured comparisons. Though some approaches were quite simplistic and not fully discussed, others presented well established arguments and were fully contextualized in terms of author, place and ethnographic context. The lowest achieving responses did not always fully develop both similarities and differences. Some answers were more narrative than comparative in nature and structure, but these were only few.

Many candidates were able to produce good responses to this question which required demonstrating an understanding of rites of passage. What constitutes a rite of passage was defined broadly, and many cases were satisfactorily made relevant for comparison. Some responses drew explicitly from Turner's analytical framework to structure their comparisons, while others made reference to Durkheim's view on ritual.

The question allowed candidates to make comparisons of different kinds and draw from a wide range of ethnographic materials. Candidates who did particularly well on this question often did so because they were focused and chose well contextualized and relevant comparative ethnographies. As mentioned above, it is very interesting to see that many centres are incorporating more contemporary materials into their readings and these provided opportunities for relevant discussions.

Popular ethnographies chosen were Bourgois' *In Search of Respect*, Okely's *The Traveller-Gypsies*, Pun Ngai's *Made in China: Women factory workers in a global workplace*, Piot's *Remotely Global*, Khosravi's *Young and defiant in Tehran*, Patel's *Working on the night shift* and Lindquist's *Singapore's Borderlands: Tourism, Migration and the Anxieties of Mobility*.

Some candidates used Kuper's Swazi material to good effect and could provide reasoned evaluations of her theoretical perspective and contextualize her work in sound historical terms. Other popular choices included Lee's materials on the Ju/'hoansi, Chagnon's work on the Yanomamö, Weiner's Trobrianders and Ratier's Villeros y villas miseria.

All of the above provided relevant materials for comparison.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers need to emphasize the importance of reading questions carefully and structuring answers accordingly. Practice with previous paper 1s and markschemes is an effective tool towards this goal.
- Teachers need to help candidates clarify key command terms, to make sure that answers are relevant and closely focused.
- Candidates should be encouraged to be explicit in demonstrating their understanding of concepts by, for example, defining the terms used.
- In question 1, candidates need to use their own words rather than rely too heavily on quotations

from the text. Candidates are expected to go beyond simple description and develop some generalizations that are relevant to the terms of the question and can be linked to relevant points and examples given in the text.

- In question 2, in order to gain full marks, the answer must identify the viewpoint of the anthropologist. Teachers should devote class time to this issue in the ethnographic materials used in class. Also, candidates should be encouraged to work on developing their analytical skills so that they can move beyond merely offering descriptive responses.
- In question 3, candidates should be reminded to present a comparative ethnography in terms of author, place, and historical context. Some candidates would only make a very generic reference to a group of people. A publication date for ethnography is not necessarily what is meant by ethnographic contextualization, but the description of the historical context of the ethnographic account.
- In terms of ethnographic materials, it is important that teachers try to ensure that candidates are familiar with some contemporary ethnographic works. The opportunity to read more recent ethnographies in addition to classic older material will enable candidates to cover many areas of the programme more thoroughly.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 31	32 - 44

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Many candidates do not provide fieldwork dates, and rely on the publication dates. The publication date is not an adequate substitute for fieldwork dates, since the intention is to identify the historical moment when the society was studied. Publication dates are not required, though they are welcome when a candidate wishes to identify the source bibliographically. However, fieldwork dates are required because societies change.

Some candidates use sources that are not ethnographies and are not written by anthropologists. In these cases, it would be desirable to make this explicit and discuss any potential biases in the author's presentation.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Generally speaking, candidates are able to provide adequate descriptions of social change. Many also adequately apply relevant concepts and theories related to social change.

Usually, ethnographic examples are detailed and concepts are often introduced to interpret the materials.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

#### Strengths

When ethnohistorical sources were used, a number of candidates tended to recognize their potential weaknesses and the problematic reliability of such sources.

#### Weaknesses

Candidates did not usually develop the concepts of "ideology" or "identity" in their respective essays. Although they adequately presented material about the rest of the essay question, they often did not discuss or explicitly link their presentation to the principle concept included in the question. In this sense, their essays are somewhat incomplete, as they are not fully responding to or directly addressing the question.



Many candidates confused the term “social movement” with migration. This has happened in previous years as well. The term “social movement” refers to organized actions or structures intended to empower oppressed minorities (e.g., protests). Thus, examples of population migrations (i.e., physical geographical displacements) within or across countries would not count as adequate examples. While examples of street protests that assist with toppling an oppressive government may be adequate.

Many candidates chose the question on “sexuality” but all of them confused this term with “gender”. In addition, many candidates did not establish a distinction between “gender” and “sex”.

