

Approval of proposed new name for AECC University College

UKPRN: 10000163

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

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 amended relevant legislation to give the OfS the power to consent to the use of the word university in a registered higher education provider's name. In consenting to 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' title as part of their name. This 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

AECC University College applied to the OfS for approval to use the word university in its proposed new name 'Health Sciences University' in June 2023. We consulted on the provider's proposed new name and received 98 responses.³ Considering the responses:

- We took the view that the provider's proposed new name did not appear to be like any other registered English higher education provider's name because of similarity that could cause potential confusion or be misleading.
- We agreed with some consultation responses which stated that the proposed name could be potentially misleading, for the following reasons:
 - Several respondents raised concerns that the proposed name implies a scope of offering that does not match the reality of the provider's offering.
 - Several respondents raised concerns that the proposed name may suggest that the provider is the sole provider of health sciences provision in the region and/or the UK. Respondents stated that the proposed name offers a broader portfolio than the

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 or university title' 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-aecc-university-college/.

provider has in reality, and therefore the name is anti-competitive, given other providers may offer a broader scope of provision in the relevant disciplines.

- We concluded, however, that issues raised by respondents during the consultation are unlikely to cause any detriment or harm as they 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 students have clear information to enable them to make informed decisions about whether they want to study there. Information would include, for example, what is meant by the term 'health sciences' and clear and visible communication regarding the breadth and depth of courses offered.
- Therefore, we decided to approve the proposed new name of 'Health Sciences University'.