

Processes followed by the FESC, as required by the REC: SBE *(presented by Tanya Ficker - Aug '24)*



Photo by Stefan Els

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: Social Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE), which forms part of the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University.

LOW RISK APPLICATIONS: The FESC reviews and provisionally approves all low-risk ethics applications. If an application is deemed as medium or high-risk, the application is referred to the REC: SBE for review and approval.

FESC MEMBERS: Prof Corné Schutte (Chairperson), Prof Marion Sinclair, and Tanya Ficker.



Prof Marion
Sinclair
Civil Engineering

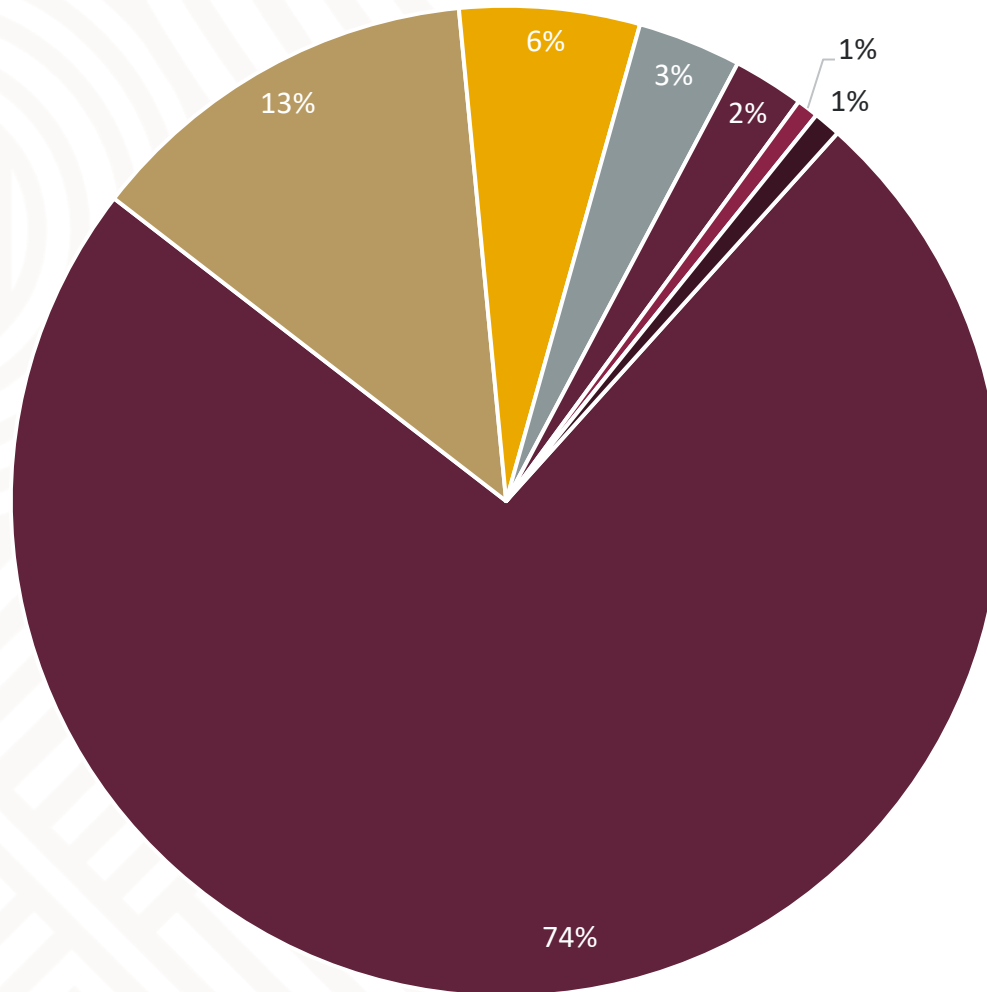


Prof Corne Schutte
Industrial
Engineering



Tanya Ficker
Dean's Division
tanya@sun.ac.za

The FESC has received a total of 561 ethics applications (Jul '15 - Dec '23):

