



9 February 2015

Chief Executive Officer, AQA Exam Board, Andrew Hall
Qualifications Developer Social Sciences and PE, Gulfem Wormald
Director of General Qualification Development, AQA, Geoff Coombe

Dear Chief Executive Officer and Members of the AQA Exam Board,

The Organising Committee of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) has recently learned of the decision by the AQA Exam Board to discontinue the A-level anthropology course after 2018, effectively cancelling it as an offering. We would like to express in the strongest possible terms our stance that this is an unwise move, which will impoverish the educational opportunities available to secondary students in the UK and diminish the capacity of emerging adults to deal as informed citizens with the world's most pressing social and environmental issues.

As an organisation representing over 40 anthropological associations throughout the world, we have been concerned since our founding with how anthropology can contribute to addressing the fundamental problems faced by humanity. Enhancing outreach through educational programs has been a WCAA priority in those efforts. Through its treatment of the entire range of the world's cultures, increasingly brought into proximity with each other by the forces of globalisation, and its long-term perspective on the interaction of our species with the world's environments, anthropology equips students with the conceptual and practical tools necessary to make socially-informed decisions. The UK's choice to institute Anthropology as an A-level offering has been widely lauded for providing students with the perspectives necessary to act as national and global citizens in contemporary contexts of multiculturalism, dwindling resources, epidemics and the entire panoply of dilemmas that we face today.

The study of anthropology at A level also enhances the capacity of students to work successfully in their careers of choice, whatever the field. Global in perspective but detailed in approach, anthropology enables graduates to negotiate the multicultural and international contexts of private companies, government services, and professional vocations such as marketing, journalism, medicine, law and sports. Companies such as IBM increasingly hire people with anthropological backgrounds, and the contribution of anthropological understanding to work in all fields where sensitivity in interpersonal relations is a requirement has long been recognised. Continuing to foster the practical skills that anthropology contributes through its inclusion in secondary schooling will be of major benefit not only to those who go on to study the subject at university, but to all upcoming members of the work force, whatever career they choose.

We feel that a retreat from the A-level anthropology course will not only diminish educational and vocational outcomes for students in the UK, but also have a negative multiplier effect in dissuading other countries to follow the UK's pioneering efforts in instituting the study of anthropology at secondary level. We urge you to allow the existing program to continue, to grow, and to keep leading the rest of us. In this contemporary era, anthropology's global orientation, knowledge, and experience have much to offer the world and should definitely not be limited to university-level educational programs.

Sincerely yours



Professor Vesna Vucinic
WCAA Chair



Professor Virginia R. Dominguez, Chair,
WCAA Task Force on Advocacy and Outreach