

SUCU General Meeting Agenda 16th January 2025, 1pm - 2pm
Hybrid: Google Meet and Arts Tower, AT LT05

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Minutes of previous meetings
 - [12/12/24](#)
3. Sheffield's Private Renting Problems
 - [Survey](#).
4. Local news and updates
5. Motions
 - Motion 1: Indicative ballot over compulsory redundancies (Appendix 1)
6. Any other business
 - Delegates/contacts for branch affiliations
 - [National Shop Stewards Network](#)
 - [Justice for Colombia](#)
 - [Cuba Solidarity Campaign](#)
 - [Sheffield Trades Council](#)
7. Next meeting - Wednesday 12th February - [meeting info](#)
Note: Congress motion deadline - Tuesday 4th March



SUCU General Meeting Minutes 16th January 2025, 1pm - 2pm

Hybrid: Hicks Building, Hicks - Arts Tower, AT LT05 and Google Meet - [meeting info](#)

Chair: Robyn Orfitelli (RO), Minutes: Rosie Strathearn-Brady (RSB), News: Charlie Porter (CP)

1. Welcome and introductions

RO welcomed all to the meeting. Agenda.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes from the previous meeting on 12th December were approved. Any corrections to minutes can be emailed to ucu@sheffield.ac.uk.

3. Sheffield's Private Renting Problems

Michaelle Lukanu spoke about Shelter's currency campaign to collect information on how housing issues are impacting private renters and what solutions we can find for those problems. Their [survey](#) closes at the end of the month. She also invited members to their Winter Warmer on 29th January at SADACCA 6pm-8pm where they will be planning how to collectively fix renting issues.

4. Local News and Updates

Updates from CP. More detail on these topics can be found in branch emails that have recently gone out, please do take the time to read them as there is a lot happening at the moment.

3.1. Dispute with the University

Negotiations have been taking place as part of our local grievance procedure, which is not yet a formal trade dispute. RO, Allie Anderson (our Regional Officer, James Brackley, David Hayes, Ben Purvis, and our Unite comrades are the negotiators at these meetings.. Unison will be taking a different approach and will be starting by taking an indicative ballot.

Since September we have been asking for detailed financial information. We have started to receive some information now that we've started the local dispute. Some information is commercially sensitive and confidential, but the more information we see, the less we see the rationale for making such drastic cuts. For example, UEB could agree to not take bonuses until the financial crisis is over, and they could also take a 10% salary cut, both of which could save jobs. HR could also offer staff to take unpaid leave or reduce their working hours. UEB have cancelled their catering for next year.

HR have not agreed to our demand to commit to no compulsory redundancies for the next two years. We have lots more negotiating work to do. Please email ucu@sheffield.ac.uk to be added to the Dispute Committee and to take part in discussions on dispute tactics.



3.2. Individual Support Plans (ISPs)

Members are reporting a rise in the use of ISPs. If you have been put on an ISP inappropriately recently then please get in touch. You can take someone into ISP meetings with you.

3.3. Sheffield Needs East Asian Studies Campaign

Following the announcement of a review of SEAS and the plan to consolidate programmes, staff in SEAS have started the following [petition](#), which we encourage members to sign. [Article link](#).

3.4. ELTC

The ELTC restructure was a big part of the driving force for the dispute, and we are currently supporting members on a 1-2-1 basis. If you have any concerns then please get in touch.

3.5. Solidarity with Local Industrial Actions

Several unions are currently involved in industrial action in Sheffield:

- UCU at University of Sheffield International College - their indicative ballot was successful and they are moving towards a formal trade ballot.
- NEU at Longley College - they are still taking industrial action over trade union victimisation.
- Unite at Veolia - they are still taking industrial action over union recognition. Please attend their picket lines and show your support. [Veolia clean up your act](#).
- Unite UCU - Unite's dispute with UCU is still ongoing, which brings shame to our union.

3.6. VSS

The VSS scheme has recently closed, with more applications than expected across the institution. This will be a difficult time, with repercussions as experienced staff come to leave their posts and their work is given to already over worked colleagues.

5. Motions

4.1. Motion 1: Indicative ballot over compulsory redundancies (Appendix 1)

This motion was moved by Dave Cameron (DC), and was seconded by a member from Dispute Committee.

Motion passed - 146 in favour, 2 against, 5 abstentions.

See Item 3.1. for an update on the current grievance. An indicative ballot will gauge our willingness to take industrial action, without committing to a specific course of action. The forecast for 2025-26 is that the University will be in a £50m deficit without making savings, and there is no pressing reason to make such big cuts in such a short space of time. The university seems keen to retain the threat of compulsory redundancies.



Discussion included the following topics:

- Q - Last time we were on strike - management seemed happy to just ride it out and save money - what strategy to make more of a symbolic action
A - the plan of this is to be open - not binding ourselves to what industrial action would look like now - members would decide at a future point
- Some schools are being asked to merge programmes together which leads to despecialisation of what we offer to students. Current structural changes seem to be leading towards future redundancies. PGT recruitment will be affected.
- As this is not a national action we will have a good amount of agency as a branch, and we will have detailed discussions about tactics and action in Dispute Committee meetings.

As the motion has passed we will launch an online ballot on Monday, which will be open for two weeks. Turnout is very important so please vote and encourage other members to vote too.

6. Any other business:

6.1. Delegates/contacts for branch affiliations

Update from RSB. We are renewing our affiliations over the next few weeks and are looking for contacts for the following affiliations. Email ucu@sheffield.c.uk to express an interest or find out more.

- [National Shop Stewards Network](#)
- [Justice for Colombia](#)
- [Cuba Solidarity Campaign](#)
- [Sheffield Trades Council](#)

6.2. Global Women's March

The Global Women's March will be on Saturday 18th January.

7. Next General meeting

The next GM will be on [Wednesday 12th](#) February.



Appendix 1: Motion 1 - Indicative ballot over compulsory redundancies

This branch notes:

1. In December, this branch launched a local grievance with our employer over their stated intention of reducing staff costs by £23 million over the course of two academic years, which will involve a substantial number of redundancies, including compulsory redundancies. This grievance has the following demands:
 - a. A commitment to no compulsory redundancies.
 - b. UEB to negotiate with UCU on options to avoid compulsory redundancies.
 - c. A commitment to significantly reduce the planned cuts to staff costs, and to the extent that financial savings are indeed necessary, to shift savings to non-staff budgets.
 - d. UEB to negotiate with UCU about ways of making financial savings without the need to reduce staff costs and staff numbers.
2. Also in December, the UoS Unite branch launched a local grievance on the same issues.
3. Two local negotiating meetings have now occurred to endeavour to resolve the dispute. Branch representatives have been provided with further information about university finances, and have presented University management with several concrete suggestions for alternatives which would reduce any need for staff cuts.

This branch believes:

1. That University management continues to not adequately demonstrate the need to pursue such aggressive levels of cuts, nor that the university's stated timeline of returning to a surplus position within 2 years is necessary.
2. That, to whatever extent spending cuts are necessary, the university has still not fully explored non-staff alternatives, or even all options within the staffing budget.

This branch resolves:

1. To call an online indicative vote to assess Sheffield UCU members' collective willingness to enter into a trade dispute, and to take industrial action in the forms of strike action and action short of a strike.
2. To coordinate with the other campus trade unions wherever possible.

