

# Frequently Asked Questions

Following the announcement that the governing bodies of Highbury College and Portsmouth College have agreed, in principle, to merge, we wanted to provide you with answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

You may like to read this document alongside the public consultation document that can be found by visiting [www.highbury.ac.uk/consultation](http://www.highbury.ac.uk/consultation) or [www.portsmouth-college.ac.uk/consultation](http://www.portsmouth-college.ac.uk/consultation)

If you have any further queries over the coming weeks, please do not hesitate to contact us. Beyond the public consultation exercise, we are keen that everyone who has an interest in our college, either now or in the future, is informed, and given their chance to have their say, about such a key development.

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## What does a merged college mean for the people of Portsmouth?

By combining the existing resources and expertise of both colleges, the merged college will give students, employers and the residents of Portsmouth an even better education and training offer. We will continue to be innovative and will develop to meet the needs of our communities, employers and the local, regional and national economies. Our vision is One City – One College.

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## Are there any downsides of merger?

The merger process, as with all projects of this size carry risk and the risks to the merger have been identified as part of the merger plan. One of the risks we have considered and are proactively managing is the perception that the College will become too large and not continue to offer an excellent student experience. Please be reassured that we will continue to offer a personal and supportive student approach. We have engaged an experienced project manager who is working closely with both the CEO (Designate) and Principal (Designate) to support with this, all overseen by a Shadow Board with joint governor representatives from both colleges. We have comprehensive plans in place to mitigate and manage the risks identified to ensure the merger is delivered in the smoothest way possible. Of course, it is the firm belief of both colleges that the benefits of merger outweigh any potential risks which have been identified.

### **When will we know if the merger is definitely happening?**

Both Colleges are committed to serving the communities and economy of Portsmouth to grow and succeed. We believe that this can best be done by uniting to offer seamless learning pathways into work and higher levels of study. We believe that this will attract inward investment and support regeneration; that it will enable skills development tackling unemployment and low wage work. We want to create a prosperous future for our young people and diverse communities and believe we can do this better as one college maximizing our resources and being focused at the point of delivery.

The public consultation outcome finishes on Wednesday 28th April 2021 and an update regarding the outcome will be provided by Friday 18th June 2021.

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### **How will I know the progress of the merger, and how will this be communicated?**

The Shadow Board, made up equally of representatives from both College boards, is committed to ensuring all staff and stakeholders are kept informed of progress and developments through a range of channels. There is a communication plan that will keep people informed of progress in a timely manner throughout the process. There is an 'Ask a Question' button on the Highbury website and people can also email [hello@tpc.ac.uk](mailto:hello@tpc.ac.uk) to ask questions of Portsmouth College. Regular updates will be posted on both college websites.

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### **What is the date of the merger?**

The merger date, if agreed, is Friday 30th July 2021.

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### **What will the new name of the College be?**

It has been proposed that the new College name is City of Portsmouth College. This name is subject to consultation which will also close on Wednesday 28th April 2021. The outcome of this consultation will be announced on Friday 18th June 2021. An update will be provided.

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### **Who will be the CEO and Principal?**

The Shadow Board and both College boards have agreed that Penny Wycherley will be the Chief Executive Officer and Simon Barrable will be the Principal of the new merged college. They are working closely together to ensure the success of the merged college.



### **How will the new college ensure that quality is challenged and maintained?**

The merged college will ensure that the good practices already in place in both colleges will be shared and the best of existing arrangements will be used to further improve our services. The governors and leaders will work to ensure that quality levels are maintained and improved. By building on our strong foundation and learning from each other, both colleges will be able to share best practices, share resources and create improved learning environments for students and apprentices.

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### **When would changes start to take effect?**

Merging two colleges is a complex process and although the merger is due to take place on Friday 30th July 2021, operationally and practically there will still be considerable work to do to ensure we gain the maximum benefit from joining together. We are keen that the separate campuses within the new college will retain their own unique characters and curriculum offers within the overall new college.

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### **How big will be the merged College be?**

The combined college will have a turnover of around £30m.

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### **Progressing the merger between the College will be a time consuming and complex process, which could take resource away from the College core business, and reduce focus on the students, how will this be managed to ensure that this does not happen?**

The governors and leadership teams are very mindful of the interests of our current and new students.. We have clear priorities for further quality improvement and supporting our students. To help us do this the merger process is being managed by a Shadow Board and supported by a specialist project manager

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### **How will the proposed merger affect students applying for September 2021?**

We are committed to ensuring that it is business as usual for our students and employers. Whilst the merger is happening, students should continue to apply for a course offered in the usual way and follow the existing application guidance and procedures of each college. Our priority throughout the process is to ensure that students studying at either college continue to have the high-quality education and training they expect. As the merger of the colleges progresses, we will keep applicants up to date with the latest news and will update both college websites to help ensure everyone has the information they need.

The majority of students will continue to have their programmes delivered on the campus site they are expecting to attend.

