



PUBLIC CONSULTATION

on the Proposed Merger
and Name Change of
Exeter College and Petroc

SEPTEMBER 2025

WE WELCOME YOUR VIEWS

Exeter College and Petroc are proposing to merge to form a new College Group. This merger aims to create the best place-based college group in England, which works for students, staff, the community, and businesses to support ambition in Devon.

The purpose of this document is to outline the proposed merger, enabling students, employers and the wider communities served an opportunity to provide informed feedback to contribute to the final merger proposal.

We welcome all views on the proposal and invite you to share your feedback as part of the public consultation – please see page 18. All responses will be carefully considered and will contribute to shaping the final proposal. Should the merger proceed, we will continue engaging with all stakeholders to create a collaborative and ambitious vision for the group.



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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRS

We are pleased to present this public consultation document on the proposed merger between Exeter College and Petroc. As Chairs of these institutions, we believe that this merger represents a significant opportunity to enhance the educational landscape in our region. By combining our strengths, we aim to provide even greater opportunities for our students, staff, and the wider community.

This is a voluntary process. Neither college is in any form of intervention, so both Boards have looked at this through the lens of positioning both organisations in the best possible place for the future for learners, staff, employers, our stakeholders and the community. We believe this could be a unique opportunity to strengthen Further Education across Devon and the wider South West.

This merger provides the opportunity to build a brighter future for education in Devon. We are committed to achieving consistently high standards of excellence, while also expanding our capabilities to meet the evolving needs of our students and industry partners.

We value the input of our stakeholders and encourage you to participate in this consultation process. Your feedback is crucial in ensuring that this merger is successful and beneficial for everyone involved.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to working together to achieve our shared vision.



Adam Watt
Chair of the Corporation
Exeter College



Patricia Denham OBE
Chair of Board
Petroc

“We are committed to consistently achieving high standards of excellence”

LOCATIONS



RATIONALE FOR THE MERGER

Exeter College and Petroc are both well-established further education tertiary institutions with a long history of excellence in delivering a wide range of academic and vocational courses.



Both colleges have their absolute focus on doing the right thing for the young people, Apprentices, Adult learners and businesses that are currently studying at, or working with, Exeter College and Petroc. That will not change. By proposing this merger, we are seeking to build on our shared values and enhance our collective ability to meet the regional skills need.

There is a direction of travel nationally for fewer, larger place-based college groups, with the capacity and capability to meet the ambition of its learners, stakeholders and community. The new group would be the largest college group in the South West, and one of the largest nationally. It would have a £100m annual turnover, creating a regional education and skills powerhouse with the ability to invest, innovate and deliver ‘the exceptional’ for Devon.

Alongside maintaining Outstanding sixth form provision in Exeter and developing Outstanding sixth form provision in North Devon, we believe there are significant opportunities for Devon-wide solutions for High Needs Education, Apprenticeships, Adult Education and Higher Technical Education, aligned to local economic need. The emerging vision for Petroc’s Tiverton campus is to create a centre dedicated to meeting the needs of young people with additional needs, continuing the evolution of this campus into a specialist centre in SEND, supporting progression into independent living, supported employment, and further learning.



We are seeking to build on our shared values and enhance our collective ability

Should this move forward we think there will be three main advantages, for staff, students, employers, stakeholders and the community:



A larger group, providing additional resilience against funding reductions and enhanced capacity to capitalise on opportunities that stem from government policy and devolution.



Opportunities brought about by increased scale, in Adult Education, Higher Technical Education and Apprenticeships, particularly to support new industries in Devon, such as offshore wind.



An ambitious and dynamic sixth form offer enabling our regions’ young people to succeed and flourish in an unmatched range of courses.

EXETER COLLEGE

Exeter College’s vision is to be an exceptional College. Enjoying an excellent regional reputation, it is a thriving and growing tertiary College which places student experience through excellent teaching and learning as its top priorities.

Established in 1970 in its current form, and based in the heart of Exeter, Devon, it serves over **12,500 Learners**, employs **1,200 staff** and has an **annual turnover approaching £75m**.



MORE THAN
12,500
LEARNERS



1,200
STAFF



£75M
ANNUAL TURNOVER

The college has built a reputation for excellence in education, consistently achieving high achievement rates and positive student outcomes. An Ofsted Inspection in 2022 resulted in the College retaining the impressive accolade of Outstanding. The College also scored the top assessment of ‘strong’ for its approach to meeting the skills needs of the area. Exeter College’s Financial Health has been Good or Outstanding in recent years.

As a successful tertiary College, it offers a wide range of courses and students can choose those that reflect their individual ability, aspiration and interest. Courses provide a variety of ways into industry or further study. Students can choose from A Levels, T Levels, BTECs, Apprenticeships, Higher Technical Education, and a range of adult learning courses including GCSEs and Skills Bootcamps. The college maintains strong partnerships with local employers, providing

students with valuable work experience opportunities and ensuring that its curriculum is aligned with industry needs. The importance of partnership is also reflected in links with schools in Devon through its role as a Member of the Ted Wragg Trust, and the collaboration with the University of Exeter for which a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in June of this year.

