

# HOW TO: Disrupt Arms and Fossil Fuel Company Recruitment



## ACTION GUIDE



**CAMPAIGN  
AGAINST  
ARMS  
TRADE**

Disrupting Arms and Fossil Fuel Company Recruitment was written by Sam Walton and edited by Sarah Reader, Sam Robinson, Andrew Taylor and Miriam Wilson.

Additional writing by Barnaby Pace.

### Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the following people who have been of great assistance in compiling this campaigns guide, in giving us their time, insight, photos and stories of past actions:

Anne-Marie O'Reilly, Ian Prichard, Sarah Waldron, Cherry Allan, Glen Reynolds, Michael Wood, Sheffield Activist Network, Lewis Bush, Disarm Nottingham, Craig Griffiths, Disarm UCL, Francesca Morganty, Chris Browne, Weapons out of Warwick, Edinburgh People & Planet, Disarm York, Alex Green.

## Contents

<b>Why take action?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Company events (and how to disrupt them)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Tips for a successful action</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Any questions?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>What next?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Arguing the case</b>	<b>13</b>



# Why take action?



UK universities and colleges act as recruiting grounds for the arms trade and fossil fuel industry. Every year, arms companies recruit thousands of university and college leavers to produce the next generation of killing technology. The fossil fuel industry - responsible for driving us towards a global climate crisis - is just as keen to snap up students completing courses.

Both industries spend a great deal of time and money trying to feed their constant hunger for university and college leavers, who are vital for their continued survival. By reducing the number of students willing to work for such destructive industries, we can cause them real damage. We can use recruitment events as an opportunity to damage the brand of these

companies, and weaken their 'social licence' to operate.

Whilst fossil fuel and arms companies recruit from almost all subject areas, the bulk of the students completing courses will be engineers and science students. In the UK there is a widely acknowledged shortage of engineers and similar technical professionals. This means that for every graduate recruited by the destructive arms and fossil fuel industries, one is taken away from the positive and desperately needed alternatives such as the renewable energy industry.

This guide will lay out the ins and outs of how to counter the recruitment efforts of these companies and give you some ideas about how to inform other students about the damage done by the fossil fuel and arms industry.



**This guide suggests two main approaches to countering arms trade recruitment:**

## 1. Informing other students

By taking action against arms and fossil fuel companies, we can inform other students about the issues surrounding them and hopefully dissuade them from getting involved. Increasing the stigma attached to working for an unethical company will increase the difficulty it faces in recruiting good staff.

## 2. Disrupting recruitment events

By continuously disrupting fossil fuel and arms companies' recruitment events, we will be wasting their money and resources. Eventually it will become too costly for them to recruit at universities and colleges if they are faced with constant protests. Take a careers fair: in running a stall, an arms company may spend nearly £2000:

- Cost of stall: £1000.
- Freebies: £200.
- Staff pay, travel, lunch etc: £800+.

By discouraging students from approaching such stalls and from being interested in working for them, you will be costing them a hefty amount!

Going along to an arms trade or fossil fuel graduate recruitment event is effective, easy and fun. It is easy to show why they should be banned from university or college campuses and to deter prospective graduate employees.

In any campaign, the aim is to make it easier for people to say 'yes' to you than 'no'. If we are trying to discourage people from working for an unethical company, we should think about what factors motivate them.

This way we try to make it easier for them to say 'yes' to working for an ethical company.

## What motivates students?

- Believing that a company offers the best chance of a good career.
- Feeling like there are few other options in their field of work.
- The money.
- The swish presentation.
- The company reps having time to talk to them and giving persuasive answers to their questions.
- The buffet/drinks/tea and coffee/freebies provided which make it feel like a nice place to work and which get people into a positive, receptive mood.

## What discourages students from working for an unethical company?

- The moral and ethical implications.
- Knowledge of the damage the company does.
- The social stigma attached to producing weapons and causing climate change.
- Wanting to have a career that benefits the world.
- Not wanting to be in a career where they will face protests.
- Knowing that there are other careers with better financial and ethical prospects.



