

TAKE ACTION AT YOUR CAREERS FAIR

HOW-TO GUIDE

WHY CAREERS FAIRS?

Fossil fuel companies often use university careers fairs as a key way to recruit students into the industry. Through stalls at careers fairs, companies have access to a large number of graduates provided by the university. This platform also gives campaigners a key moment to mobilise around, by showing our universities that industries complicit in social and environmental injustice have no place on our campuses. Here's how to do it...



STEP 1: FIND AND RESEARCH YOUR TARGET

- Find out when your next university careers fair is. Universities normally advertise careers fairs on their website or through their Careers Service. This will normally tell you when/where careers fairs are taking place as well as information about some of the companies that might be attending. Most universities will have a careers fair in the first semester, usually October or November as well as sector specific fairs throughout the year. The earlier you start planning, the better your action will be!

- See if you can find out which companies are attending, and if any of them have links to fossil fuels, mining, or arms. You will probably want to do a bit of research into these companies, to get a few killer statistics and soundbites to use in your action.
- Generally, STEM and Engineering careers fairs tend to have the highest number of fossil fuel, mining, and arms companies in attendance.
- If there are no companies with fossil fuel links, or you can't access the list of companies, you can still plan an impactful action.
- Even if there aren't any fossil fuel companies at a careers fair, this is still a key opportunity to draw attention to your campaign. Without an ethical careers policy in place, there is nothing stopping a university from inviting these companies onto campus throughout the year or working with them through online careers platforms.

STEP 2: PICK YOUR TACTIC

You should pick a tactic that is appropriate for the stage of your campaign, as well as the comfort level of participants. Here are some ideas:

- The tactic that students most often use is **blockading** a stall. For this, you need a big enough banner and enough people to totally block access to a particular stall. Your aim is blocking off the stall to make it impossible for the company to recruit. You might also want to have some other people with leaflets to hand out to students as they walk past. You also might want to make some noise (prepare chants etc.) to increase disruption. See pictures below.

Some other actions ideas include:

- Doing a banner drop inside the careers fair / on the outside of the building to highlight your demands
- Subvertising - making alternative flyers advertising the harm caused by these companies which can be handed out at careers fairs (you can also include info on how to join your campaign).
- Creative ways to engage students. For example, at Sheffield University there were so many arms and fossil fuel companies that students made a bingo card with them all. They gave out hundreds of these to students, with a prize for returning a full card.

Creative ways to disrupt the stall. For example, at the University of Leeds students declared multiple stalls an environmental hazard and taped them off, with students dressed up in suits role-playing as health and safety officers.



STEP 3: PLAN YOUR ACTION

- Now you've decided on a target and a tactic, it's time to plan your action. Here's our suggested outline for doing that. We recommend giving yourselves a couple of weeks to plan an effective action.
- Roles** - To make sure that the work to plan the action is shared out, we recommend starting by splitting into roles, so that different people take responsibility for different sections.

- You can have more than one person on a role! Some key roles/teams are: Welfare, Logistics, Outreach + Recruitment, Art + Materials, Press, Photographer, Social Media. And of course, people need to volunteer to be in the blockade!
- Make sure that everyone in your group knows what their role is and feels comfortable and supported with how they're participating in the action. Roles like handing out leaflets, press and group photographer are very important but don't require being one of the people physically disrupting the stall.
- **Narrative** - Having a clear narrative is key to making sure your action links to your campaign demands. Your narrative should be the same across your press release, social media posts and the messaging you use on flyers or banners.
- **Action planning** - Work out a clear plan for the day of the action that everyone agrees to do. This should include things like where and when you are meeting, who is bringing the materials, what everyone's role is on the day, what you'll do when inside, where you'll meet after and what might go wrong on the day – with plans for how you'll react.
- **Recruit** - Make sure you have enough people for your action to be a success. This could include reaching out to friends or other societies. Actions are a great time to build up links with other groups, and to get people involved in your campaign. Remember that the more publicly you recruit people to help with your action, the more risk there is of the university expecting your action and potentially having more security in place.
- **Materials** - Make a list of all the materials you will need for your action, such as banners, leaflets or other resources. Then make sure you know who is responsible for creating these and bringing them on the day. Remember to think about how big you will need the banner to be for the action you want to do, as well as how you are going to get it into the venue and potentially past security. Big banners look great, but if you expect security to be tight at the event you may wish to make several smaller banners out of fabric, rather than cardboard, so they can be folded up small or hidden under jackets. Paint takes longer to dry than expected, and leaflets take longer to design, print, and cut out than expected too!
- **Follow up emails** - Before your action, make sure to draft an email to your University management and careers service, reaching out to discuss your demands. You can then send this as soon as you've done your action and build up the pressure for them to commit to an Ethical Careers Policy.

