

Approval of proposed new name for Solent University

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The Office for Students (OfS) has approved the use of the word 'university' in the provider's change of name from 'Solent University' to 'Southampton Solent University'.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 amended relevant legislation to give the OfS the power to approve the use of the word university in a registered higher education provider's name. In approving the inclusion of the word 'university' in any name the OfS has regard to the need to avoid names which are, or may be, confusing.¹

The OfS has published guidance for registered higher education providers that wish to use either university or university college as part of their name ('university title' or 'university college title'). It states that we will consult on a provider's proposed new name and assess the extent to which the proposed name is, or may be, confusing or misleading.²

Solent University applied to the OfS for approval to use the word university in its proposed new name, 'Southampton Solent University', in July 2023. We consulted on the provider's proposed new name and received 84 responses.³ Considering the responses:

- We noted some respondents suggested that there was potential for the new name to cause confusion or be misleading, particularly to potential students. The primary reason behind this concern was the potential of confusion with another OfS registered provider, University of Southampton. We concluded, however, that this issue raised by respondents during the consultation is unlikely to cause any detriment or harm as it could be mitigated by the university's requirement to comply with its legal obligations under consumer protection law. This means that the university must ensure that prospective students have clear information to enable them to make informed decisions about the university they are applying for and whether they want to study there. Information could include, for example, communications about the university's location and new name to potential students and those applying to the university.
- We also took the view that the university's proposed new name would not cause potential confusion or be misleading as the provider previously held the name 'Southampton Solent University' for 12 years between 2005 and 2017. Therefore, we decided to consent to the proposed new name of 'Southampton Solent University'.

¹ See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/part/1/crossheading/powers-in-relation-to-university-title/enacted>

² See 'Regulatory advice 13: How to apply for university college and university title' (OfS 2019.08), available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-13-how-to-apply-for-university-college-and-university-title/.

³ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/proposed-new-name-for-solent-university/.