Exeter College has high expectations of its students and staff and each year their combined efforts result in excellent exam grades, outstanding training successes and brilliant music, art, sports and community achievements. Students of all ages and abilities are welcomed and the tutorial and learner support programmes are designed to meet their needs, challenging them to reach their full potential. In 2025 Exeter College was named a Sunday Times ‘Top 100’ Employer in its annual Best Places to Work Survey, in the large employer category.



PETROC COLLEGE

Petroc College, with its campuses in Barnstaple and Tiverton, serves over 4,500 learners and plays a pivotal role in delivering post-16 and adult education across North and Mid Devon.

Employing **650 staff** and with an **annual turnover exceeding £31 million**, Petroc is a key regional anchor institution, providing education and skills training aligned to local economic priorities.



MORE THAN
4,500
LEARNERS



650
STAFF



£31M
ANNUAL TURNOVER

As a dynamic and inclusive College, Petroc offers a comprehensive curriculum that spans A Levels, T Levels, vocational qualifications, apprenticeships, Higher Education, and adult part-time learning. Its programmes are delivered flexibly - on campus, in the workplace, and online - ensuring accessibility across one of the largest and most rural college catchments in England.

Petroc’s vision is to inspire ambition through inclusive education, enabling every learner to reach their fullest potential. Its mission goes beyond academic attainment - **transforming lives and communities through high-quality learning experiences that equip individuals with the skills and confidence to thrive.**

The College’s curriculum is designed to be career-focused, with strong employer partnerships and clear sightlines to future employment. Petroc ensures its offer remains responsive to emerging trends in health and social care, construction and green industries, digital and creative sectors, and advanced manufacturing.

The **North Devon Campus** in Barnstaple delivers a broad and ambitious curriculum, with strengths in academic, technical and professional programmes. It is a leader in T Level delivery and hosts the region’s University Centre and the South West Institute of Technology (SWIoT). Recent investment in updating facilities and expanded digital, construction and engineering provision reflects Petroc’s focus on aligning with sector growth.

The **Tiverton Campus** has a distinctive and vital role in the community, specialising in Entry Level and Level 1 provision, and providing a safe, inclusive space for learners with additional needs. As a specialist centre in SEND, Tiverton supports progression into independent living, supported employment, and further learning.

Petroc’s ambition is matched by its strategic drive to improve quality and financial resilience.



Following a “Requires Improvement” outcome in its October 2024 Ofsted inspection, the College has implemented a robust improvement plan aimed at achieving a “Good” rating by 2025. Despite recent financial challenges, a return to “Good” Financial Health is forecast for 2024/25, supported by strategic investment in people, estate, and technology.

In summary, Petroc is a forward-thinking, place-based institution that plays a vital role in addressing social mobility, economic inequality, and skills development across North and Mid Devon. With a commitment to excellence and a curriculum rooted in opportunity, Petroc is well-positioned to contribute to a merged college group that delivers for learners, employers, and communities across Devon.



THE MERGED COLLEGE GROUP

The guiding principles of the merger will ensure learners, staff, Devon communities, local skills needs and employer needs are at their core. Maintaining financial stability whilst being consistently outstanding will be overarching aims.



The merger will create a new, ambitious group, with a commitment to aspiration for learners through inspirational teaching and learning

The merged college group will have outstanding place-based sixth forms in Barnstaple and Exeter, ensuring a coast-to-coast College Group that can be accessed across Devon, offering an aspirational and inclusive curriculum.

The group will continue to build partnerships that positively impact students and their community. There will be a co-ordinated Devon-wide Apprenticeship, Adult and Higher Technical offer, partnering local employers and other stakeholders to deliver education and skills training that is closely aligned with local needs, improving social mobility and economic prosperity.

The proposed name of the merged College Group is **Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group (ENDC)**. The proposal is for Petroc's Barnstaple Campus to become **North Devon College**, ensuring there is a closer link between its name and the community it serves. Emphasising the importance of place-based education, whilst meeting the needs of the broad and diverse Devon communities it serves will be crucial. **Exeter College** will retain its name, as it already celebrates its place in the community. The Petroc Tiverton Campus will have a new focus, supporting student progression and individuals with additional learning needs, as a result this will become the **Centre for Progression**, Tiverton. We believe the new group can be a skills powerhouse for the region.





HOW WILL THE MERGER BENEFIT STAKEHOLDERS

Our guiding principles will be to do the right thing for learners, staff, employers and the community; while recognising what we do and offer must have the potential to be outstanding and financially sustainable.

IMPACT ON LEARNERS AND APPRENTICES

- We will establish an approach of “right student, right course in the right location” across the new group, improving completion and achievement.
- A greater depth and breadth of progression opportunities will be accessible to all Learners.
- The scale of the new group will provide enhanced opportunity to introduce new curriculum areas.
- As a result of being in a larger group, greater support and access to resources will directly lead to improved outcomes in North Devon.
- Devon-wide solutions for High Needs Education, Apprenticeships, Adult Education and Higher Technical Education will deliver improved outcomes in Devon.