- **Press** - You should be putting out a press release, or at least a public statement, for every action that you do. It's one of the keys ways to make sure your action is impactful. It's always best to have this drafted before the day of your action so that it's ready to be sent out straight away. Newspapers will want to publish a story as close to the event as possible before it becomes old news. Remember to also make a list of journalists to email your press release to. This could be local newspapers, student press or online blogs. Chat to the FFC campaign coordinator for guidance on writing a press release, or support with finding email addresses for local journalists. We also have lots of useful resources to help you create effective press content, such as a template press release and guidance on taking good press photos
- **Social media** - You'll also want to draft your social media posts in advance, so that they will be ready to post straight away once you've taken photos of your action on the day. Remember to tag your university and careers service so they know the action has happened. You can also reach out to other groups on campus and ask them to share. It's also important to consider security when posting photos of actions on social media, such as covering or blurring faces so people taking action can't be easily identified.
- **Photos** - Assign someone to take photos during the action. This is a really essential role, and doesn't need a fancy camera. A phone camera works well! This is perfect for someone who doesn't want to or isn't able to physically disrupt a stall themselves.
- **Welfare** - Actions can be draining and intense! Make a plan of how you're going to look out for each other both during and after your action. A great way of doing this is by having a buddy system where everyone is paired with a buddy who they stay with throughout the action. Make sure that you know where your buddy is at all times and if there is any particular support your buddy might need when taking part in the action. It's also important to schedule a debrief for after your action has taken place. This is both a space for people to discuss how the action went as well as a space for people to share how they are feeling and check in with each other.
- **Know your rights** - Before any action it's super important to make sure that you know your rights and are aware of any risks you might be taking. Remember that different people may face different levels of risk and this may impact how they choose to take part in an action. Take some time to check out these resources for more information:
 - [Rights when protesting at universities in the UK](#)
 - [Green and Black Cross legal advice for protests](#)
 - [Legal advice for protesting in Scotland \(SCALP\)](#)

STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

Aim to get there at the start of the careers fair - Your action will have the most impact if you're able to disrupt the stall straight away. Meet at your group's agreed meeting place and make sure to go into the careers fair in pairs with your buddy.

- **Be prepared for bag checks** - Security might be checking people's bags when they enter, so plan ahead for this. Make sure you know how you're getting any banners into the fair. This includes wrapping the banner around your body under your coat or bringing two banners just in case.
- **Be prepared to show ID** - Some universities scan student ID cards so that only students can get into the careers fair. Make sure you have your ID ready to guarantee being able to get into the fair. And be clear to everyone participating that the university will likely be able to work out who took part in the action.
- **Anticipate security presence** - There is often a security presence at University events, so think about how you will prepare for this. Make sure you are all agreed on what to do if security tries to stop your action or tries to get you to leave.
- **Engage with students** - Disrupting a careers fair is a really great opportunity to engage with students about your campaign. Bring flyers to hand out during your action and have a QR code for students to scan and sign your petition. Chat to people about your demands and how they can get involved in the campaign. Do you have a meeting coming up or an open letter they could sign?

What if the stall holder packs up or cancels at the last minute?

Firstly, congratulations, you've managed to stop fossil fuel recruiters on campus! But this doesn't mean your action has to stop here. The P&P group at Edinburgh managed to get an arms company to withdraw from their careers fair at the last minute and instead, the group showed up to hang their banner over an empty stall for a great photo opportunity to celebrate their success. They also used this empty stall as a space to hand out flyers to students with QR codes to sign their petition.

STEP 5: FOLLOW UP

However your action went down, you can turn it into a moment of pressure. Whether the oil company pulled out or you pulled off a successful blockade, you can make the most of even the smallest action by getting the word out and making sure your action doesn't go unnoticed.

Checklist for after your action:

- Send out press release
- Publish social media posts (remember to add any photos)
- Reach out to other groups to share your action on social media
- Email University management and the Careers Service to explain that actions will continue to escalate (and invite them to negotiate your demands if that is part of your current strategy).
- Send any open letters to management or petitions you've been working on

STEP 6: DEBRIEF

Well done! You've pulled off your action, and everyone is now safely at your agreed meeting place. Now it's time to debrief.

It's super important to set some time aside after an action for a debrief with your group. This is a chance to check in on how everyone is doing after what can often be an intense and tiring situation. It's also a really great opportunity to reflect on your successes and any learnings for future actions.

Things to discuss in your debrief could include:

- How is everyone feeling now? Is there anything in particular that people need from this space?
- How do people feel that the action went on the day?
- What are some successes to celebrate?
- Was there anything that didn't go to plan? Was there a way that this could have been made better or could have been anticipated in advance?
- What are the key learnings from this action that you will take forward when planning actions in the future?

Remember that taking part in actions can be tiring, so make sure to have some more relaxed social activities in between more intense actions. Once you've had your debrief why not have a group social or film night?

STEP 7: FOLLOW UP

Following up from your action will help make sure that your campaign gets noticed, even by people who weren't there to see the banner drop. This is especially important if your banner gets taken down quickly

by the university - a photo lasts much longer!

Your follow up tasks can include:

- A social media statement explaining what your action was and what your campaign demands are. Make sure to include a good photo and a link to any petitions for people to sign. You can also tag your university and careers service to make sure they got the message!
- An article for student press about your campaign and how people can get involved. Photos from banner drops are great for press articles!
- A letter to university management and the careers service, asking to meet with them to discuss your campaign demands.
- Don't forget to send any photos to us at fossilfreecareers@peopleandplanet.org! We love seeing incredible actions to kick fossil fuels off campus and we can share these for you on our social media.

RESOURCES

Here are some links to more resources to help you when planning an action!

You can also drop us an email at fossilfreecareers@peopleandplanet.org to book a workshop or some training on direct action or action planning.

Guide to Action Planning from Seeds for Change

Direct Action Handbook