

# Processes followed by the Faculty Ethics Screening Committee (FESC) as required by the Humanities Research Ethics Committee (REC)

Presented by Tanya Ficker (Postgraduate Coordinator – Dean's Office)



"Before I write my name on the board, I'll need to know  
how you're planning to use that data."



Fakultät Ingenieurswese

Faculty of Engineering



# What is the FESC and what does it do?

**FESC:** The Faculty Ethics Screening Committee (FESC) was established in June 2015 on request of the Research Ethics Committee (REC), which forms part of the Division for Research Development at SU.

**LOW RISK APPLICATIONS:** FESC is responsible for the review and initial approval of all low risk ethics applications. Medium to high risk applications are referred to the REC for review and approval.

**MEMBERS:** Prof Willem Perold (Chairperson) + Prof Jan Wium + Prof Corne Schutte + Tanya Ficker



Prof Willem Perold  
E&E



Prof Jan Wium  
Civil



Prof Corne Schutte  
Industrial



Tanya Ficker  
Dean's Office

# Why... but WHY?

**NHREC:** All of SU's Research Ethics Committees (Humanities, Health, Animal) are registered with the [National Health Research Ethics Council \(NHREC\)](#).

**POLICIES:** SU adheres to the [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#), and also has the [Policy for Responsible Research Conduct at Stellenbosch University](#) in place.

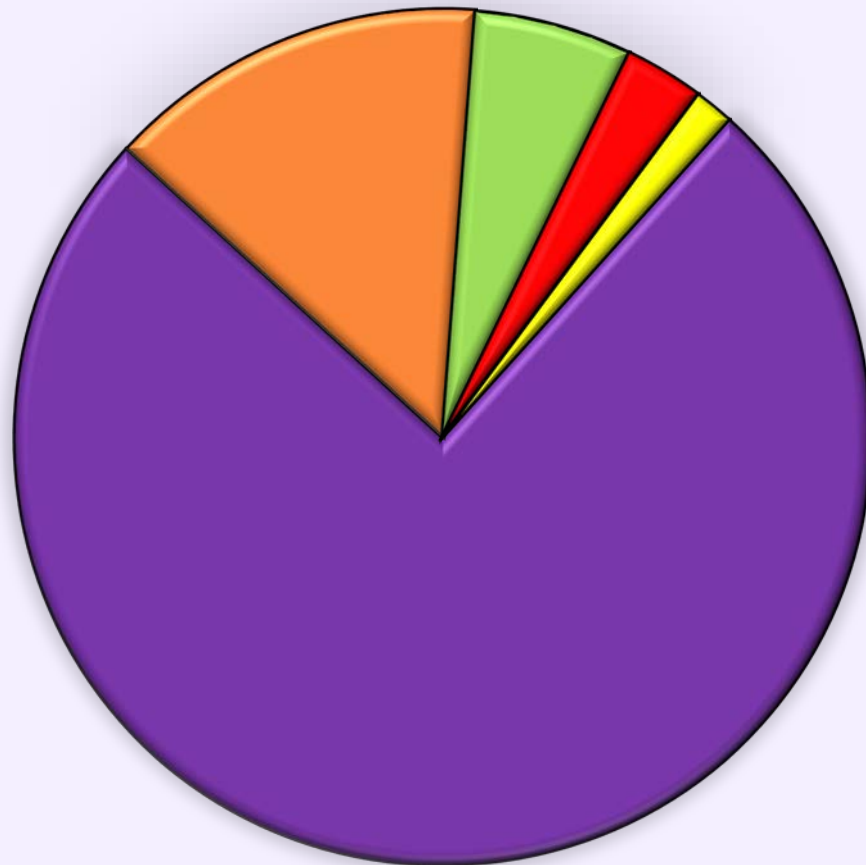
**JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS:** Certain large journals require an official letter of ethics clearance prior to accepting an article for publication (ethics clearance can unfortunately not be granted retrospectively).

**COMPLAINTS:** If a participant lodges a complaint with Stellenbosch University, after having participated in a research project, it can negatively affect a researcher's integrity if ethics clearance was not obtained.

**ENQUIRIES:** It can happen that a school or higher education institution contacts Stellenbosch University to ascertain if ethics clearance had been obtained, prior to allowing a researcher to conduct their research.

