

Lecturer and students speak on jobs fight at University of Sheffield

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Our reporters
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University and College Union (UCU) members at the University of Sheffield (UoS) held a rally December 12 at the end of their strike over ongoing job losses.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to some of the lecturers and students at the protest about the implications of shutting down entire departments and the continuing financialisation of higher education.

Dr Harsh Trivedi works in the modern languages teaching centre in the School of Languages, Arts and Society, in the French Department.

He said, “The targeted job cuts show that it’s very clear at this point that management does not care about the students, at all. Whilst the staff is being cut, and we have been told that these won’t be the only cuts that are happening, teaching hours have actually been increased.

“Management has absolutely no logic on their side. We have been asked to teach 14 more hours from the coming year, whilst they’re reducing staff at a very fast rate. So, we have absolutely no trust in management.

“The cuts in the school of East Asian studies and the school of languages are despite the fact that they keep telling us there aren’t enough students.” This was because of bad management, bad recruitment, and a lack of resources, always lacking in language studies.

“There’s a general trend to give less and less funding to Arts and Humanities, whilst we all know that funding is going into nuclear research programmes in Sheffield. It is clear discrimination against languages and critical thinking on campus.

“The threatening letter from management, effectively demanding unpaid labour to cover strike action, is

unprecedented. We have been threatened with a lockdown during which we are expected to replace classes that we have not taught because of strike action. And they don’t understand the implications of this, not just for all colleagues, but especially international colleagues who are on visas for whom this could have bad effects on their jobs.

“This is brutal and they’re just trying to completely destroy any form of industrial action. If we cave in now this would set a precedent where people will be terrified to take action. These kinds of things shouldn’t be happening. But sadly, we have come to a point where it feels scary, to be honest.

“If entire disciplines and support roles can be cut for financial targets, how can universities still claim to be centres of free and comprehensive pursuit of knowledge?

“They are arbitrarily trying to save money, whilst management keep giving themselves bonuses and take these hefty sums in salaries. And we are simply chosen as the scapegoats of this project.

“International colleagues might be deported if they lose their jobs. They [management] have absolutely rejected any kind of constructive solution.”

Biomedical science student **Aymen** is doing a foundation year at the university.

He said, “Every student deserves the education that they desire, whether it is a science subject or any sort of subject. The University is cutting funding to those subjects that they deem not favourable to the work or job sectors in the future.

“If someone wants to expand their horizons in

university they deserve all of the information and support they need to do that. Many of the job cuts are targeting staff who support research and postgraduate studies. I haven't experienced it myself directly but have seen how it affects my peers, and the staff. Lecturers are striking because of this, and I fully support them.

"The university should be a public institution, not a business. That has effectively ruined the main premises of higher education. When these departments are shut, the staff are lost and the knowledge is lost."

Nels is a former student of languages and culture at Sheffield University who graduated in 2024.

He said, "The school where I studied has already been split apart and they are cutting down on courses. Some languages will almost inevitably be cut as we saw at University of Nottingham.

"Such cuts will result in the deterioration of academia and that means that there'll be a lot of subjects and courses that simply don't get taught anymore, which is a disaster for human knowledge as a whole.

"There's also going to be the impact on working-class students not being able to study the things that they actually care about and want to get into. And it's going to have a big impact on what jobs are available to them as well.

"Universities should absolutely not be run as businesses. Tuition fees should be abolished and there should be maintenance grants that don't have to be repaid. Going to university and getting an education is part of how we make humanity better as a whole. And it should not be down to whether it's profitable or not.

"This rally today was organised in part by students. Students don't want their courses to be cut because they understand how valuable learning about these subjects are. And they understand why the cuts to the staff matter."



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