Many candidates do not demonstrate a clear distinction between processes of globalization, colonialism, regional migrations, and the encroachment of nation-states into the lands inhabited by indigenous populations. There are numerous cases in which some of these processes overlap and some of them may be seen as an extension of the other, but they are each distinct concepts in themselves and often cannot be used interchangeably. Thus, it would not be adequate to respond to a question on colonialism only by citing examples of a regional migration of pastoralists settling in lands inhabited by hunter-gatherers, as occurred in numerous essays, unless it is clarified how this is an example of colonialism or colonization.

Candidates writing about “human rights” mostly seemed to take the concept for granted. They often did not provide some definition or framework to understand it, and no candidates problematized the concept. That is, they seemed to assume that the understanding of what counts as “human rights” is self-evident and that these rights are not the subject of debate. Also, in several essays, some candidates seemed to conflate “human rights” with “cultural rights” (i.e., the right to maintain and express one’s culture), though these concepts are not identical.

Some candidates did not demonstrate a clear distinction between the concepts of “status” and “role”.

Some candidates used the term “acculturation” where “enculturation” may have been more appropriate.

Some candidates mention theories that may not be adequate for the specific examples or issues they are discussing. For example, a number of candidates introduced structural-functionalism, clarified that it fails to explain social change, and then immediately proceeded to attempt to apply it to a question about changing gender relations.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates quoting from sources that are not ethnographies are recommended to state this circumstance and to provide any relevant contextualizing information (such as potential biases or absences).

Candidates need to pay special attention when they are quoting from secondary sources in which the author did not perform the original research. Candidates should be aware of potential biases and selectivity involved in the author’s use of another person’s research.

Candidates usually achieve higher marks when they provide definitions of concepts and theories.

Candidates may achieve higher marks if they are able to compare theoretical approaches regarding a certain example or issue, or also if they are able to critique concepts or theory.

Candidates writing their exams in Spanish generally need to include more specific details of incidents and events in their essays. Frequently, these candidates provide very broad and generic statements about the societies. These candidates also should strive to include more theory and concepts in order to interpret the examples they provide.

## Higher level paper three

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

### General comments

It was encouraging to see continued strong performance at the high end, with a solid number of candidates able to demonstrate the quality of closely focused, critical thinking and writing with and about theory and theoretical perspectives in relation to ethnography that can be achieved at this level. As noted in previous sessions, often this was linked to the kinds of materials studied: candidates who had knowledge of more contemporary theory and ethnography were consistently able to develop more effective and coherent responses, making explicit and clearly relevant connections and comparisons. While other candidates were usually able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of more or less relevant perspectives, theory and ethnography, this rarely went beyond description and often seemed to represent 'set' learned materials almost in list form, presented in isolation, with little of the specific focus required by the question. While this approach allows candidates to demonstrate some generally relevant knowledge, it suggests limited understanding and limits their ability to make the kinds of thoughtful connections and/or comparisons between perspectives, theories and ethnography assessed on this paper.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates.

As already suggested, and noted in previous years, the ability to make relevant and informed connections and/or comparisons (criterion D) between perspectives, theories and/or ethnographies in terms of any critical analysis continues to be difficult for many candidates. While most candidates seemed to have some knowledge and understanding of each of these components, rather too often this appeared to be limited to 'learned materials' that candidates struggled to apply effectively beyond the specific context in which they had been taught, or in response to new questions in terms of a genuine inquiry. Quite often this was limited to either simple, 'learned' comparisons between ethnography which is not usually relevant to questions in Paper 3. And where there was an effort to compare perspectives and/or theories this again was often presented as a learned list with no apparent effort to clarify its relevance to the question. A similar problem was that theory was often not made relevant to the chosen ethnography, which was a consistent case where candidates were apparently limited to using Lee's materials on the Ju'Hoansi. Consequently, more often than not, relevance to the question was only weakly established, limiting achievement, especially on criteria D and E.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

It was encouraging to see the critical quality of some of the thinking and writing some candidates were able to produce in terms of exploring the relation between ethnography, theoretical perspectives and particular schools of thought: this session all five questions produced an encouraging number of anthropologically informed and closely argued responses, demonstrating the level of critical work that can be achieved at this level. As noted last year, it was also encouraging that different candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding of the same ethnographic and sometimes theoretical materials to respond thoughtfully to different questions. Although not at this high level, almost all other candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge of relevant perspectives and ethnography, and several schools of thought seemed to be quite well understood, although application within the context of a given question remained a struggle for many. Schools of thought most frequently referenced included Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Theory, Cultural Ecology, Political Economy, Feminist Theory, Postmodernism, Resistance Theory and some aspects of Practice Theory. However, the range and depth of theoretical knowledge and understanding continues to vary widely between centres. Some of the most successful responses made good use of relatively current materials including Bourgois' *In Search of Respect*, Lindquist's *Singapore Borderlands*, Patel's *Working the Night Shift* and Khosravi's *Young and Defiant in Tehran*.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1

This was a straightforward question, though not often chosen and with only a few successful responses, with others more limited in relation to at least two of the three key components - perspectives, schools of thought and ethnography. While all were able to demonstrate some basic knowledge and understanding of a synchronic perspective, usually linking it to Structural Functionalism as a school of thought, few were able to demonstrate and/or evaluate its implications for ethnographic work in any critical way. The most successful responses worked with Kuper's account of the Swazi; more frequent references were to Lee's earlier work with the Ju-Hoansi and sometimes the Guarani, where accounts were sometimes quite detailed but not often effectively focused in terms of the question.

