

To interested parties

Westward House
Lime Kiln Close
Stoke Gifford
BRISTOL
BS34 8SR

0117 931 7317

www.officeforstudents.org.uk

14 March 2024

Open letter consultation: proposed new name for Solent University

Solent University has applied to the Office for Students (OfS) to change its name to ‘Southampton Solent University.’ 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.

Solent University (<https://www.solent.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 proposes to change its name to ‘Southampton Solent University.’

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

² See: Regulatory advice 13: How to apply for university college and university title. Available at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-13-how-to-apply-for-university-college-and-university-title/.

³ The OfS Register. See: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

⁴ See: [Further and Higher Education Act 1992 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13).

Professor James Knowles, Vice-Chancellor of Solent University, has provided the following statement, which is not verified by the OfS, in relation to the proposed name:

‘Following extensive research with key stakeholders, including current and potential students, the knowledge of the university’s location in Southampton city centre is an important factor in both its collaboration with local and national stakeholders and likely success in future recruitment. The title of Southampton Solent University was previously used between 2005 and 2017. Being explicit regarding our locality in Southampton further aligns our mission as a civic university driving local and regional growth.’

The purpose of this open letter is to consult, in line with Regulatory advice 13, on whether Solent University’s proposed name ‘Southampton Solent University’ is, or may be, confusing or misleading.

We are inviting views on the following questions:

1. Considering Solent University’s proposed new name of ‘Southampton Solent University,’ 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 Solent University.

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

- Existing or potential future students of Solent University
- Other providers of education with a similar geographic descriptor or based in the same geographic area
- Professional organisations and local employer groups that work with Solent University
- Local, regional, or other bodies with similar names to the proposed name ‘Southampton Solent University’
- Local emergency services to Solent University
- Higher education membership groups.

How to respond

The consultation closes at **noon on 25 April 2024**.

Please submit your response by completing the **online form** at:
<https://survey.officeforstudents.org.uk/s/PG6VZN/>

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 policy⁵). Further information is provided within the survey.

We may need to disclose or publish information that you provide in the performance of our functions 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/.