

To interested parties

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Open letter consultation: proposed new name for the University of Bolton

The University of Bolton Higher Education Corporation has applied to the Office for Students (OfS) to change its name to 'University of Greater Manchester'. This open letter invites views on whether the proposed new name is, or has the potential to be, confusing or misleading.

The OfS has the power to approve the use of the word 'university' in a registered higher education provider's name under section 77 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and section 39 of the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998.¹

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').² In that guidance, the OfS states that it will consult on a provider's proposed new name and assess the extent to which the proposed name is confusing or misleading.

The University of Bolton (<https://www.bolton.ac.uk/>) is an OfS-registered higher education provider.³ It received approval under the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992⁴ to acquire university title and the power to award its own degrees, and now proposes to change its name to 'University of Greater Manchester'.

¹ See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/section/77> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/30/section/39>.

² 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 See: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

⁴ See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents>.

Dr Greg Walker, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bolton has provided the following statement, which is not verified by the OfS, in relation to the proposed new name:

‘The University has expanded and changed beyond all recognition in the last 20 years, since its University title was granted when it was much smaller and only had campuses in the town of Bolton. The proposed title appropriately reflects an organisation which now has sites across Greater Manchester (in Trafford, Central Manchester, Wigan – through its Multi Academy Trust – and in Bolton). The University is also currently looking to develop a significant presence in Bury. Almost 70% of home students at the University are drawn from and live permanently in postcodes across the Greater Manchester (GM) Combined Authority, with only 20% residing in the GM Borough of Bolton itself. The University today has several thousand students now studying beyond our campuses with partners in the UK and overseas. The ‘Student Voice’ has been the key driver for this proposal, with the last three elected Students’ Union Presidents demanding a university title that is instantly recognisable across the world and has the standing and credibility in the employment market which matches the current profile of the University. The current and misleading provincial university name holds back determined efforts by the institution to enhance graduate employment. The University Board seek a title that is unique, distinctive and appropriate for competing on a level playing field.’

The purpose of this open letter is to consult, in line with our guidance on applying for university college and university title, on whether the University of Bolton’s proposed name ‘University of Greater Manchester’ is, or may be, confusing or misleading.

We are inviting views on the following questions:

1. Considering the University of Bolton’s proposed new name of ‘University of Greater Manchester’, in your view is it, or does it have the potential to be, confusing or misleading?
2. Please explain why you think this and provide any evidence to support your view.

Who should respond to this consultation?

We welcome responses from anyone with an interest in the proposed new name for the University of Bolton.

We are particularly (but not only) interested in hearing from:

- existing or potential future students at the University of Bolton
- graduates and alumni of the university
- employees or former employees of the university
- other providers of education with similar geographic descriptor or based in the same geographic area
- professional organisations and local employer groups that work with the university

- local, regional, or other bodies with similar names to the proposed name 'University of Greater Manchester'
- emergency services local to the university
- higher education membership groups.

How to respond

The consultation closes at **midday on 2 May 2024**.

Please submit your response by completing the **online form** at:

<https://survey.officeforstudents.org.uk/s/bolton-name/>

If you require this document or the online form in an alternative format, need assistance with the online form, or have questions about this consultation, please contact us on 0117 931 7305 or at regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk.

How we will treat your response

The OfS will process any personal data received in accordance with all applicable data protection laws (see our full privacy policy).⁵ Further information is provided within the survey.

In performing our functions, we may need to disclose or publish information about you, or provide or disclose it to other organisations for the purposes of their functions. Information (including personal data) may also need to be disclosed in accordance with UK legislation (such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018, and Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

Yours sincerely

David Smy
Deputy Director of Enabling Regulation

⁵ See: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/ofs-privacy/.