## Stalls

**What happens:** In a building with a lot of students passing through (Students Union, Engineering Departments) or at a careers fair, there will be a stall staffed by representatives from the arms or fossil fuel companies. They will be armed with a variety of pamphlets, some corporate graphics and often some freebies. They will want to do three things:

1. Get students to fill out an application form online, which is the first step of all the big corporations' recruitment processes these days.
2. Encourage students to turn up to their evening presentation, where they can tell them how wonderful their company is.
3. Get students' email addresses, so they can badger them about online applications and evening presentations.

**What to do about it:** There are many ways to limit the effectiveness of a stall, ranging from leafleting the people going up to it, to actively dismantling the stall.

**Some of these actions may have more serious legal implications than others. See page 9 for more information on legal issues.**

### Actions that have been taken against arms or fossil fuel company stalls include:

- Leafleting the people going up to the stall and explaining why the arms company is destructive (this is one you can do by yourself, even if no one else turns up to the action).
- Having a 'die-in' outside the careers fair.
- Dropping a banner from a university or college building or inside the fair.
- Holding a religious service in front of the stall.
- Dressing as grim reapers and standing next to the stalls.
- Dismantling the stall and confiscating all the freebies.
- Subvertising the freebies (with stickers) or replacing them with more 'appropriate' ones (like toy guns).
- Upsetting the stall and pouring red paint over the materials or dumping coal.
- Holding an alternative careers fair.
- Wasting the reps' time so other students can't talk to them.



### CASE STUDY: The stall hijackers

Careers fairs provide the perfect opportunity to disrupt the arms industry's sordid trade, and students in Sheffield have tried a number of different methods in our attempts to scupper their recruitment process. From banner drops to die-ins, all manner of approaches have been employed, but for me the most effective strategy is simply to dismantle their stalls, hijack their leaflets, and prevent them from doing what they are there to do.

The university held an event boasting stalls from BAE, QinetiQ and Rolls Royce, among others. At a planning meeting beforehand, we decided that given the high number of objectionable companies at the fair, the best result would be had if the stallholders were no longer able to operate after our 'visit'. Research was done into the layout of the fair, using maps freely available at the event, and we highlighted which stalls we were going to target. We decided to operate in groups of three, and this proved to be a good number – three people, working without restraint, can shut a recruitment stall down in about a minute.

On the morning of the fair, we convened in a local park, divided into groups, and equipped ourselves with enough bin bags to carry all of the offending literature. Dressed and acting as inconspicuously as possible, we entered the fair in our groups, and sauntered over to our assigned stalls. After a little confusion about when we were to start proceedings (it's probably best to start when you are ready, and not try to coordinate exactly with other groups), we began the task in hand. We approached the stand (QinetiQ in our case) and told the startled stall-holder that we'd come to help him close down for the day.

At this point, one member of the team held the bin bags open while the others rapidly swept and flung any leaflets, giveaways and gimmicks in sight into the bags. When the table was clear, we began to pull the hoarding surrounding the stall down, with varying degrees of success, and fortunately noticed two full boxes of recruitment leaflets under the table. We grabbed these boxes, picked up our bin bags, and headed straight for the exit. As soon as we breached security, a member of our group armed with a megaphone began an attention-grabbing tirade against the motley crew of arms companies at the fair.

Back in the park, we recycled the leaflets, distributed the complimentary mugs amongst ourselves, and nominated someone to send a press release with photographs to the student newspaper.



# Events



## Evening presentations

**What happens:** The company will rent out a room at a local bar or more likely in a university or college building. They will provide a minimum of tea and biscuits and maybe even wine and a buffet. They will give a swish presentation and then some recent student leavers will talk through how their career has progressed to date, what they have done and where they see themselves going. Then there will usually be a time for questions in a group, before time for individuals to talk to the reps one-on-one and enjoy the buffet. At this point students will begin to drift off.

**What to do about it:** Disrupting a company's presentation can be really effective in making it too costly (in terms of money spent and publicity) for a company to return and also in informing other students about the company. It is important to think about the impact you want to have and who your target audience is, as some actions are more effective than others. Try not to sound preachy as this will most likely annoy people and turn them against you!