IMPACT ON STAFF AND CULTURE

- Building on best practice from both colleges, a culture of high expectation and excellence will be established.
- Rolling out the enhanced benefits and culture that led to the Sunday Times Best Companies Top 100 recognition in Exeter will lift opportunities across the group.
- Providing greater resilience in a tough funding landscape will provide opportunities for improved pay, conditions and stability.
- The new group will prioritise the creation of a culture where staff feel valued and success is celebrated.

COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

- Taking best practice from both Colleges will enhance the reputation with school partners.
- Further improving quality and student experience in North Devon will enable more students to choose to study locally.
- More efficient use of resources through economies of scale will allow increased investment in North Devon.
- Pooling resources and working collaboratively across Devon will lead to an improved Apprenticeship offer.
- The merger will increase capacity to respond to employers and partners, providing an improved solution for their needs.
- An enhanced cross-Devon offer for Adult learners and Higher Technical Education will lead to greater choice and increased opportunity.
- Devon Wide approach to supporting High Needs and SEND learners.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The public consultation process is a critical step in the proposed merger, ensuring that stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback and express their views. The proposed merger timeline is as follows:



STATUTORY NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the Corporation of Petroc, Old Sticklepath Hill, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2BQ in accordance with The Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012, of the proposal for the transfer of its property, rights and liabilities to the Corporation of Exeter College, Hele Road, Exeter EX4 4JS and the subsequent dissolution of the Corporation of Petroc.

The Corporation of Exeter College is separately proposing to the Secretary of State a change of name for the Corporation to be effective from 5 January 2026. The proposed name of the merged college Corporation is Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group (ENDC).

Petroc is a general further education college which delivers education and skills training for learners across A Levels, T Levels, vocational qualifications, apprenticeships, Higher Education, and adult part-time learning. It serves over 4,500 learners, employing 650 staff and with an annual turnover exceeding £31 million.

Dissolution of the Corporation of Petroc is proposed in order that it may merge with Exeter College. The merger will create a strong institution delivering high-quality education and skills training for learners and employers across Devon.

The date proposed for the dissolution of the Corporation of Petroc is 5 January 2026.

All students at Petroc who have not yet completed their course of study by the date of the proposed dissolution will continue their education in the merged college on the same campus where they studied immediately prior to the dissolution of the Corporation of Petroc. This will affect approximately 4,526 students (of which 2237 are full-time and 2289 are part-time): 2544 16-18-year-olds (of which 2039 are full-time and 505 are part-time) (FE learners) and 1982 adults, including Higher Education (of which 198 are full-time and 1784 are part-time).

A copy of the consultation document on this proposal is available at www.petroc.ac.uk or by writing to Executive Office, Petroc, Old Sticklepath Hill, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2BQ.

The consultation period runs from 1 September 2025 to 30 September 2025.

All responses and representations must be received by the closing date through:

- Completing the online response form at www.petroc.ac.uk or www.exe-coll.ac.uk
- Emailing merger@petroc.ac.uk or merger@exe-coll.ac.uk

A summary of the feedback and the outcome will be published by 30 November 2025 on the Petroc and Exeter College websites. A copy of the document will be available free of charge to any person who requests it.



YOUR VIEWS

We welcome your views on the proposed merger between Exeter College and Petroc and on the proposed corporation name change for Exeter College. Your feedback is essential in helping us understand the perspectives and concerns of all stakeholders. Please share your thoughts by using the online feedback forms at: **www.petroc.ac.uk** | **www.exe-coll.ac.uk**

You may also email your response to **merger@petroc.ac.uk** or **merger@exe-coll.ac.uk**.

Alternatively, please post your response to Executive Office, Petroc, Old Sticklepath Hill, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2BQ or Executive Office, Exeter College, Hele Road, Exeter, EX4 4JS.

All responses must be received by **30 September 2025** to be considered as part of the consultation process.

Name:

Address and Postcode:

Your organisation (if applicable):

Please circle the category/ies which best describe/s you:

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Exeter College Student | • Trade Union Representative | • Private training provider |
| • Petroc Student | • Parent/Carer | • Employer/local business |
| • Prospective student or parent/carers | • School | • Local government |
| • Exeter College Staff | • Other FE institution | • Government body |
| • Petroc Staff | • HE institution | • Other |

- 1. Do you support the merger?** (Please circle one answer) **Yes / No / Unsure**
- 2. Do you wish to pass any general comment, on the merger, or identify an emerging skill need, or a community need that the new group should consider?**

3. Your comments on the proposed corporation name: Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group.

4. Your comments on the names of the proposed Colleges within the newly formed College Group: Exeter College and North Devon College.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

Any personal information you provide to Exeter College and Petroc as part of the consultation process will only be used for the purposes of acknowledging your participation and/or responding to any queries you submit at your request.

Personal information will not be published as part of the outcome of the consultation; only anonymous comments and responses will be made public. Any personal information you provide will be kept for six months and then destroyed in a secure manner.

You retain the following rights:

- The right to access your personal information, using the College's subject Access Request process
- The right to have inaccurate personal information changed
- The right to restrict the processing of your personal information
- The right to object to the processing of your personal information
- The right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office in relation to how Exeter College and Petroc have processed your data. You can do this at: **www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint**



PETROC