

Approval of university title for NCH at Northeastern Limited (10048199)

The Office for Students (OfS) has approved university title and a change of the provider's name to 'Northeastern University – London'.

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.

The OfS's published guidance¹ 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') sets out the eligibility criteria. It also states that we will consult on a provider's proposed new name and assess the extent to which the proposed name is confusing or misleading.

NCH at Northeastern Limited, also known as New College of the Humanities, applied to the OfS for university title in February 2021.

We consulted on the provider's proposed new name 'Northeastern University – London'² and received 74 responses. We considered those responses and noted that there was some potential for the new name to cause confusion or be misleading, particularly to potential students³. However, we concluded that the issues raised by respondents to the consultation were unlikely to cause any detriment or harm. This is because they could be mitigated by the provider's obligation to comply with consumer protection law, including in relation to the material information provided to students considering study at the provider, and by the steps the provider is taking to avoid any such confusion.

As a registered provider, Northeastern University – London is also required by ongoing condition of registration C1 to demonstrate that, in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection law. The OfS is able to take regulatory action if it considers that a provider is not meeting this requirement.

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/proposed-new-name-for-nch-at-northeastern-limited/.

³ These issues included:

(a) Some respondents to the OfS's consultation raised concerns that the proposed name may suggest that the provider is the London campus of an American university, rather than an autonomous English higher education provider.

(b) Some respondents to the OfS's consultation raised concerns that the proposed name may suggest that the provider is primarily located in the northeast of England, with a campus in London, rather than primarily located in London.