**Petroc & Exeter College Joint Statement**

Dear Stakeholder,

Since Christmas, Exeter College and Petroc have been exploring what a deeper collaboration might look like. After careful consideration and robust discussions, the initial work was extremely encouraging. Governors at both Exeter College and Petroc have therefore agreed to move forward and enter what is called a merger in principle.

We now enter a period of due diligence, looking at the detailed legal, financial and strategic considerations of merging. We will seek advice from a group of external consultants but assisted by the senior leadership teams at both Petroc and Exeter College.

This is a voluntary process. Neither college are 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 staff, young people, 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.

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 young people, 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.

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/working with Exeter College and Petroc. That will not change. By exploring this merger, we are seeking to build on our shared values and enhance our collective ability to meet the regional skills need.

Alongside maintaining Outstanding sixth form provision in Exeter and developing Outstanding sixth form provision in North Devon, we believe there are big 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, and supporting the progression of, young people with additional needs.

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.

· New opportunities brought about by increased scale, in Adult Education, Higher Technical Education and Apprenticeships.

· An unmatched and nationally significant curriculum for young people, with the financial capacity to introduce new areas to support industries, like offshore wind.

If this stage progresses as we hope, there will be a further vote by both Boards to determine whether we actually merge. The aim is to reach a final decision in November 2025.

In the coming months, both colleges will create FAQs on their websites and a detailed brochure to outline what a merger could mean for staff, students, Apprentices, employers, stakeholders and our community. There will be a full public consultation and engagement with stakeholders like you will be central to this process – your perspective and insight while we explore this opportunity will be invaluable.

Today, it remains business as usual for both colleges. Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We look forward to working closely with you throughout this important journey.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Denham OBE                                           Bindu Arjoon

Chair of the Corporation, Petroc                        Chair of the Corporation, Exeter College

Kurt Hintz                                                               John Laramy CBE

Interim Principal & CEO, Petroc                       Principal & CEO, Exeter College