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GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES



Anthropology

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE



→ **8TH IN THE UK AND
2ND IN SCOTLAND
FOR ANTHROPOLOGY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

Guardian University Guide 2026

About Aberdeen

Going beyond boundaries, expectation, and tradition since 1495

For more than 525 years we have proudly offered our students life-changing opportunities by proving true to our Foundational Purpose: 'open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others'.

Our rich heritage, world-leading research, and learning excellence has contributed to our association with five Nobel Prize winners and our ranking in the Top 20 UK Universities by the Guardian University Guide 2026.

Scotland's alternative city

Aberdeen is welcoming, adventurous, unafraid, and forever evolving – the perfect place to find your purpose and your people. Nestled in between the Cairngorms National Park and miles of golden coastline, Aberdeen has something exciting at every turn.

An ancient campus that has helped shape the modern world

Since 1495 our campus, and the world around it, have seen many changes. But the medieval core of our university, King's College has remained

constant. Over the centuries we've continued to add and innovate, growing our campus to the ideal blend of old and new you'll find today. To keep breaking boundaries in education and research, we need to keep innovating. We are committed to investing in our campus to provide the very best learning resources for our students.

Our iconic Sir Duncan Rice Library is so much more than a study space. With social and collaborative spaces, a public lending library and museum, the Library embodies our foundational promise to be open to all in the service of others.

A community committed to inclusion and progress

At Aberdeen, you'll make friends and connections that will last a lifetime. Aberdeen has been voted one of the safest and most affordable cities in the UK (Complete University Guide 2025). When you come to Aberdeen, you'll be well looked after and will become part of a close-knit community known for its outstanding support.





Why Anthropology?

Anthropology is the study of the diversity of human communities and cultures around the world. It brings together theories about 'being human' from a wide range of Western and non-Western thinkers to understand human action, culture and thought, as studied through long-term international research with the communities themselves.

Our courses examine the connections among all aspects of life – family and kinship, economic systems, political and religious institutions, human-animal and ecological relations – and the way in which they come together to create whole ways of living within an increasingly global and postcolonial world.

At Aberdeen our degree draws on the expertise of staff specialists on South America, Tibet and South Asia, the Pacific and the circumpolar North from Scotland and Siberia to Canada.

Over the course of your degree you will gain valuable training in interviewing, social research, research design, ethnographic reporting, and museum skills. In your final year you will apply your skills and knowledge to developing an original piece of research on a subject of your choice; this may be either a supervised fieldwork project or library-based dissertation.

The skills you will develop in critical thinking and analysis will give you a deep knowledge and understanding of human behaviour, which can be applied to many sectors. Many of our graduates have gone into research, teaching, media, and politics. Others have pursued careers in business and public sector organisations in a host of roles, with international and cultural contexts.



Meet your Lecturer



Dr Tanya Argounova-Low
Department of Anthropology
School of Social Science
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My name is Tanya Argounova-Low, and I am Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology. My research interests lie in mobility, movement, as well as art, creativity, and material culture in the North and Siberia, where I am originally from.

I teach the first year Introduction to Anthropology course and Honours courses, including Roads: Mobility, Movement, Migration which focuses on various aspects of mobility from infrastructure to climate change.

Anthropology provides an excellent opportunity to understand the social phenomena and processes from a different perspective, question stereotypes and see how people in different places around the world live and cope with current challenges.

Why Aberdeen

International reputation for excellence

Aberdeen's department of Anthropology has an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. We provide a supportive yet challenging environment within which students develop knowledge of anthropology, including issues of pressing concern for people the world over. Students are supported by research-active staff who are internationally recognised experts in their fields, and our courses reflect staff specialisms.

An outstanding student experience

We are committed to providing students with an outstanding student experience, with a focus on excellence in teaching. This involves a wide variety of course assessments, including a mix of traditional exams, group work, debates, and museum exhibitions.

From year 3 (the Honours level) you are offered considerable choice in course selection, allowing for specialisation in your study and culminating in a dissertation on a topic of your choice. Students work on their dissertation from the second half of year 3 into the first half of year 4.

As a student you can also take part in University societies and debates. The Anthropology Society is one of the most active student societies on campus.

An flexible, innovative degree programme

We offer an innovative programme, with emphasis throughout on work at the cutting-edge of the discipline. You will benefit from close links with other programmes within the School of Social Science, and programmes from other Schools in the University.

With the option to follow a single Honours degree or study Anthropology as part of a Joint Honours degree, you have the flexibility to shape your own degree to suit your particular interests and career plans.

The Anthropology Department also has close relationships with the University's King's Museum and Elphinstone Institute. With their unique anthropological and ethnological collections, they provide special opportunities for undergraduate students.

Above all, you will be enthusiastically welcomed into an environment where staff and research students are actively engaged in top class, internationally recognised research.



A forward-looking teaching programme

Our teaching programme involves the following themes:

- **Religion and politics:**
Analysing the importance of religion in human life, its connections with politics, asking how we can best understand religion and politics.
- **History and the legacy of colonialism:**
Discussing the history of relations between empire and the indigenous people encountering imperialism.
- **Human environment relations:**
Understanding how humans in different parts of the world relate to and understand the environment in which they live, and the movement of people in that environment.
- **Culture, creativity and objects:**
Exploring the importance of creativity and making in human life, including the curating and exhibiting of objects.
- **Ethnographic focus:**
A unique ethnographic focus on the North, including Siberia, Alaska, Canada, Scandinavia, Iceland, Greenland and Scotland with further expertise in Central Asia, North Africa, the Andes, Tibet and Northern India.
- **Research methods and anthropological theory:**
Understanding how research is done in anthropology and how anthropologists engage with theoretical ideas.

