

June 23, 2020

The faculty of the Department of Comparative Thought and Literature is deeply concerned by the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on its graduate students as well as on graduate students across other departments and divisions.

Under normal circumstances, our students work very hard to complete their studies in the five years of funding available. In addition to their demanding course requirements, TAing obligations, and language training, they are asked to learn and master a diverse set of interdisciplinary, methodological tools necessary for conducting the in-depth research required for the completion of truly innovative dissertations. Our students also increasingly need to pursue non-academic as well as academic paths to professionalization in response to the poor condition of the job market.

In this context, the negative impact of Covid-19 can hardly be overestimated: studies abroad for archival or other forms of research, as well as language training, have been cancelled or postponed; the same holds true for participation to academic conferences and workshops, all necessary requirements for the successful completion of our Ph.D. program. The uncertainty about the development of the pandemic only adds to the understandable anxiety of our students and has a certain, although impossible to measure, negative psychological impact.

With our limited budget we are doing everything within our power to support our students, but we cannot provide the resources they need to navigate the present crisis without the assistance of the administration.

In its recent letter of June 1, 2020, the faculty of the History department expressed very similar concerns and outlined measures we fully endorse, namely (we quote):

- An extension of full funding (including stipend, tuition, and insurance) of at least one semester for Ph.D. students who were still under the provision of such funding in the spring 2020 semester.
- Elimination of at least one semester of future non-resident tuition and student health insurance fees for current Ph.D. students in good standing who were on track to complete the program in their sixth or seventh year before the pandemic struck.

We are well aware of the challenging financial situation our University, like so many others, is facing right now and we understand the need for difficult choices. Nevertheless,



we hope that the interests of the vital, and particularly vulnerable, constituency of graduate students will not be forgotten or downplayed. We urge the administration to hear our concerns and positively respond to our requests. Graduate students are an essential component of Hopkins' legacy and present aspirations as one of the first research university: in our view it would be ill-advised to neglect the needs of its future leading scholars and researchers.

Respectfully,

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