Also, most students will do anything for free food, so removing the free food/drink (especially if it is limited) is a good way to reduce the amount of

students staying on for a chat with the reps from the arms company. A result of this can be a slap up meal and several rounds of drinks for you and your fellow activists...

### Tactics at evening presentations have included:

- Interrupting the arms or fossil fuel company representatives and speaking over them with a megaphone.
- Holding up pictures of victims from the conflicts that are being fought using the arms company's weapons and weapons systems; or holding pictures of the destruction wrought by the fossil fuel industry.
- Occupying the stage and not allowing the presentation to continue.
- Booking out the event so that no real potential students completing courses attend.
- Leafleting the people going into the presentation.
- Asking awkward questions which expose the company.
- Holding alternative presentations or events.

## CASE STUDY: Wining and dining

A group of students discovered that an arms company had booked a section of an expensive bar for an evening careers presentation. Once the arms company representatives had given their spiel about why their company is so great, there was a question and answer session and then a chance to talk individually at greater length with a rep whilst enjoying the free buffet.

Depending on people's strengths and experience, we:

- Questioned the reps on the moral and ethical dilemmas of working for an arms company.
- Asked 'Yes Men' style questions, like "Wow, that bomb you showed me was so amazing, but how many deaths per dollar do you think you would get for that?" to point out the craziness of the industry.
- 'Disposed' of the buffet so there was less incentive for other students to stay.
- Spent ages talking to the reps one-to-one so that other students would not be able to talk to them (quieter people are often really good at this).

An action like this is always invigorating, but the added bonus of free food and booze made it really enjoyable. We now have an official social every time the arms company turns up!

- Wasting the reps' time - this is an especially effective tactic when a presentation has just ended, and they invite individuals to ask them questions one-on-one.

## Materials in careers departments and mock interviews

Did we mention that arms and fossil fuel companies are desperate for engineers? Oh, we did. Well one of their tactics is to offer free mock interviews, to engineers who are about to graduate.

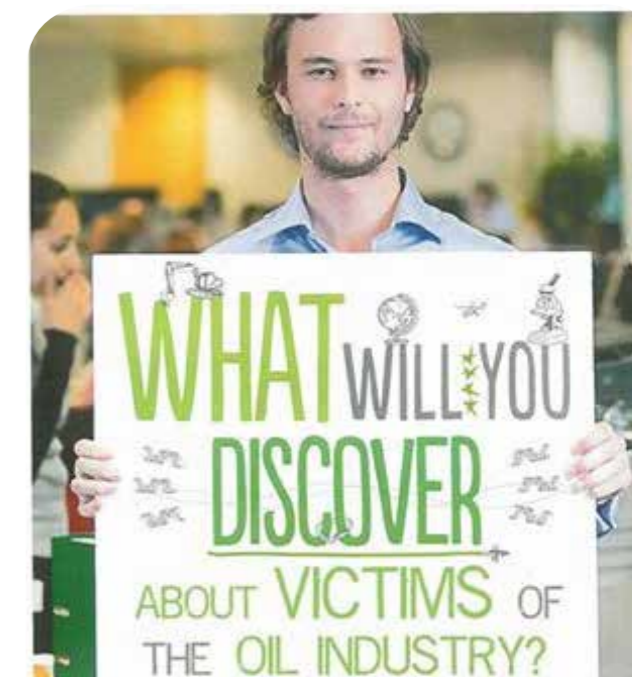
**What happens:** In addition to offering interview practice and advice, companies also stock the careers department with lots of lovely leaflets and information, and may even provide academic departments with materials such as mouse mats.

**What to do about it:** You can keep the pressure on arms companies by subverting their promotional materials (with stickers, leaflets or alternative posters for example).

You can also:

- Distribute information about the companies that they wouldn't advertise themselves (check out the resources section on the CAAT, People & Planet and London Mining Networks websites for in-depth information about specific companies).

- Target the university or college careers service with actions in protest of their continued support of arms and fossil fuel companies.



"the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico threatens the very existence of the Atakapa-Ishak Indians who live there"  
"The largest oil spill in U.S. history is killing wildlife, contaminating beaches and marshes, closing fishing waters and... threatening an entire way of life."  
- National Geographic

It's your choice who you work for.



## CASE STUDY: Subvertising BP

Students from the University of Edinburgh People & Planet Society and Geosciences Department disrupted a careers talk from BP. We produced alternative publicity posters highlighting the environmental and human rights atrocities that BP have committed. These were displayed throughout the building in which the talk was due to take place.

A last-minute venue change meant only a few students were able to make it into the talk itself but those that did utilised the Question a& Answer format in order to ask critical questions which their employees had a hard time dodging.

Leaflets explaining BP's continued contribution to climate change were given to all students on exiting the talk. An "oil spill" of BP's publicity material covered in molasses was created directly outside the front door of the building in which the talk was taking place.

Our action showed the university that students are not happy with the likes of BP being invited onto the campus of an institution which has declared that it wants to be "the world's first socially responsible university".

# Tips for a Successful Action



# Any Questions?

## Plan ahead!

Make sure everyone feels comfortable with what's going to happen and that people have different roles according to experience and strengths.

## Arrange a photographer

Most of the methods we have outlined so far involve taking direct action - preventing arms and fossil fuel company recruitment is the aim. However, a great photo can make a great story. So if you are planning to publicise your action or try to get it into the media, having someone ready to take quality photos can make a big difference to the prominence of your action.

Send your arms company photos to [students@caat.org.uk](mailto:students@caat.org.uk) and your fossil fuel company photos to [fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org) to share with other students and hopefully inspire more to take action.



## Send out a press release beforehand

If you want to get your story into the media, send out a press release before your action. This can be useful especially because universities and colleges are often sensitive to their local and student papers.

You can write your own press release or adapt a draft one and send it out to local and student media.

You can download a draft from CAAT's student wiki: [universities.caat.org.uk/resources/](http://universities.caat.org.uk/resources/)

Find a fossil fuel press release: [peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free/resources](http://peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free/resources)

If you send your photos to CAAT ([media@caat.org.uk](mailto:media@caat.org.uk)) or People & Planet ([fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org)) we can help publicise the action nationally and show the scale of student campaigning around the country.

## Legal bit

With any action it is important to think about the legal issues concerning the action and possible outcomes and repercussions. Because universities and colleges are on private land they can at any time decide that you are trespassing and if you refuse to leave make you liable for arrest.

Check out the Activists' Legal Project's guide to campus protests for an in-depth and useful resource: [bit.ly/studentlegal](http://bit.ly/studentlegal)

It is really important that everyone feels comfortable with what they are doing and that they do not find themselves in a position that they did not expect. All protests require different roles, some with more risk of arrest than others. If people do not feel that they are ready to disrupt a presentation or actively shut down an arms or a fossil fuel company's stalls then perhaps they would feel happier handing out leaflets or asking awkward questions during presentations. There are also really useful jobs like photographing the action or holding on to people's valuables that also need doing.

## What if I can't get near a stall?

You can still inform students about companies even if you aren't directly next to a stall. Stand outside the entrance and leaflet everyone going into the fair. If you want to get close to a stall, either just to chat to the reps or do a stunt, then try to look like an average student. The university or college is probably obliged to let you into a fair anyway so that you could look for your own job, whatever your political views. If you are hoping to do a stunt then you might want to consider options like concealing props in bags or under clothes and if there are a lot of you then stagger the times you are going in.

## What if we can't get enough people along to protest?

You only need one or two people to make a big difference at an event - try handing out leaflets, it takes very little effort (get pre-made leaflets off the CAAT wiki or make your own). If you struggle to find numbers for one specific protest then have one or two people there all day to leaflet and set a time (that suits the most people) to gather your full numbers and have a rally with speeches (megaphones help) or do a stunt.

Having visuals such as banners, t-shirts and signs may help make the protest bigger despite the low numbers.

## How do we find information about the visiting companies?

Someone has probably done this already when the company came to their university or college.

For fossil fuel companies, you can email [fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org) for guidance. There is also loads of information on specific companies on London Mining Networks website.

For arms companies, check out the CAAT wiki and the companies' pages on the CAAT website to see if there is any information up there already. You can also email CAAT's Research Coordinator on [ian@caat.org.uk](mailto:ian@caat.org.uk) or the student Network Coordinator on [students@caat.org.uk](mailto:students@caat.org.uk) to ask for advice.

If those don't give you what you want then you can do research on the companies' own websites, Corporate Watch and in old news articles.

Find out as much as you can to know your enemy!



# What Next?



## 1. Find out more about your University or College's Careers Service!

Check their website, look through their literature and sign up for email alerts about future events. Keep an eye out especially for information aimed at engineering or physics students. Many of the recruitment fairs take place at the beginning of the academic year (in October/November) so make sure you are ready to take action at the start of term.

Universities and colleges are making it harder to find out about events to avoid protests. Many don't

release the list of exhibitors until the very last minute and even then only through a password protected site only accessible to current students. It's worth looking at the company websites as well.

## 2. Take action!

When you find out about a careers fair or an evening presentation taking place - organise an action to disrupt it and inform students about the arms trade. You can find ideas and materials on the student wiki at [universities.caat.org.uk/resources/](http://universities.caat.org.uk/resources/). Let's save each other time and share



### Case study: Taking on the Careers Service

At Warwick University's People & Planet group, our disruption took the form of our own batch of careers fair guides, a small pamphlet offering some pithy insights into the unseen malefactions of Shell, BAE Systems, Atos, MBDA, Barclays, HSBC, Morgan Stanley and Unilever.

Packaged into a professional looking design not dissimilar from official university literature, the guide proved to be an instant hit, providing eager would-be employees with some much needed home truths about the corporations looking to recruit them.

Amazingly, the simple activity of equipping students with information incurred the wrath of the careers service, but despite the efforts of university staff to foil our action by confiscating copies of the guide, we knew our right to free speech. After enlisting the help and support of our fantastic Students' Union to retrieve our publication and recycling the brochures by handing them out all over again, we estimate that we reached over 1000 students.

If anything, the overreaction from university employees gave the action the air of controversy it needed to cause a significant disruption to the careers fair, leaving representatives from BAE looking particularly sheepish next to a forlornly vacant stall.

## Conclusion

The campaign against arms trade and fossil fuel industry recruitment on campus is a crucial one with tangible and attainable objectives. The fact that in 2008 E.ON pulled out of their tour of universities and colleges demonstrates how powerful student protests can be. Add this to the fact that Rolls Royce and BAE are struggling to employ students completing courses and you have a weakness in the system. This presents us with an opportunity to increase the pressure for ending the arms trade and to damage the social licence of the fossil fuel industry.

We need to show our universities and colleges that we shall not be targeted by arms and fossil fuel companies and that a recruitment service which is complicit with the arms trade and the fossil fuel industry is unacceptable.

Hopefully you will now know how these industries recruit students completing courses, and have some ideas about what to do about it at your university or college. Have a great time and let us know how you get on by emailing [students@caat.org.uk](mailto:students@caat.org.uk) or [fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org).



## Useful Info

### CAAT

- [universities.caat.org.uk/resources/](http://universities.caat.org.uk/resources/) - A mini-site is for students and academics concerned about the arms trade. Email [students@caat.org.uk](mailto:students@caat.org.uk).
- [caat.org.uk](http://caat.org.uk) - Campaign Against Arms Trade's website. Here you can find information on each of the arms companies.
- [studywarnomore.org.uk](http://studywarnomore.org.uk) - Does your university or college work for the military? Probably. Find out and do something about it.
- [ei.wikia.com](http://ei.wikia.com) - A great site with loads of info about ethical investment.
- [weaponsoutofwarwick.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/alternative-careers-guide](http://weaponsoutofwarwick.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/alternative-careers-guide) - Weapons out of Warwick's 'Alternative Recruitment Guide' (also check out the BAE-specific guide).

### People & Planet

- [peopleandplanet.org](http://peopleandplanet.org) - People & Planet's website. Find more information about our campaigns and what we do.
- [peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free/resources](http://peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free/resources) - Check out our huge range of resources including reports, action guides, and a map of careers fairs the fossil fuel industry will be attending.
- Email [fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfree@peopleandplanet.org) for more info.

.....  
: If you require this guide in a plain text :  
: format or larger font please get in touch. :  
.....