

University of Birmingham

General Member's Meeting
Thursday 27 November 2025

Agenda

- Local Dispute
- Negotiations
 - PDR
 - Performance Management and Grant Income
 - FTC and RSSD
 - Academic Governance
 - Consulting Firms
- Branch Delegate Meeting, Thursday 1 December at 13:00
- Setting date and time for member's meeting to discuss branch input into BDM

21 November 2025

Our Ref: AOS/rlc

Professor Adam Tickell
Vice Chancellor
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Via email: a.tickell@bham.ac.uk

Dear Professor Tickell

Re: Declaration of dispute

I write on behalf of UCU to declare a formal dispute with the University of Birmingham about the University's plans to restructure the School of Biosciences, putting 13 staff (12 FTE) at risk of redundancy in the current academic year.

UCU does not believe there is any reasonable case for making the proposed redundancies. We have given our reasons for taking this view in the consultation meeting that took place on 24 October 2025 and in the JNCC that took place 11 November 2025.

We have asked the University for a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies on several occasions. However, despite the discussions that have taken place, the University has declined to offer such a guarantee, or to review its proposals in any meaningful way, or indeed at all. I repeat here the union's request for the University to revisit these proposals and work with UCU to avoid compulsory redundancies.

Furthermore, we believe that the University is in breach of our local agreement on Seeking to Avoid Compulsory Redundancies arising from Restructuring Proposals because:

1. it has not provided an Equality Impact Assessment, as specified under Clause 2.3.
2. the union has been invited to attend only one consultation meeting so far, which has itself now been cancelled and rescheduled for 8 December. The consultation period ends on 22 December. Therefore, we will not have had 'regular collective consultation meetings' as specified under Clause 2.4.

We seek an assurance that the University will rectify these breaches of the agreement without delay.

In pursuance of a motion unanimously passed by a well-attended BUCU branch meeting on 13 November 2025, UCU reserves its right now to progress this matter; however, the institution is aware of the action needed to resolve this issue and we remain open to meaningful negotiations.

In that spirit we would propose that the upcoming JNCC meeting on 26 November should focus on reaching agreement on the need to avoid compulsory redundancies and that the consultation meeting on 8 December be devoted to revising the proposals to achieve that specific end.

In the absence of such agreement this dispute will continue until such time as all the above issues, and any issues related to any industrial action called for by the union in support of the dispute, have been resolved to UCU's satisfaction.

We have looked at our current membership and we do not believe that the majority of those who would be entitled to vote in an industrial action ballot in pursuance of this dispute are engaged in the provision of an important public service as defined by statute. Therefore, in the event of an industrial action ballot being undertaken, the support threshold of 40% will not apply.

Yours sincerely



Anne O'Sullivan
UCU Regional Official West Midlands

cc Shirley Ye, UCU Branch President
Greg Barnett UCU Head of Bargaining, Organising, Representation and Operations

Local Dispute

Local Dispute

Anne O'Sullivan
Regional Official
UCU Office
4th Floor, Edmund House
12-22 Newhall Street
Birmingham
B3 3AS

25 November 2025

Via email: aosullivan@ucu.org.uk

Dear Anne

Re: Letter dated 21 November 2025 – Declaration of Dispute

Thank you for your letter of 21 November, addressed to Professor Tickell, regarding the proposed restructure of the School of Biosciences.

I would like to draw your attention to paragraph 12 of the Procedure Agreement currently in force, which states:

12. If a matter cannot be resolved within the above procedure, it shall be referred, with a statement, agreed if possible, of the points at issue, to the Staffing Committee acting on behalf of the Council. If after report to the Staffing Committee, the matter has still not been resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, either side may refer the matter to the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service before the two parties formally record a failure to agree.

In this context, we would respond as follows to the points in your letter:

- The University remains committed to collective consultation under our local agreement, even where fewer than 20 individuals are affected. We have adhered to this commitment and will continue to do so. The next consultation meeting is scheduled for 8 December 2025, where the business case and feedback will be discussed.
- Whilst we aim to minimise compulsory redundancies, we cannot guarantee their complete avoidance. This position was communicated to BUCU on 11 November 2025.
- We are working closely with affected individuals to explore alternatives to compulsory redundancy.
- An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and was confirmed at the JNCC meeting on 11 November 2025.
- Consultation meetings are ongoing, and BUCU will continue to be invited. We do not believe we are in breach of local agreements.
- Regarding your suggestion to prioritise the restructure at the JNCC meeting on 26 November, I would advise you that the agenda is already full with other business, and it is unlikely that we would have the relevant people in the room. We therefore propose a separate meeting dedicated to this matter as soon as possible.

- Should BUCU decide to ballot members, we will of course comply with all legal requirements regarding industrial action [thresholds](#) and we would expect you to do likewise.

Please provide your availability for a dedicated meeting, and we will set it up.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Page
Director of People and Culture

What's next?

