

PROGRAMME REPORT: FIELDWORK METHODS IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2026

Programme Title	Student Research Project – AMU3248 ATS3248 APG4248 Field Methods in Anthropology and International Development Discussion Topic: Human and Non-Human “(how people in Malaysia think about and use goat meat and goat milk)”
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Date	12 July - 15 July 2026
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2. Background

The Field Methods in Anthropology and International Development (FMA) 2026 is an annual collaborative programme involving Monash University Australia (MUA), Monash University Malaysia (MUM), and the South East Asia Community Observatory (SEACO). The programme is hosted by SEACO, Monash University Malaysia, and typically involves approximately 40 to 45 students from both Monash University Australia and Monash University Malaysia each year.

For the FMA 2026 programme, 29 students from Monash University Australia (MUA) and 11 students from Monash University Malaysia (MUM) participated, making a total of 40 students. The programme was coordinated by two Academic Coordinators, Associate Professor Dr. Narelle and Dr. Stefan Bächtold, with support from 12 SEACO staff members who acted as facilitators and field coordinators. Their roles included supporting and coordinating the fieldwork activities to ensure the programme was implemented smoothly.

SEACO acted as the programme implementation partner and was responsible for providing coordination and logistical support throughout the programme. This included facilitating fieldwork

activities, participant recruitment, data collection, as well as engagement with the local community and relevant stakeholders.

Participants were recruited from existing SEACO participants and members of the Segamat community. They were invited to participate in the research to provide their perspectives and experiences on several key research themes, namely:

Human and non-human relationships (animals, environments, and objects)

Household structure and everyday life management in Malaysia

Sustainability, the environment, and climate change

Community engagement: understanding voices and representation

Religion and cosmology

Traditional medicine practices

Participation involved either a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) or an in-depth interview, with each session lasting approximately one to two hours. The discussions and interviews focused on one of the identified research themes. Each FGD comprised approximately 7 to 10 participants and was conducted during either the morning or afternoon session. In-depth interviews were arranged at a mutually agreed date, time, and location that was convenient for the participants.

The data collection activities were conducted from 12 July 2026 to 15 July 2026. Throughout the FGDs and in-depth interviews, participants shared their views and experiences relating to their communities, social and cultural practices, personal beliefs, and, where applicable, objects or places that were considered significant to the research topics. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time before the commencement of data analysis on 16 July 2026.

3. Objectives

The academic programme, which comprises the units AMU3248, ATS3248, and APG4248, is a strategic initiative designed to equip a new generation of researchers with practical skills in anthropological field methods and international development. The programme provides Monash University students with an opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge gained through their academic studies in real-world community settings, thereby connecting classroom-based learning with practical research experience.

Through direct involvement in fieldwork, the programme enables students to develop practical research skills while gaining a deeper understanding of community contexts. At the same time, the programme contributes to the broader development of a collaborative research ecosystem.

The primary objective of the programme is to provide students with practical experience in applying research methods through fieldwork.

4. Activity during session

a) Session with Malay Community

Date: 12/07/2026

Time: 10 am-12pm

Venue: SEACO Office

Attendee: 4 person

A general discussion was conducted to explore participants' understanding and perceptions of goats from the Malay community, including their household food and protein sources, experiences with goat meat, where they usually consume it, and their preferences.

Three interactive activities were then conducted:

Activity 1: Protein Card Sort – Participants ranked different protein sources based on daily consumption, price, and personal preference.

Activity 2: Agree/Disagree Line – Participants responded to statements about goat meat consumption, taste, availability, price, religious practices, and health perceptions.

Activity 3: Where Does My Protein Come From? – Participants mapped their understanding of how meat travels from the source to the market and finally to their home.

Overall, the activities provided an opportunity for participants to share their views and experiences related to goat meat and other protein sources. The session indicated that the Malay participants generally enjoyed eating goat meat.

b) Session with Chinese Community

Date: 12/07/2026

Time: 2pm am-4pm

Venue: SEACO Office

Attendee: 10 person

A general discussion was conducted to explore participants' understanding and perceptions of goats from the Chinese community, including their household food and protein sources, experiences with goat meat, consumption preferences, and where they usually consume it.

Three interactive activities were then conducted:

Activity 1: Protein Card Sort – Participants ranked different protein sources based on daily consumption, price, and personal preference.