### Question 2

Although not often chosen, several responses were quite successful here: these were more often focused on an idealist perspective, often using feminist theories associated with Butler and Massey to examine gendered social relations in Patel's *Working the Night Shift*. Other responses focused on a materialist perspective were also quite effective, working with Bourgois' *In Search of Respect* in terms of social relations between Nyorican and mainstream communities, in relation to elements of Political Economy and Bourdieu's Practice Theory. Less effective responses either lost sight of social relations and focused exclusively on the idealist/materialist binary, or seemed to understand the perspectives as characteristics of the societies studied rather than as an analytical framework for interpretation.

### Question 3

This was the least popular question but produced several strong answers apparently all from the same centre. One group of responses compared particularist and universalistic perspectives in relation to feminism, looking at the approaches of Butler and Massey as well as Durkheim in relation to Patel's *Working the Night Shift* and/or Lindquist's *Singapore Borderlands*; other responses, focused on Symbolic theory, compared the approaches of Turner and Geertz in relation to Fadiman's text, *The Spirit Catches You and You All Fall Down*. Less effective responses had trouble in clarifying the two perspectives; in particular universalism seemed poorly understood.

### Question 4

This was by far the most popular question, with the most successful responses focused on a comparative discussion of either structure or agency, sometimes comparing theoretical approaches and sometimes ethnography. For both structure and agency, it was interesting to see that different candidates were able to make very effective use of the same ethnographic materials as a basis for comparative discussion for both of these perspectives, sometimes using similar theoretical references. These included Political Economy, Bourdieu and Practice Theory, Scott's Resistance Theory, Feminist theory contrasting the approach of Massey and Butler, and Psychological Functionalism (not usually well used) and Structural Functionalism, and occasional references to Postmodernism and Cultural Ecology. Somewhat surprisingly comparative discussion of approaches to a diachronic perspective was quite limited, particularly with reference to relevant schools of thought. In this question in particular, one of the key differences between more and much less successful responses was the ability to maintain a clear focus in terms of the question, making connections and comparisons explicit. Weaker responses also often lacked any temporal contextualization.

### Question 5

This was also quite a popular question with more responses focused on conflict-centred perspectives than cohesion-centred perspectives, although the latter were somewhat more successful overall. In terms of conflict, a good number of candidates were able to reference Marx and/or Gluckman in terms of relevant schools of thought but were less effective in developing and/or applying these connections. They were more successful in exploring relevant ethnographic accounts in terms of conflict, for example working quite effectively with Bourgois' *In Search of Respect*, Khosravi's *Young and Defiant in Tehran*, Chagnon's *Yanomamo* as well as with Fadiman's text *The Spirit Catches You and You All Fall Down*. Discussions of a cohesion-centred approach to ethnography were more successful in developing clearly relevant theoretical references, for example to Structural-Functionalism and to Durkheim, and were usually able to illustrate their claims with relevant ethnography including Lee's Ju'Hoansi and Fadiman's text. As noted for question 2, there was a tendency in weaker responses to treat cohesion and/or conflict as 'conditions' in which societies and/or individuals found themselves, rather than as an analytical frame used by anthropologists.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

One key element not often seen this semester, were responses that clearly and explicitly focused on the terms of the question, making every paragraph clearly and directly relevant. Even if candidates have some basic knowledge and understanding of perspectives, theory and ethnography, unless it is appropriately focused and made relevant to the question, the level of achievement is inevitably limited.

Clearly, this needs to be practiced explicitly in the classroom, working with candidates to explore how the same materials can be refocused and made relevant to different questions.

The other challenge for teachers is to develop classroom strategies that encourage candidates to become more confident in their knowledge and understanding of perspectives, and especially current schools of thought, through constant discussion, debate and application/writing. Many candidates need to develop more critical, analytical and comparative skills to ensure that answers are closely focused and made relevant, making connections between different elements of the programme rather than presenting isolated 'learned' materials more or less mechanically and regardless of the question.

Finally, as noted above, it seemed that the materials available to some groups of candidates was limited in range or context or outdated, often putting candidates at a disadvantage. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to review their own programme and materials to make sure they are as current and relevant as possible. In this context, teachers are reminded that the new curriculum, to be first examined in 2019, is organized differently around different selected units of inquiry that may well require some shift in classroom materials.