

UCU SHU Branch Meeting

29 April 2026

There were 81 members present (64 online and 17 in person).

1. Branch Secretary and Negotiating Secretary update

The Branch Secretary reported on the state of negotiations with the employer as extremely slow with key issues still not discussed. There are still only very limited assurances on proposals to move staff to Subsidiary Company, and the negotiating team has extreme concerns about implications for fragmenting staff and union. The team continues to press to find out what the employers' plans are if proposals for the subsidiary company are rejected.

There are also still ongoing and serious concerns about restructures and possible compulsory redundancies. The team was shocked to learn that there has been no modelling from the employer about the impact that cuts to staff will have on quality of teaching for students.

The negotiating team has successfully fought for sickness absence to be removed from redundancy pool criteria. The team was finally provided with some information to start looking in more detail at finances, but still no agreement on figures including on capital spending budgets. It will continue to dig into these and soon be in position to present an alternative budget and vision for the university.

Members were urged to vote in the current ballot for industrial action if they have not already done so. The branch will need to take action as soon as possible in May, and this will be sustained and all-out for a significant period, affecting all work including marking and assessment.

2. Members questions and comments

There was a broad debate about taking a significant block of strike action disrupting assessment and teaching in order to build up pressure to shift the employer.

There was a range of questions and comments from members including: if proposed subsidiary company could be sold to private company; importance of media coverage and involvement of members.

Members were encouraged to engage with branch website and social media, and to use the template letter to contact MPs and councillors. More information and FAQs will be sent to members.

3. Motion: Greylisting Sheffield Hallam University

Proposed: Bob Jeffery

Seconded: Jill Pluquailec

The Sheffield Hallam UCU Branch Notes:

- *Sheffield Hallam University is planning to make £26 million in cuts to its budget and has proposed a tranche of changes to employment terms and conditions. Academic staff are at risk of redundancy, with further proposals expected that would place additional professional services staff at risk. This follows the loss of more than 1,000 academic and professional services posts across the university over the past two years.*
- *The proposed changes to academic terms and conditions will result in increased workloads, forced pension changes, demotion to lower paid roles, and diminishing career progression. In a broader context, the proposed changes risk the destruction of Sheffield Hallam's academic, technical, and administrative infrastructure.*
- *In "consultation" meetings with the unions, Sheffield Hallam senior management has not only failed to rule out compulsory redundancies but also refused to seriously consider viable alternatives to compulsory redundancies that tackle short-term financial issues with long-term solutions that preserve jobs and create growth. This reflects a lack of engagement by management in either meaningful consultation or genuine negotiation, violating sections 188 and 178 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Consolidation Act 1992 (TULRCA).*

The Sheffield Hallam UCU Branch Believes:

- *The current redundancy plans by Sheffield Hallam management reflect an unprecedented assault on staff that will negatively impact Sheffield Hallam University's operational effectiveness, reputation, and student experience for years to come.*
- *Sheffield Hallam senior management's blatant disregard of local agreements, use of subsidiary company to circumnavigate responsibility for pension provision and plans for entrenching a tiered academic workforce sets a worrying precedent not just for Sheffield Hallam, but for UK HE more widely.*

The Sheffield Hallam Branch Resolves:

- *To carry out an online ballot (consistent with UCU's Censure and Academic Boycott Policy) about whether Sheffield Hallam should be added to the national UCU's list of greylisted institutions. Greylisting as a sanction would include but not be restricted to:*
- *not applying for any advertised jobs at Sheffield Hallam University*
- *not agreeing to speaking at or organising academic or other conferences at Sheffield Hallam University*
- *not accepting new invitations to give talks or lectures at Sheffield Hallam*
- *not accepting new positions as visiting professors or researchers at Sheffield Hallam University*
- *not accepting invitations outside of contract to write for any academic journal which is edited at or produced by Sheffield Hallam University*

- *not accepting new contracts as external examiners for taught courses at Sheffield Hallam University*

The meeting voted:

- For: 73
- Against: 3
- Abstain: 0

The motion was carried.

4. Guest speaker: Tom Barker

Tom Barker from UNISON spoke to the meeting about his experience of successful trade union organising. Tom has been a teaching assistant at a SEND school for 10 years and UNISON rep for seven years. He has led multiple successful disputes over pay and against redundancies.

Tom was elected early in 2025 to the NEC of UNISON and is a supporter of UNISON's broad left, and Time For Real Change. He was suspended from duties in October 2025 in a case UNISON has described as union busting. Unison members are beginning strikes over suspension and the attack this represents on their union rights on April 30, and urgent solidarity from the labour movement is needed.

Tom described how membership was built with high density in his workplace. Significant strike action about pay parity and compensation was taken in 2023 after negotiations had been exhausted. The key lesson from this was that every concession that was won was due to strike action, with momentum being built with members in the workplace led by an elected strike committee. The employer made five offers before the union finally settled. Members gained an understanding of the power of collective organising and action and Tom described how the union built the confidence of members to take action, providing information, support and examples of other success stories. He also spoke about the power of linking with other trade unions, media campaigns and public meetings.

UNISON's pamphlet *How workers Can Win* is available for £5 each or discounted bulk copies.

The Chair gave message of solidarity, and there were questions from the room. The meeting thanked Tom for his inspiring words.

Petition here: [Stop union-busting: protect union reps! Reinstate Tom Barker! | Megaphone UK](#)

5. Any other business

As part of its annual May Day celebrations, Sheffield TUC is launching a new pamphlet *The 1926 General Strike in Sheffield, commemorating the centenary of the General Strike*.

Saturday 9th May 2-5pm, Showroom Cinema Sheffield. For free tickets, contact Bob Jeffery.