

The Women's Classical Committee UK

Resolution on the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Women's Classical Committee UK notes the extraordinary impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the education sector, both the direct impact of the pandemic itself and the social and economic consequences of the response to it. In the short-term, during the current lockdown:

- We urge our departments to show sympathy and consideration to staff and students affected by physical and mental illness arising from the crisis, the continuing need to shield themselves and vulnerable family members, those dealing with sudden disruption and relocation, and the trauma of loss and bereavement.
- We note that disproportionate burdens have fallen upon those with significant caring responsibilities and those managing existing illnesses, and that the distribution of these burdens tends to be gendered; while some departments have acknowledged this, others continue to place unrealistic demands on academics working from home.
- We call upon departments and institutions to be explicit in recognising the additional work and emotional labour (also often gendered) undertaken by so many academics at a time when all were facing intense disruption in their own lives.
- We encourage departments to be mindful and realistic of the very different working conditions that staff and students will be under in terms of their access to technology, space and security.

We note the economic consequences of the shutdown and their disproportionate impact on the already precarious, the hourly-paid workers in higher education and those supporting their studies and/or their academic employment through part-time and hourly-paid work in other sectors. We note the likely consequences for employment in the sector and the probable reduction in opportunities for those already in precarious employment or hoping to enter the job market.

- We express our solidarity and support with classicists facing uncertainty and disruption as they complete their studies and seek employment.
- We also note the particular stress faced by those approaching the end of fixed-term studentships and fixed-term contracts at this time, as well as those who have recently been made redundant, and would urge institutions to explore the government's Job Retention Scheme and all other available possibilities to extend those contracts.
- We urge all Classics departments to find ways to support colleagues and students through the release of any discretionary funds for travel and research expenses that cannot now be spent as intended, as we have done with our own funds.
- We encourage our members to advocate these policies within their own departments as far as possible, particularly those in permanent employment and senior management roles.
- We commit to continuing to arrange events on-line, and when it becomes possible again, in-person, to enable our members at all levels of study and career to develop.

- We urge all Classics organisations and learned societies to consider what steps they can take to support doctoral students and early-career scholars over the coming years, through funding schemes, affiliation and access to library and on-line resources.
- We also urge all Classics departments and institutions to begin a realistic, transparent, consultative and humane process of contingency planning for the autumn 2020 teaching semester and beyond.

We thank those departments, organisations and individuals who have stepped forward to provide support to students and to staff.

Approved at the WCC UK 2020 AGM, held electronically via Zoom on Friday 24th April 2020.

For further queries or to share examples of best or worst practice, please contact us via womensclassicalcommittee@gmail.com