These themes allow us to keep pace with new global challenges that people face and emerging issues in the discipline of anthropology. As a department, we are well-placed to explore these challenges and issues and equip our graduates with the skills and knowledge to contribute to the tackling of these challenges.



Meet your Lecturer

My name is Rob Wishart and I am the honours adviser for the Department of Anthropology. I teach on the first year, Introduction to Anthropology course and focus on topics such as Linguistics, Rituals, and Indigenous rights. I also teach the advanced honours courses Society and Nature, and Anthropology of the North where I teach about my research interests on human-animal-land relationships, politics, and law.

I love how anthropology challenges people to think outside the box and understand events through multiple perspectives, which is also something that employers recognise as a benefit of hiring anthropologists.

Dr Robert Wishart
Department of Anthropology
School of Social Science
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Degree Structure & Content

We offer two types of Honours degrees. The first is a Single Honours Degree in Anthropology. The second is a joint degree, where Anthropology is combined with another discipline, e.g. International Relations, Sociology, English, History, Geography, Archaeology (many other combinations are possible).

Year 1: Introduction to Anthropology I & II

In the first year we offer two courses, Introduction to Anthropology I: Peoples of the World in the first term and Introduction to Anthropology II: Questions of Diversity in the second term. We explore key questions in the discipline – does human nature exist, and how does culture affect the way we think and act?

Week by week, we take on social issues such as migration, climate change, religious conflict, international development, and colonialism and post-colonialism. We use case study material from around the world, drawing on anthropologists' first hand accounts of their fieldwork along with sources from the communities themselves. These are presented in lectures, readings and small group tutorials. Our first year classes are designed for people with no prior study in the subject.

Year 2: Key debates in anthropology; Re-imagining colonialism

In the second year we offer two courses: Key Debates in Anthropology explores some of the key questions that anthropologists have debated: what it is to be human, the nature of human interaction with other humans, with non-humans, and with the environment, and the different ways that people perceive the world and act within it. Themes explored in this course include the category of the person, morality and ethics, art and aesthetics, what is power, how to engage with Otherness, and how anthropologists engage actively, outside academia, in development, health or business.

Re-imagining Colonialism explores contemporary colonial expressions from an anthropological perspective. It is split into two main themes: Material Histories and Mediated Histories. Within these themes it will address topics such as the 'capturing' of cultures in museums, kinship and politics, gendered colonialism, economic development, media, aboriginal rights and contemporary resistance movements.

Years 3 & 4: Anthropological theory and research, dissertation, and choice of honours courses

In your third year you will explore key debates and theoretical issues in contemporary anthropology with Anthropological Theory.

Single Honours students will also take Anthropological Research Methods and Project Design in their third year, which develops a range of theoretical, methodological, and analytical skills. Following this, in fourth year Single Honours students will complete an original piece of research on an anthropological topic of their choice, in the form of either a scholarship- or fieldwork-based dissertation.

Joint Honours students can choose to take Anthropological Research Methods and Project Design in their third year, which then allows them the option of a scholarship- or fieldwork-based dissertation in Anthropology during their fourth year. If a Joint Honours student does not take this course in third year they can still choose to do a scholarship-based anthropology dissertation in their fourth year.

In addition, during your third and fourth years you will be able to choose from several Honours course options, each of which reflects a particular subject area within anthropology.

Our Honours course options include:

- Anthropology and Art: on Place, Landscape and Materials
- Anthropology, Museums and Society
- Economic Anthropology
- Ethnography
- Global Economy: Social Perspectives
- More than Human
- Politics and Society in the Middle East
- Religion, Power and Belief

Professor Alison Brown and a group of Blackfoot ceremonial leaders examine a woman's dress, dating from the early 20th century, during a 2013 visit Blackfoot ceremonial leaders made to the UK as part of the Blackfoot Collections in UK Museums: Reviving Relationships through Artefacts International Network funded by the Leverhulme Trust.



Careers & Skills

Anthropology provides insights into the workings of human relationships, groups and institutions which are in demand in many professions. Providing flexibility and distinctiveness in future career paths, anthropology will challenge you to think critically and understand society from many different perspectives.

You will be equipped with practical and transferable skills essential to working with people in a variety of contexts, including communication, creativity, problem solving, research skills, negotiation, diplomacy, reading and compiling statistics, team building, self-initiative, networking.

As well as going on to further education and anthropological research, our students move on to work in a variety of careers, from business to public sector charities and NGOs, local regional and national governments, journalism and media, and more.

Recent Anthropology graduate destinations include:

- Civil service officer
- Communications specialist
- Government relations officer
- Junior lecturer
- Media researcher
- Media and television producer
- NGO project assistant
- Policy advisor
- Primary school teacher
- Researcher
- Senior project manager
- Start-up founder
- Statistician

For more careers information, see:
www.discoveranthropology.org.uk

“ The programme offers a wide flexibility when choosing courses, so you will be able to explore many different topics and specialise in what you would like to do later on. One important advantage is that career-wise, it offers many opportunities.

All staff are deeply dedicated to students. Besides, academics are very approachable, always ready to help, and they care about their students beyond course content and assignments.

Nerea Heras, MA Anthropology and International Relations ”

→ GLOBAL TOP 100 UNIVERSITY FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025





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