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Department
for Education

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Changing a statutory name

Before applying you must:

- decide on your new name
- consult people in your area
- decide when the change will happen
- get your governing body to approve the new name

Deciding your new name

Your new name must not:

- wrongly use a [sensitive word or expression](#)
- be confusing, misleading or offensive
- suggest that your college is better than others
- suggest that your college serves a wider or different area than it actually does
- be the same or too similar to that of another college or other educational organisation
- give a false impression of the type of education you offer

Sensitive words and expressions

You will need to comply with the guidance on sensitive words and expressions if you're changing:

- the statutory name of a FE or sixth form college corporation
- the name of the body running a designated institution
- changing a name registered with Companies House
- adopting or changing a business (trading) name

You will need to follow [Companies House guidance](#) and seek approval from the relevant authority if the name that you wish to use:

- includes a sensitive word as set out in regulations made under the Companies Act 2006
- could imply a connection with a UK government department, a devolved administration or a local or specified public authority

You may be required to meet additional criteria and to provide further evidence to use the words and expressions listed below.

Follow the [Companies House guidance](#) on the use of the following [sensitive words and expressions](#):

- association or society
- federation
- institute or institution
- polytechnic
- trust
- university, including university centre, university campus or university college

The word 'group' is no longer considered a sensitive word. However, to be consistent with recent changes to the reporting of educational performance data, 'group' should only be used in the name of a corporation or body running an institution, where it delivers its FE provision through more than one (former) college or other unit which has a distinct institutional identity from a learner perspective.

The Companies House guidance also covers [words and expressions](#) which could imply a connection with a government department, a devolved administration or a local or specified public authority including:

- further education

- higher education

Consult people in your area

Consult people on the proposed name to make sure it is not confusing or misleading.

Contact:

- other educational organisations in the surrounding area – including universities, colleges and schools
- the emergency services – only one response is required
- other stakeholders who might have an interest

Allow enough time for everyone to respond – one calendar month is recommended.

Record your findings, including:

- who you contacted
- how long the consultation lasted
- the number of responses
- a summary of the responses
- whether responses were for or against the name change and why

Decide when the change will happen

When deciding when the name change should come into effect, remember to factor in the time taken to assess your application which is approximately 4 weeks.

Apply

Email your request to: FECollege.NAMECHANGES@education.gov.uk.

Include a letter from your principal or chair of the governing body stating:

- the name you want to use
- the reasons for the change
- the date you want the change to take place
- confirmation that a resolution agreeing to the name change has been reached by the governing body
- [details of the consultation](#) on the proposed new name
- contact details in case we need to ask for more information or evidence

We reserve the right to ask for further information or evidence about the application and the procedures above.

Bodies that are registered charities will also need to:

- follow Charity Commission policy and procedures
- arrange for their entry on the register of charities to be amended

Bodies that are exempt charities should also inform their principal regulator regarding the change.

After you've applied

Decisions are normally made within 4 weeks, unless we ask for more information.

When we get your application we check whether the:

- evidence is complete
- name could be confusing or misleading
- use of any sensitive words or expressions, specified in the regulations made under the Companies Act 2006, are appropriate and has the approval of the appropriate body

The final decision will be made by officials with delegated authority from the Secretary of State (SoS). We reserve the right to engage ministers on contentious or complex applications.

If your application is approved

You will be informed by email on the success of your application.

We expect you to:

- publicly change your name within 6 months of the consultation
- inform all interested parties

This may include changing the name on:

- official letters
- your prospectus
- directories

We will also inform the following that your application has been successful:

- Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA)
- Companies House
- Ofsted
- Office for Students
- Home Office - if the college is a Tier 4 sponsor
- Association of Colleges or Sixth Form Colleges Association
- other relevant stakeholders

Changing a registered name with Companies House

You can change your name by special resolution or by other means provided in your articles if you are:

- a college incorporated under the Companies Act 2006

- a college-owned company

Choosing your name

You must follow [Companies House guidance](#):

- on [making changes to your registered company name](#) and sensitive words and expressions
- seek agreement from the relevant authority when using sensitive words and expressions
- get approval from Companies House for the change of name

Registering with Companies House

The change:

- takes effect when the new name is entered on the register
- does not affect any existing rights or obligations or legal proceedings

Adopting a new business (trading) name

To minimise confusion the outward facing name (business name) of a college should usually be the same as the name of the corporation or body that runs the college.

The statutory further education sector also includes institutions which have been designated as being part of the FE sector under section 28 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The outward facing name of a 'designated institution' should be the same as the name in the order by which it was designated.

Different delivery models may mean that this is not always appropriate, for example within a group structure. A governing body may choose to adopt a business name for the college that is not:

- its statutory or corporation name
- the name of the body that runs the institution

This will allow colleges to locally brand their campuses.

It's important to be clear with staff, students, parents and stakeholders when and how these names will be used. For example, by using:

- clear branding containing the business name
- the statutory name on employment contracts

Choosing your name

You must follow the [Companies House guidance](#) covering incorporation and names which also includes information on sensitive words and expressions.

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