

Cora Beth Knowles: CV

I work as an Associate Lecturer with The Open University, and have done so for over 15 years.

Education

I have a BA (Hons) in Latin with Greek, an MLitt in Classics and a PhD (funded by the AHRC and completed in 2005) on Tacitus, all from Newcastle University. Since then I've picked up three more degrees (and a few partial degrees) including a second BA, an MEd focusing on Applied Linguistics, a Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Professional Studies in Education, a Diploma in Literature and Creative Writing and an MA in Online and Distance Education, all with The Open University.

Current Teaching

I teach on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate modules covering languages, ancient history, archaeology and reception, and I supervise MA dissertations in all areas. I work with adult distance learners from all over the UK and Continental Europe, as well as (increasingly) further afield. Many of my students are new to Classics, or have had bad experiences with Classics in the past. My goal is to inspire them with an interest in the ancient world, even though I might never be able to meet them in person.

Public Engagement and Outreach

I maintain an active website, [ClassicalStudies.Support](https://www.classicalstudiesupport.com), which over the last three years has become the centre of an enthusiastic and supportive community of aspiring, current and former Classics students. I use it to run a regular blog, to host free resources for teachers and students, and to set up a range of other inclusive initiatives. My pandemic interview series, 'Comfort Classics', has so far featured nearly 140 classicists, showcasing the work of teachers, postgraduates and early career classicists alongside professors and broadcasters, and has helped people to make new connections and (with nearly 100,000 views) to reach new audiences.

I also spent many years running clubs and events in primary and secondary schools in low-income areas of the North East of England, as well as teaching in community centres and other settings. Coming from a working-class background myself, I have always believed that access to the study of antiquity shouldn't be restricted by social factors, and so I've spent the last 20 years working with children and adults from non-traditional backgrounds.

Awards, Positions and Fellowships

I am a Senior Fellow of the HEA and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and in 2020 I was awarded the Open University's Recognition of Excellence in Teaching Award, in the category of 'Excellence in Promoting Student Engagement'. I am on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the Council of University Classics Departments. I'm also a member of the Lego Classicist Family.

Statement

I've known about the WCC for years, but I only joined a few months ago. I put it off for a long time because I didn't know if I'd fit in, or even if I'd be welcome.

I'm accustomed to being on the outside of Classics, looking in. I'm autistic and find it difficult to speak in public, in a discipline in which career progression often depends on visibility and performance. I'm a single parent and carer and I don't get to travel much, in a discipline which sees chasing contracts around the world as the norm. As a first-generation student from a working-class family, paid work which puts food on the table has always been my priority, in a discipline where working class values are seldom expressed and even more rarely accepted. (I'm also northern, which comes with its own set of stereotypes!)

I fell through the cracks in academia a long time ago, and I accepted that. Outsiders like me don't often get the big jobs, or the book contracts, or the career-defining opportunities, because those come more easily to people who can make the right contacts and say the right things – preferably in the right accent!

But then the pandemic hit, and something shifted. Opportunities opened up: conferences that could be attended remotely, seminar series made freely available on Zoom, career talks being given online on how to publish, people offering to share pdfs and have virtual meet-ups. Suddenly we *all* got to join in. So one of my priorities in standing for election to the Steering Committee is to ensure that we don't lose this unexpected benefit of the Long Year of 2020. In fact I'd like to see the WCC opening that door even wider. As an Open University Associate Lecturer with 16 years of experience and many years of study in the area of Distance Education, I know a lot about bringing people together online. I would love to assist the WCC in opening up distance opportunities on a larger scale, to reach more people who are usually locked out of academic events.

COVID-19 has brought about another shift, of course – a much less positive one. We're just starting to see the effects of the pandemic upon the careers of women in academia, and what we're seeing now may turn out to be the tip of the iceberg. It has rightly been said that this is not a gender-neutral crisis. More and more women are falling through the cracks, and gender equality in all areas will be damaged as a result. The WCC will have to work harder than ever, in the coming years, to champion women in Classics. That is a cause close to my heart, and I would like to help.

Thank you for your consideration!