

Approval of proposed new name for City, University of London

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The Office for Students (OfS) has consented to the use of the word 'university' in the provider's change of name from 'City, University of London' to 'City St George's, University of London', in light of its merger with St George's, University of London.

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 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

City, University of London applied to the OfS for consent to the use of the word university in its proposed new name, 'City St George's, University of London' in April 2024. We consulted on the provider's proposed new name and received 979 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 in a way that could cause potential confusion or be misleading.
- We agreed with some consultation responses which stated that the proposed name could potentially create confusion, for the following reasons:
 - a. The proposed name is too long and contains too many identities.
 - b. It could lead individuals to believe that St George's is a city.
 - c. Past diplomas awarded in the previous names could create confusion among employers and particularly past international students.
- However, we concluded that the issues raised by respondents to the consultation were unlikely to occur due to publicity of the merger, which included the proposed name change consultation, press coverage, as well as visibility and transparency from both providers on

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-city-university-of-london/.

their respective webpages. Clear information about the proposed merger is publicly available and easily accessible, which can help reduce any confusion arising from the proposed name.

- Therefore, we decided to consent to the proposed new name of 'City St George's, University of London'.
- As well as requiring consent from the OfS we note that, before a provider can use a name including the legally protected word 'university', it also requires approval from the Registrar of Companies (via Companies House). Under current regulations, the provider needs to seek a view from the Department for Education (DfE), also known as 'non-objection', before it can request approval from the Registrar of Companies. In this case, DfE issued a non-objection letter on the same day as the OfS's final decision letter. The provider can now request approval from the Registrar of Companies to use the word 'university' in its proposed new name.