Department of Anthropology

AN286 ethnographic essay grade criteria

The essay should demonstrate:

1. Research design and development: how the student came to formulate their project, construct their field, determine their objects of observation and objects of study, and ask relevant and productive research questions.

2. Reflexivity with regards to research methods: a theoretical understanding and practical skill in using a range of research methods both in online and face-to-face contexts, as well as a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of these methods, their contexts of deployment, and the kind of data gathered through them.

3. The research process: an account of how the ethnographic data was gathered and pieced together to make claims and generalizations about the object of study and answer the research questions. This might also include an account of how the field, object of study, and questions have evolved in the process.

4. The student's research skills: observation, participation, conversation, interviewing; the ability to identify non-obvious material for analysis. While acknowledging the constraints of such a short fieldwork, the student is nonetheless expected to have maximised the opportunities for active participation in the social context under analysis, which may or may not include face-to-face interaction.

5. The student's discovery: the answer/s the student has given to their research question/s (how the student's initial curiosity has led them to discover something new).

6. The student's confidence in analysing the ethnographic data: the ability to analyse the data and build an argument from the bottom up; while references to the secondary literature are welcomed, particularly with respect to literature on anthropological methods, they are not a requirement and should not overshadow the student's own efforts at analysing their original data.

7. The project's limitations and potential: a reflection on the limitations of the project and how it could be taken further. This is particularly important given the limitations of time; a careful reflection on what else could be done if there was more time, and under different circumstances can serve as an adequate demonstration that the student has understood how to conduct ethnographic research.

8. The student's communication skills: the coherence, fluency, accuracy, and vividness of the writing.

The following scheme for grading of the AN286 4,000-word Ethnographic Essay marks has been agreed for the Department of Anthropology. Please note that the descriptions given below are 'ideal types'; an essay may qualify for a class even if not all attributes are present.

NB The 1,000-word AN286 research proposal will be graded using the bespoke criteria above. The 3,000-word AN286 essay that draws on course literature to address a broad methodological question in anthropology will be graded using the Department's main essay and take-home assessment grade criteria.

Class	Marks (%)	Attributes
Brilliant First (1)	**80 - 100**	In addition to all the attributes described below (First, 70-79) the candidate demonstrates an extraordinary aptitude for anthropological research. The essay showcases the strength of participatory methods by conveying deep knowledge of the field site(s) and truly original insights into its social contexts. It also reflects an excellent grasp of the methods used and includes an insightful reflection on their potential for current and future anthropological research.
First (1)	**70 – 79**	Excellent research skills (evidenced by detailed and astute observations, rich conversational material, excellent engagement with interlocutors, as well as skill in using a range of methods to generate different kinds of data). The essay clearly demonstrates how the project was designed and developed in a way that is perceptive of the current conditions and shows heightened reflexivity vis-à-vis the tenets of anthropological fieldwork, such as 'field,' 'participation,' 'observation,' and the object of study. The research process is brought to life throughout the essay, providing support for the candidate's provisional empirical claims. Clear and detailed explanation of the aims of the project – what the candidate was curious about, what research questions emerged from the process of fieldwork – and a compelling sense of discovery. The analysis of the data is sophisticated and clearly motivated by the evidence. If any secondary literature is cited, it is used by the candidate as a point of comparison or to amplify their original findings rather than being used to derive the analysis. The reflections on the strengths and limitations of the project and the methods used are insightful and constructive, demonstrating that the candidate has clear and concrete ideas of how to take the project forward if given more time and resources. The candidate writes with flair; the writing is engaging, clear, fluent, and evocative.

Upper Second (2:1)	**60 – 69**	Good research skills (evidenced by competent observations, good quality conversational material, and a good level of engagement with interlocutors, as well as skill in using a range of methods to generate different kinds of data). The essay sufficiently discusses how the project was designed and developed in a way that is perceptive of the current conditions and shows heightened reflexivity vis-à-vis the tenets of anthropological fieldwork, such as 'field,' 'participation,' 'observation,' and the object of study. The research process is documented in enough detail to make the candidate's claims convincing. Good account of the aims of the project – what the candidate was curious about and how this curiosity motivated the process of research – and the link between research activities and findings is presented in a clear and logical fashion. The analysis of the data is executed with confidence and the empirical material is used coherently and pertinently. If any secondary literature is cited, it is used to support the candidate's own analysis rather than being imposed on the data. The reflections on the limitations and further potential of the project are well articulated. The essay has a clear structure, and the writing is clear, fluent, and carefully copy-edited.
Lower Second (2:2)	**50 – 59**	Satisfactory research skills (evidenced by descriptive and conversational material that is mostly adequate but is at times quite superficial revealing only a cursory engagement with the candidate's interlocutors, or by a limited range of research methods). The essay sufficiently discusses how the project was designed and developed in a way that is perceptive of the current conditions but shows little reflexivity vis-à-vis the tenets of anthropological fieldwork, such as 'field,' 'participation,' 'observation,' and the object of study. The research process is described or alluded to but in generic terms that leave the reader unsure as to how the candidate obtained the ethnographic data. The aims of the project – what the candidate was curious about and how this curiosity motivated the process of research – are explained or implied, but the link between research activities and findings is often unclear. The analysis of the data is at times muddled and unsupported by the ethnographic evidence. If any secondary literature is cited, it is imposed on the data often for irrelevant or tangential reasons, detracting from the development of the candidate's own analysis. The reflections on the limitations and further potential of the project are cursory. The writing is often imprecise, and the overall presentation is confusing.

Third (3)	**40 – 49**	Poor research skills (evidenced by the superficial quality of both observational and conversational material and by a very limited range of research methods). The project was not designed and developed in a way that is perceptive of the current conditions and the essay shows little-to-no reflexivity vis-à-vis the tenets of anthropological fieldwork, such as 'field,' 'participation,' 'observation,' and the object of study. There is only a cursory and unconvincing account of the research process. The aims of the project – what the candidate was curious about and how this curiosity motivated the process of research – are not coherently described and the link between research activities and findings is tenuous. The analysis is confused and has little connection with the ethnographic data presented by the candidate. If any secondary literature is cited, it is used incoherently and with no obvious connection to the candidate's own ethnographic material. The reflections on the limitations and further potential of the project are rushed and careless. The writing is marred by unsupported generalizations and inconsistencies in reasoning, and the overall presentation lacks clarity and cogency, with repetitions, some illogical argumentative steps and/or contradictions.
Fail	**20 – 39**	The essay contains little evidence that the candidate has undertaken fieldwork. The ethnographic material is shallow, and the analysis lacks relevance, accuracy and substance.
Bad Fail	**0 – 19**	The candidate has failed to undertake fieldwork and has not been able to write an essay based on original ethnographic data.