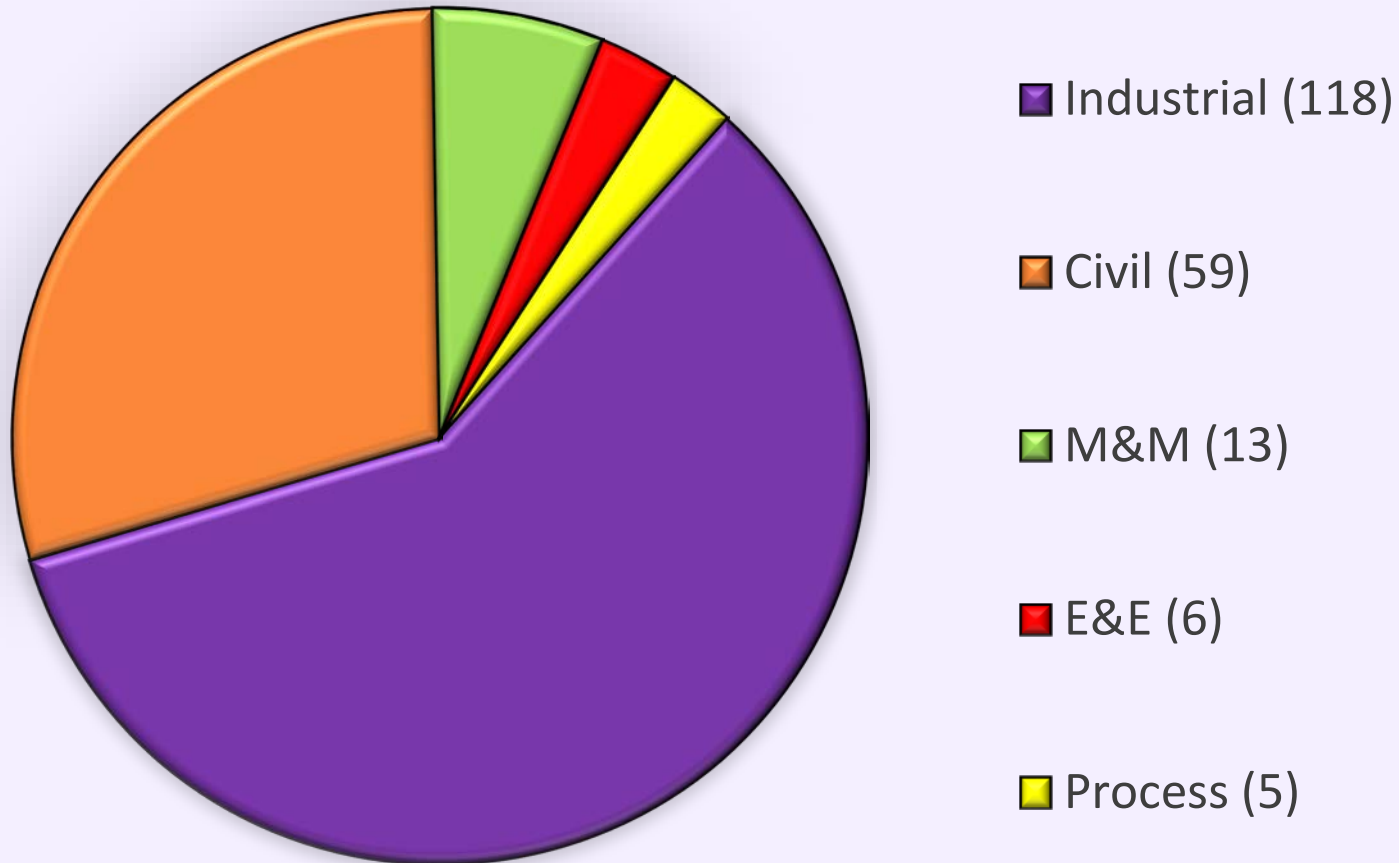
**CONTACT:** Dr Natalie Harriman [Research Integrity Officer – The Division for Research Development – 021 808 2670 / [nharriman@sun.ac.za](mailto:nharriman@sun.ac.za)] can be contacted w.r.t. research integrity and misconduct issues.

**As from July 2015 the FESC has received a total of  
201 ethics applications**



- Submitted to REC (151)
- Exempt (29)
- Retrospective (12)
- Withdrawn (6)
- Referred to Health REC (3)

## Ethics Applications received per Department





# When should a postgraduate student submit an ethics application?

If any of the following five questions (see Section 4 of the application form) apply, then a postgraduate student should submit an ethics application (there is one exception, though, as explained in the next slide). If none of the following five questions apply, then please do not submit an ethics application.