- Meeting times have been offered for in-person meeting next week on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday
- We await the University's response

Negotiations: PDR

- Meetings with management regarding the PDR
 - 11 August 2025
 - BUCU members would like to keep the PDR once a year and no more.
 - Staff should be provided with information about career progression support outside of PDR, such as mentoring, and given the option rather than being made to have conversations with their PDR reviewers or line manager about their career progression.
 - Both the PDR meeting and any informal conversations about professional development should remain staff-led rather than manager-led/reviewer-led to have the objectives set voluntarily by the staff with feedback and support rather than imposition from the reviewer.
 - PDR should remain a supporting tool rather than a performance management tool or even a disciplinary tool.
 - Some criteria in PDR forms such as contribution to EDI remain implicit and up for interpretation, which can be problematic.
 - Some departments of larger size have delegated PDR review to reviewers who are not necessarily their line managers, which means that there are discrepancies and disconnect between line manager perception and staff experiences. Training of reviewers and being mindful of these potential discrepancies are key.
 - The choice of reviewers should remain so that staff should request a different reviewer should they experience any issues with an assigned reviewer.
 - 17 November 2025
 - HR suggested that all PDR forms be uploaded to Core.
 - BUCU raised concerns regarding this practice.

Link to form on Google Docs:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/143VkrHxMRs2P7bsv_y1uKSGfm_4fJpvo/edit?usp=sharing&oid=109258465705889800857&rtpof=true&sd=true



Performance and Development Review (PDR) - Academic Colleague

Your PDR is an opportunity to have a structured, constructive conversation about your achievements, career aspirations, and training and development. Reviewees can use this form to prepare for their annual PDR conversation. A final version is completed by the reviewer after the meeting. Once agreed, the reviewer and the reviewee both sign this form and retain a copy. An optional six-month check-in section is included at the end of the document.

Employee name:	
Employee number:	
Job title:	
Grade:	
School / Department:	
Line manager / Reviewer:	
Meeting date:	

1. Review of the last 12 months

What were your main achievements this year?

What difficulties have you faced and how did you overcome them?

Have there been any additional achievements that did not form part of your objectives that you'd like to note?

...

Review the objectives set during your previous PDR, below. You might not have objectives under every area of contribution. Consider what you have achieved and how you have gone about this. Refer to our **shared values**, below, where appropriate. Your reviewer will also provide some feedback on your performance, here.

Contribution Area	Objectives	Progress Update / Feedback
Education		

Performance Enablement

Inclusion		
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Our values guide how we work together to achieve our goals, reinforcing the importance of our individual and collective impact on the communities around us.

Our UoB Shared Values				
<p>Ambitious</p> <p>We are confident in the University of Birmingham and project this globally. We are focused on our goals, are clear about our strengths, and pursue our own direction. We are bold and take intelligent risks.</p>	<p>Innovative</p> <p>We enjoy being the first to do things. Inspired by our Birmingham heritage, we are resourceful, creative, grounded and practical, and seek to make a real positive difference to the world around us.</p>	<p>Open</p> <p>We welcome colleagues, collaborators, and students from across the world to work and study with us. We are committed to academic freedom, freedom of speech, and equality of opportunity for all. We expect everyone to act with sensitivity, respect and fairness.</p>	<p>Collaborative</p> <p>The major challenges facing our city, nation, and the world cannot be solved if we act alone. We enhance our research and education by pursuing creative partnerships within and beyond the University.</p>	<p>Responsible</p> <p>We operate with transparency, trust, and respect. We value our role as an anchor institution for Birmingham. We strive to be an excellent employer, to reduce inequalities in access to education, and to place sustainability at the heart of our work.</p>

2. Looking forward

Discuss and agree objectives for the next 1-3 years and record them in the box, below. You might not have objectives under every area of contribution. As far as possible, try to make your objectives SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely).

What's next?

- Third union meeting to be scheduled to discuss the PDR
- Discussion: What do you want from the PDR?

Performance management and grant income

- What are your experiences?
- Should we collectivise these issues? How?

FTC and RSSD

- Casework
 - Employment Law: FTC should not be treated differently from those on permanent contracts
 - Certain research areas not supported by RSSD: Is this Constructive Dismissal?
- What are your experiences?
- Should we run a survey?

Academic Governance

- Senate
- Council
- Do we want the unredacted minutes of both Senate and Council to be available to the University community?
- Do we want trade union reps to sit on Council?
- How can Senate and Council be more accountable and democratic to staff and students?
- Do we want a campaign for greater academic freedom and governance?

Consulting Firms

- What management say: In-house expertise is not available, so universities employ external consultancies who can address these gaps. Reporting to OfS involves in engaging in an external consultancy to produce that report. University uses external auditors, which they are expected to use as part of their legal obligation. In an external regulatory service environment, there is inevitable reliance on third party services. University uses both internal and external datasets to make decisions.
- Our concern: Consulting and external firms are not accountable to staff or trade unions
- Do we want to formulate a position on consulting firms?

Branch Delegate Meeting

- Thursday, 1 December, 1pm
- Setting a date and time for a member's meeting to discuss branch input into BDM
- We need to await questions for branches

AOB

- Workload Working Group – if Tom Cutterham or Minjie Cai can provide an update?
- Setting dates for the next GMM