Activity 2: Agree/Disagree Line – Participants responded to statements about goat meat consumption, taste, availability, price, religious practices, and health perceptions.

Activity 3: Where Does My Protein Come From? – Participants mapped their understanding of how meat travels from the source to the market and finally to their home.

Overall, the session indicated that Chinese participants consumed goat meat less frequently than other protein sources. Goat meat was mainly consumed during religious or ritual occasions. Participants also reported limited use of goat-based products, such as goat milk soap. Other protein sources, particularly pork, fish, and tofu, were more commonly preferred and consumed in their daily diet.

c) Session with Goat Farmer

Date: 13/07/2026

Time: 10am – 12pm

Venue: Goat Farm

Attendees: 2 participants

The session was conducted at a goat farm and involved an informal one-to-one interview with two participants who were directly involved in goat farming. No structured activities were conducted during the session. Instead, the students engaged in an open discussion to understand the participants' professional backgrounds, experiences, and involvement in goat farming.

The discussion explored the participants' daily responsibilities and experiences in managing the farm, including goat husbandry, feeding, housing, cleanliness, health monitoring, and general animal care. The participants also shared their knowledge of goat behaviour and lifestyle based on their practical experience working with the animals.

The students also discussed goat breeding and reproduction, including mating practices and the management and care of goats during the breeding process. In addition, the participants shared their perspectives on maintaining and sustaining goat farming activities, including the practical considerations involved in managing the farm and maintaining the goat population.

Overall, the session provided the students with valuable first-hand insights into goat farming from a professional and practical perspective. The informal interview allowed the participants to share their experiences openly and helped the students gain a better understanding of goat husbandry, breeding, farm management, and the sustainability of goat farming.

d) Session with Indian Community

Date: 14/07/2026

Time: 2pm-4pm

Venue: Community Hall, Chaah

Attendees: 8 participants

A general discussion was conducted to explore participants' understanding and perceptions of goats from the Indian community, including their household food and protein sources, experiences with goat meat, where they usually consume it, and their preferences.

Three interactive activities were then conducted:

Activity 1: Protein Card Sort – Participants ranked different protein sources based on daily consumption, price, and personal preference.

Activity 2: Agree/Disagree Line – Participants responded to statements about goat meat consumption, taste, availability, price, religious practices, and health perceptions.

Activity 3: Where Does My Protein Come From? – Participants mapped their understanding of how meat travels from the source to the market and finally to their home.

Overall, the session indicated that the Indian participants generally enjoyed eating goat meat and considered it an important source of protein, particularly when consuming red meat. Participants also reported consuming goat milk and expressed positive preferences towards goat-based food products. The session provided insights into their dietary preferences and perceptions of goat meat and goat milk as part of their protein sources..

e) Session with Aqiqah Businessman

Date: 14/07/2026

Time: 10am – 12pm

Venue: Aqiqah Centre, Kg Jawa

Attendees: 2 participants

The session was conducted through an informal one-to-one interview with an Aqiqah business operator to understand the business from a professional and practical perspective. The discussion explored the background of the business, including how and when it was established, the motivation behind starting the business, and the participants' experience in managing and developing the business.

The discussion also focused on how the business is sustained, including the process of obtaining goat supplies, managing the supply chain, and meeting customer demand. The participant shared their experience in maintaining the business and managing the operational aspects involved in providing Aqiqah services.

Halal certification and practices were also discussed, particularly the importance of ensuring that the goats and the slaughtering process comply with halal requirements. The discussion also explored the business's customer base, including customers from different ethnic backgrounds.

Overall, the session provided valuable insights into the Aqiqah business, particularly its development, supply and operational management, halal requirements, and customer preferences. The participant highlighted that the majority of their customers are from the Malay community, making the Malay community the main customer group for the business.

f) Session with Veterinary Service Department, Segamat

Date: 14/07/2026

Time: 2pm-4pm

Venue: Veterinary Service Department Office

Attendees: 4 participants

The session was conducted through a discussion with four officers from the Veterinary Services Department, including veterinary and health officers, as well as officers responsible for goat-related activities. The discussion focused on the department's role in supporting the sustainability and development of goat farming in Segamat.

The officers shared information on the types of support and services provided to goat farmers, including training, technical guidance, assistance programmes, and goat vaccination. They also discussed the support provided to farmers during emergencies, such as assistance during flood events, to help protect livestock and support affected farmers.

