

FIRST ANTHROPOLOGY A-LEVEL LAUNCHED

A new GCE AS and A2 qualification in anthropology has been accredited by Ofqual, and will be available for teaching from September 2010. It has been developed by the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in partnership with AQA, and will be offered and assessed by AQA.

The new GCE has been designed to give A level students a grounding in anthropology across the discipline's range – both biological and social/cultural branches – through exploration of themes such as 'Being human', 'Becoming a person', 'Global and local processes' and 'Practising anthropology'. Students taking the subject at A2 will conduct a small-scale personal investigation on a topic of their choice, and so gain a taste of real research.

Dr Mike Cresswell, AQA Director General, said: "AQA is committed to providing the opportunity for breadth of study and well-rounded learning.

"We are therefore delighted to be offering this new qualification and to be working so closely with the RAI to deliver the very best support to our teachers and learners."

Hilary Callan, Director of the RAI, said: "Anthropology is an inherently fascinating subject and has a natural place alongside cognate disciplines as a key part of a contemporary liberal education. Yet up to now it has been almost absent from pre-university curricula in the UK. The new GCE fills this gap. It is intellectually challenging and will demand much of students. Those taking it, whether or not they go on to study anthropology at university, will gain an understanding of human life in society, and of diverse ways of seeing the world, that will serve them well as the globally educated citizens of the future."

The course content is the product of over 4 years' intensive work by the RAI's Education Committee, which is composed of university-based academic anthropologists and experienced A-level teachers. The project has received national support from University departments of anthropology throughout the UK; and has been funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) under its *Science in Society* programme.

A dedicated RAI website, *Discover Anthropology* (www.discoveranthropology.org.uk) provides teaching and learning resources, as well as serves as a communication platform for teachers interested in teaching the GCE or introducing anthropological material into their teaching generally. A teachers' networking group has also been established. For more information, or to join the expanding group, contact the RAI Education Officer, Nafisa Fera on education@therai.org.uk.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. For further information visit: www.therai.org.uk
www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/esrccontext/sciencesociety/index.aspx

Or contact: socialsciences@aqa.org.uk.

2. Press/media enquiries should be directed to:

Claire Ellis at AQA on 01483 477911 or email cmellis@aqa.org.uk
RAI Director on admin@therai.org.uk; tel 020 7387 0455

3. AQA are the largest of the three English exam boards, awarding 49% of full course GCSEs and 42% of A-levels nationally. In total, students take over 3.5 million exams with us each year.

4. Ofqual's report on awarding bodies' customer service standards for the 2008 A level and GCSE exams showed that:

- when teachers needed to phone an awarding body, 79.1% of them described their experience with AQA as positive
- only 1.1% – the lowest of any awarding body – had difficulty getting through to AQA
- the AQA website was deemed the most useful by respondents

5. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. It supports independent, high quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector. The ESRC's planned total expenditure in 2009/10 is £204 million. At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and independent research institutes. More at <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk>