



ENDING THE FOSSIL FUEL ERA

How to campaign for
a Fossil Fuel Treaty
on campus



CLIMATE JUSTICE AND CORPORATE POWER

‘Between fossil capital and life: we unequivocally choose life.’

Gustavo Petro, president of Colombia, announcing his country’s support for a Fossil Fuel Treaty



Fossil fuels have facilitated capitalism’s pursuit of endless growth. The benefits of this growth are enjoyed most by the world’s rich and fossil fuel corporations which make billions every year driving the climate crisis. Meanwhile the countries most affected by climate change (small island nations, much of Africa and Asia) are often the least responsible.

Just 100 multinational corporations are responsible for more than 70% of global emissions. Big businesses, from banks to agribusiness, car companies to oil giants, have consistently used their economic and lobbying power to prevent effective climate action and pursued false solutions such as carbon trading which prioritise profit over effective climate action.

Getting real on climate change means leaving fossil fuels in the ground and rolling back the power of these multinational corporations, helping to decolonise the global economy in the process. And instead of relying on unenforceable targets for reducing carbon emissions, we need an agreement between states to end the fossil fuel era for good.

WHAT IS THE FOSSIL FUEL TREATY?

Climate breakdown is hitting the least well-off hardest, while the world's rich, and wealthier countries in general are historically responsible for the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions. That means it is the responsibility of wealthy countries in the global north to take the lead on climate action, and doing so will require global coordination.

We need a global exit plan from coal, oil and gas, one that works for ordinary people, workers and communities across the world. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (Fossil Fuel Treaty or FFT for short) is a proposal to rapidly start the phaseout.

First proposed by Pacific Island States, where the climate crisis is urgently existential, a FFT would have three key aims: ending the expansion of fossil fuel production; phasing out existing fossil fuel production fairly, and a 'globally just transition' to clean energy systems.

This would replace carbon-intensive jobs with good quality green jobs and rebalance economies affected by deindustrialisation and the dominance of big finance, uniting workers in the global north with workers and affected communities in the global south.

The UK led the way into the fossil fuel era, but by listening to and acting with countries and communities in the global south we can be one of the wealthy global north economies charting a path out, helping push forward climate action globally.

Already a number of countries and many cities and municipalities around the world have called for a Fossil Fuel Treaty to be negotiated. For the UK to join them, we need a groundswell of support for the treaty from civil society, including unions, local councils – and universities. This booklet is designed to help you win endorsement for the treaty from your university, as well as bringing your students' union on board.

PLANNING YOUR CAMPAIGN

In order to start your campaign for your university to publicly endorse the FFT, you need to understand how decisions are made, and who makes them. The vice-chancellor is probably the most senior staff member, and a likely person to address a petition to for instance, but there will also be committees and governance structures which you may be able to influence at some point.

Lobbying your university management could be a straightforward task or it may be a longer and more challenging process. For this reason you also need to know where your strengths lie. Large numbers of students will know and care about climate change, so mobilise them in some way to create pressure on the university. There is more information on building support through stalls, petitions, social media and creative actions on the following pages.

Nevertheless it will be useful to find allies among academic and non-academic staff as well as within the student body so you can leverage the support you have most effectively. Remember you can always reach out to Global Justice Now for support.

We have a youth activism team which is able to help you set up a group, and provide materials, info and training – get in touch via the contact details on the back.

Research

It is worth starting by trying to find the answers to a few key questions. You may wish to research your university's relationship to the fossil fuel industry and look for the presence of fossil fuel industry representatives on university committees. However, if you don't find all the answers, don't worry too much – you'll find out more as you go along. Please get in touch with Global Justice Now if you need help with your research.

Getting your university to endorse the Fossil Fuel Treaty

Ideally, you would identify one or two sympathetic staff members who can help you lobby the university. A good place to start would be to check the university website to see if there is a climate or sustainability team and arrange a meeting with them to make the case for endorsing the FFT and gauge their support.

You might want to think not just how supportive a member of staff is of action on climate change, but also how influential they might be in the wider university structures.

Most staff have their email addresses listed on the university website, but you can always ask for contact details from the university admin team. Once you've found a likely candidate, approach them for a meeting.

Getting your students' union to endorse the Fossil Fuel Treaty

Lobbying your university management may be a lengthy process, but it could become easier if you have unions and the students' union (SU) on board, since representatives from these groups already have a working relationship with management and may be invited to university governing meetings.

One of the main ways to get an endorsement from unions and the SU is to get a motion passed. See page 8 for more details.



BUILDING A CAMPAIGN

You may need to use various channels such as student press, social media, stalls, leafleting, and events to raise awareness and garner support for your campaign. Collaboration with student groups, academics, and trade unions can amplify your impact and build momentum for FFT endorsement. Global Justice Now has guides on [how to spark creative action ideas](#) and [how to make the most of local media](#). See the box below for all guides.

Build your group

A strong team is the foundation of any great campaign. Gather your friends and start bringing in a mix of people to join you. Use social media to invite others, or get help from your students' union officers to connect with interested students. Consider running stalls and making announcements at events or lectures to attract new members. You can organise yourselves as a Global Justice Youth group, or in whatever way is useful.

Hold your first meeting

Getting together as a group is an important part of organising. Meetings foster camaraderie, allow for action and event planning, and knowledge sharing. A successful meeting leaves participants feeling empowered, energised, and motivated

for change. While there are no strict guidelines, certain practices can enhance participation, usefulness, and maintain high energy levels. See our guide on [how to hold a great meeting](#).

Hold an event or social

Socials and events are a great way to bring people together! Events raise awareness and inspire action, maintaining your group's local presence and attracting new participants. If you need any assistance organising an online or in-person event or workshop on campus, reach out to us! Also check out our guide on [how to put on a public event](#).

Build support

Stall and petitions

Stalls and petitions are a great way for new supporters to get involved in the campaign. Keep any stall focused, simple, and be creative. While getting students to sign the petition is important, stalls are a unique opportunity to get new people involved in the campaign. With this in mind, be sure to take a sign-up sheet which people can add their WhatsApp numbers to so you can contact them about future events and actions. You can create your own petition or get in touch and we can help create one.

Usually a group of students can set up a stall at any reasonable spot within the grounds of the university as long as it's outside. Make the stall colourful and approachable and think of an eye-catching idea to make your stall look great if you can. See our full guide on [how to run an effective stall](#).

Before running your stall, have a read of [our briefing](#) (globaljustice.org.uk/fft-briefing) on the Fossil Fuel Treaty so you're fully clued up. You can also order copies of this for your stall from Global Justice Now, along with leaflets and stickers.

Social media

Social media is invaluable for building campaigns because it allows for instant reach to a broad audience and enables you to direct message with allies. Set up an Instagram or Tik Tok account for your group and consider other forms of social media if you have the time.

Creative actions

Creative ideas are useful in campaigning, whether you're planning actions, engaging people, or designing events. Combining unexpected elements with visually compelling art, music, and theatre,

along with humour and imagery, can create empowering experiences and bring people together in a way that strengthens relationships and builds community. Check out our guide on [how to spark creative action ideas](#).

Find all the activist guides mentioned and more here:

globaljustice.org.uk/guides




GETTING YOUR STUDENTS' UNION TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

Getting your students' union to support your campaign can be an important milestone and could open up help and resources. You can submit a motion to the SU for a vote (or a sub-committee who have expertise in the area). If the policy passes, it will mean the full-time student officers are able to commit resources to the campaign. However it is not as simple as submitting a motion and hoping that the SU will endorse it.

Different students' unions work in different ways. It is usual to have an Annual General Meeting which all students can attend and vote at, but less usual to have other general meetings like this during the year. Rather the union may be governed by a council elected by students, members of which could put your motion forward.

In order to get this to happen, you will need to identify allies and any likely opponents. In the same way you would when lobbying the university





to endorse the FFT you may benefit from having student backing – this can be in the form of a petition. Equally, you should try and identify a union sabbatical officer or member of the SU staff team who cares about action on climate change and who may be supportive of, or could be convinced to support, the motion. Utilise the skills within your group, and remember that Global Justice Now can help you.

Of course, if there is an AGM coming up, it could also be the perfect opportunity to speak directly for the motion yourself. Make sure you check how far in advance the motion needs to be submitted and any other conditions, then get your speech ready!

Template motion

Contact Global Justice Now to receive a template motion that you can use and adapt as you need to. If you can add a reference to any commitments the SU, university, or other body has already made on climate change that will strengthen it. The motion is currently drafted for your SU, but it can also be adapted for other organisations like the UCU, NUS, and university committees.

The most important part of the motion is that the wording at the end commits organisations to taking concrete actions to support the FFT – these commitments can include a public endorsement of the FFT, writing to the local MP and publishing a climate action strategy. Once the motion is passed then this is what you can follow up on afterwards to ensure that it has been acted on.

Trade unions

The main trade union on campus will be the University and College Union (UCU), which represents academic staff, including PhD students, and has a branch at every university. There's a good chance you could persuade the UCU branch to pass a motion of support. We've produced a separate model motion for trade union branches which might be a better basis for a UCU motion, although the key thing is to commit the branch to call on the university to support the treaty. Non-academic staff may also be organised in branches of Unison (which already supports the treaty nationally), Unite or other unions.

LOBBY AND ESCALATE

While campaigning for the FFT will involve some form of awareness-raising on campus and lobbying the university or SU, if you feel you're facing unnecessary delays or being ignored, don't hesitate to take decisive action. Surprisingly, actions that students fear might antagonise the institution often compel them to take the campaign more seriously and respond to its demands.

There are numerous ways to escalate your campaign, such as banner drops or chalk art actions. If your university has ties to fossil fuel firms, including pension fund investments, then consider disrupting open days or organising a noisy protest on campus. You can leverage support from influential alumni on social media. Alumni, who may be university donors, could withhold financial support – a tactic that universities are likely to take seriously.



WINNING AND NEXT STEPS

When your institution is close to making a decision on FFT endorsement, be prepared for any outcome. Plan for either celebration or escalation actions depending on the result.

If not all your demands are met, keep pushing. Don't lose the progress you've made and continue the campaign. Maintaining pressure ensures your university is more likely to stick to its commitments and take your demands seriously.

You've won! What now?

Share

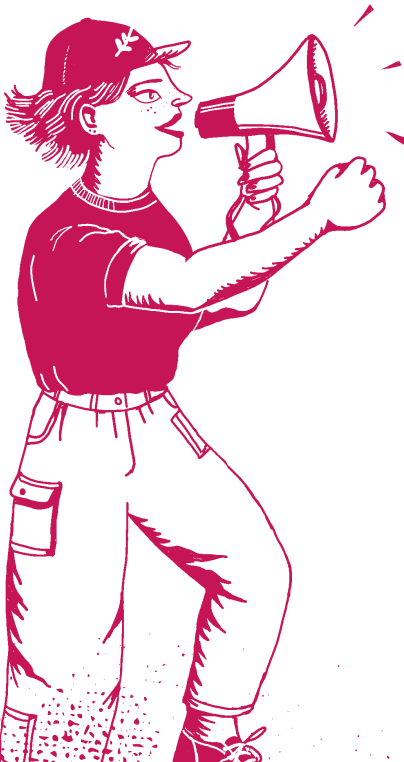
Spread your success story widely, both on social media and beyond. Write blogs, give interviews to the student newspaper, share resources, and hold workshops to help others learn from your experiences. Your story can inspire others to start or elevate their own campaigns, so make sure you share it!

Press

It's good to have press releases ready in advance if possible. We can help you with this. Contact activism@globaljustice.org.uk to ask for support and share your success — we would want to celebrate with you!

Celebrate!

Bring everyone together to celebrate your achievements! Celebrating your successes is essential, so don't forget to acknowledge milestones along the way.



Global Justice Now and Global Justice Youth

Global Justice Youth is a national collective of young people building international solidarity with social movements and struggles for justice, particularly in the global south. We challenge the power of big corporations, oppose the neo-colonial structures of the global economy, demand climate justice and act in solidarity with migrants and those facing oppression. Members of the network come together in local groups where possible, but also connect at a national level, and we run political education events as well as activism and campaigning.

Just contact activism@globaljustice.org.uk and we would love to help.

The Global Justice Youth network is part of Global Justice Now

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