The discussion also explored the current goat farming landscape in Segamat in comparison with practices in other countries. It was highlighted that goat farming in Segamat mainly involves small-scale stakeholders, with limited commercialised or large-scale goat farming operations in the area. The department plays an important role in supporting these smaller-scale farmers through veterinary services, training, and other forms of assistance.

Overall, the session provided valuable insights into the role of the Veterinary Services Department in supporting goat farming and its sustainability. The discussion highlighted the importance of government support, particularly through training, veterinary services, vaccination, technical assistance, and support during emergencies such as floods.

g) Site visit to Bekok

Date: 15/07/2026

Time: 9am-12pm

Venue: Sg Bantang, Bekok

A field visit was conducted to Sungai Bantang, Bekok, to provide the students with an opportunity to gain practical exposure to the local community and fieldwork environment. During the visit, the students had the opportunity to observe the local surroundings and gain a better understanding of the community setting and its social and environmental context. The visit also allowed the students to experience the practical aspects of conducting fieldwork in a community setting and to relate their academic knowledge to real-world situations. Overall, the field visit provided valuable exposure to the local community and helped students develop a deeper understanding of the context in which community-based research is conducted.

5. Reflection

The programme provided students with valuable practical experience in anthropological fieldwork and community-based research. Through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), field visits, and direct engagement with community participants and relevant stakeholders, students were able to apply research methods and concepts learned in the classroom to real-world community settings. These activities allowed students to gain a better understanding of the local community, social practices, and different perspectives related to the research topics. Although some discussions involved sensitive or personal questions, participants were generally cooperative and willing to share their experiences, views, and knowledge, which contributed positively to the data collection process.

Throughout the fieldwork activities, the students demonstrated good cooperation, adaptability, and willingness to participate. They were able to engage with participants from different backgrounds and adjust to different fieldwork settings and discussion formats. The use of consistent research methods, structured guidelines, and clear instructions across the different sessions helped ensure a smooth and organised data collection process. This also enabled facilitators and SEACO staff to coordinate the activities effectively and provide the necessary support to the students throughout the programme.

The fieldwork experience further enhanced the students' confidence, communication, teamwork, and practical research skills. It provided them with opportunities to interact directly with community members, professionals, business operators, and other stakeholders, allowing them to gain insights beyond the classroom setting. The experience also highlighted the importance of building respectful relationships with participants and conducting research in an ethical, culturally sensitive, and appropriate manner.

Overall, the successful implementation of the programme was supported by the cooperation and commitment of the students, participants, academic coordinators, and SEACO staff. The willingness of participants to share their experiences and perspectives, together with the effective coordination and support provided by the fieldwork team, contributed to a positive and meaningful fieldwork experience. The programme also strengthened collaboration between the academic team, SEACO, and the local community, providing a valuable platform for students to develop their research skills while gaining a deeper understanding of community-based research.

6. Recommendation

The research questions, participant selection criteria, and interview/FGD guidelines should be finalised and provided by the students to the facilitators prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Early submission would allow facilitators to better understand the research objectives, identify the type of participants required, and make the necessary arrangements for each session. This would also help ensure greater consistency in the data collection process and allow sufficient time for facilitators to review and provide feedback where necessary.

Students should also be encouraged to communicate and cooperate closely with facilitators throughout the fieldwork activities. Clear communication is important to ensure that session arrangements, participant recruitment, and data collection procedures are properly coordinated. Students should provide relevant information and updates to facilitators in advance and seek clarification when they are unsure about the research questions or fieldwork procedures.

It is also recommended that students prepare and share their interview or FGD materials with facilitators before each session. This would allow facilitators to familiarise themselves with the discussion topics, understand their roles, and provide appropriate support during the fieldwork. Providing the materials in advance would also reduce last-minute changes or confusion during the sessions.

Finally, facilitators and students should conduct a short debrief after each fieldwork session to discuss the activities conducted, challenges encountered, participant responses, and any improvements required for subsequent sessions. This would provide an opportunity to address issues early, improve coordination, and ensure that lessons learned from one session can be applied to the following fieldwork activities.





Figure 1: Session with Chinese & Malay community



Figure 2: Session with Segamat Veterinary Office





Figure 3: Session with Goat farm



Figure 4 : Session with Aqiqah Businessman



Figure 5 : Session with Indian Community