**Question 1:** I will collect data from, or interact with, one or more individuals through interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, video recordings, etc.

**Question 2:** I need access to confidential data or information (or archival data, contact lists or reports), of an organisation or institution or company, where the data is not available in the public domain (i.e. not available to the general public). The data can be linked to individuals or clients or employees, etc.

**Question 3:** I am collaborating with an institution or organisation or company that is giving me access to physical or financial data that is NOT linked to individuals, or any personal accounts or personal information. I have been granted access to this data by an authorised representative of the organisation or institution or company.

**Question 4:** I will have access to a database or archive that holds information linked to personal identifiers (e.g. names, ID numbers, account numbers, student numbers); and/or the database contains coded information, but I have access to the codes that links the information to personal identifiers.

**Question 5:** I will gather information or data that is available in the public domain, but that could be regarded as sensitive or potentially sensitive information, e.g. you will collect data via social media networks or public profiles such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook.

# But wait... there is ONE exception!

**Question 3** (*refer to Section 4 of the application form*): I am collaborating with an institution or organisation or company that is giving me access to physical or financial data that is NOT linked to individuals, or any personal accounts or personal information. I have been granted access to this data by an authorised representative of the organisation or institution or company.

1. Has the applicant answered "YES" to Q3, and "NO" to all the other questions (Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5)?
2. If so, then yes – the research project is indeed exempt from ethics clearance.
3. In that case, please do not submit an ethics application.
4. An external non-disclosure agreement (NDA) is only required if the outside institution or organisation or company requires or initiates it. The onus is not on you (the applicant/researcher) to initiate an NDA.
5. It is strongly advised that you contact Mrs Alweri Brand [Legal Advisor – The Division for Research Development – 021 808 9488 / [alweri@sun.ac.za](mailto:alweri@sun.ac.za)] prior to signing an NDA with an outside institution.

# When should an undergraduate student submit an ethics application?

Even if an undergraduate student answers "YES" to any of the previous five questions, they will only need to apply for ethics clearance:

- if their ethics application will be classified as medium or high risk, or
- if their ethics application will be classified as low risk and one of the following four points apply to their research report.

1. If the undergraduate student's research report will perhaps be published at a later stage; or

2. If the undergraduate student's research report will be presented at a conference; or

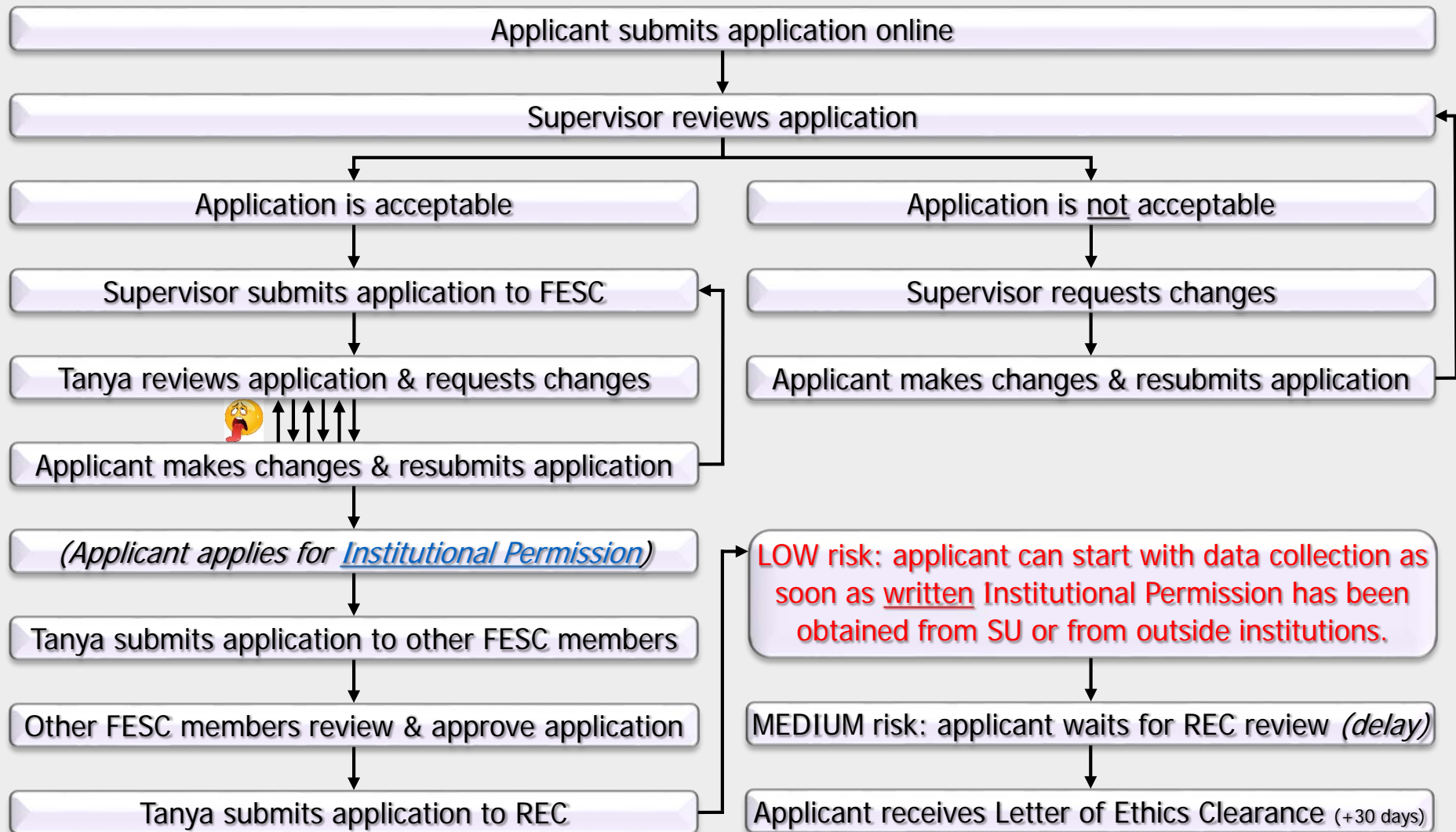
3. If the undergraduate student's research report will be shared with anyone outside Stellenbosch University; or

4. If the undergraduate student's research report will be stored on any platform that is accessible to anyone who was not directly involved in the project.

Either way, undergraduate students must still obtain permission from SU's [Division for Information Governance](#) if any data/information will be obtained (via interviews, questionnaires, surveys, social media, etc) from SU's staff members, students, alumni, and/or third-party partners. Queries can be sent via email to: [permission@sun.ac.za](mailto:permission@sun.ac.za)



# What process is followed once an applicant submits an ethics application?



## Frequently Asked Questions

1. Click [HERE](#) to find out if a research project will be classified as low risk, medium risk, or high risk.
2. Click [HERE](#) to view the Agenda Closing Dates for the 2018 REC Review Meetings (only w.r.t. medium or high risk applications). Submit your application 21 work days before the REC agenda closing date.
3. Click [HERE](#) to find out if an application should be submitted to the Health REC or to the Humanities REC.
4. Click [HERE](#) to gain access to the training manual on how to submit an application for ethics clearance.
5. Click [HERE](#) to gain access to the online ethics application form.

## Frequently Asked Questions (continued...)

6. Click [HERE](#) to find out if it's necessary to apply for Institutional Permission (a separate application).
7. Click [HERE](#) to see exactly what additional information is required for Question 3 of Section 2 of the online ethics application form.
8. Click [HERE](#) to gain access to the various Templates (available on Sharepoint) that should be included in an ethics application form.
9. Click [HERE](#) if you're uncertain as to how to submit your student's online ethics application form.
10. Click [HERE](#) if you'd like to rectify the fact that you receive email notifications (w.r.t. ethics application submissions) via your personal, instead of your work, email address.

# Do you need help with your ethics application? Contact us!

1. Ms Tanya Ficker [Postgraduate Coordinator – [Dean's Office](#)] – 021 808 9403 / [tanya@sun.ac.za](mailto:tanya@sun.ac.za)

2. Ms Clarissa Graham [Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee (REC) Humanities – [Division for Research Development](#)] – 021 808 9183 / [cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za)

3. Mr Aden Williams [Administrative Officer: Research Ethics Committee (REC) Humanities – [Division for Research Development](#)] – 021 808 9185 / [aden@sun.ac.za](mailto:aden@sun.ac.za)

And do remember...

If perhaps we ask you to include seemingly irrelevant or strange information in your ethics application?

**Please don't shoot the messenger!**



**Thank you!**