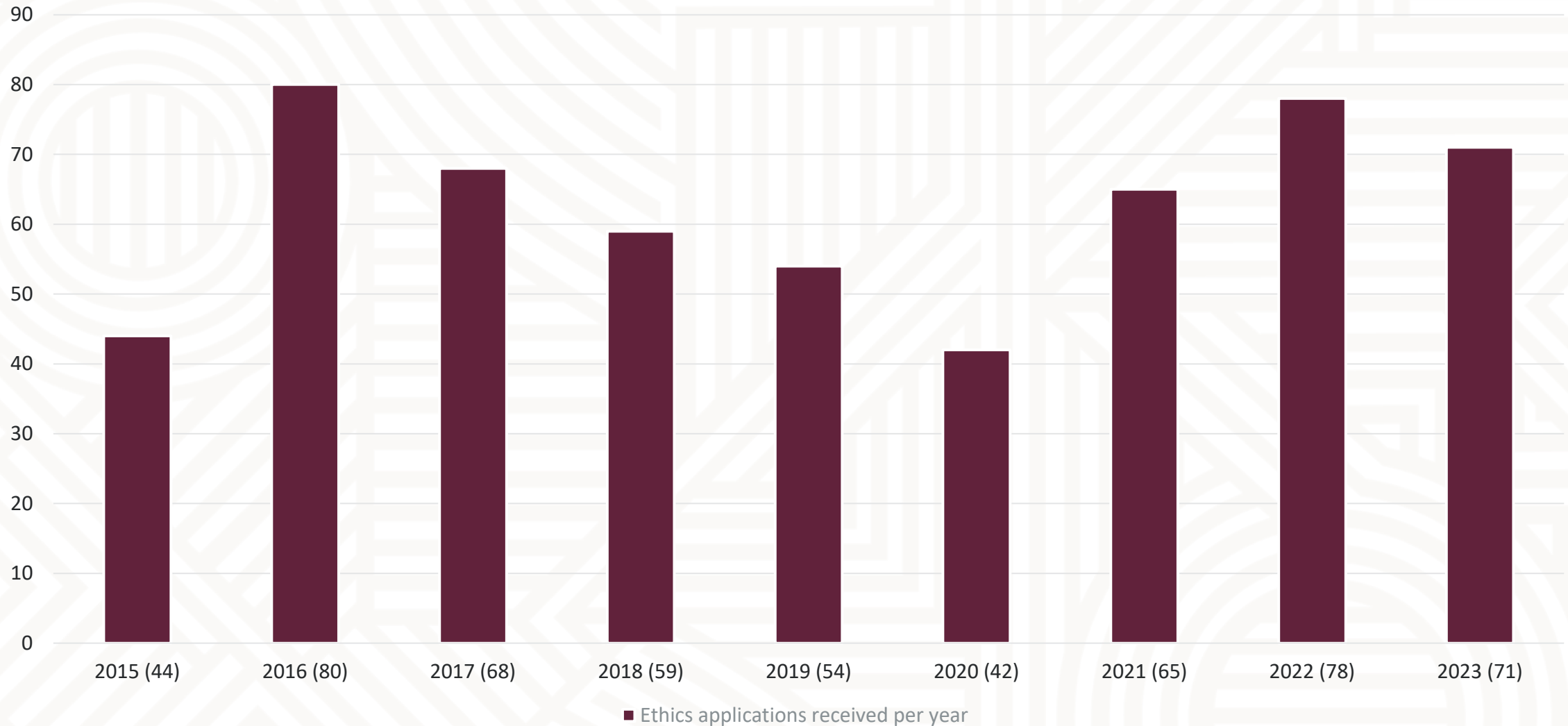


- Classified as low-risk (414)
- Exempt (73)
- Referred to REC: SBE (33)
- Withdrawn (19)
- Retrospective (13)
- Applicants still to make changes (4)
- Referred to Health REC (5)

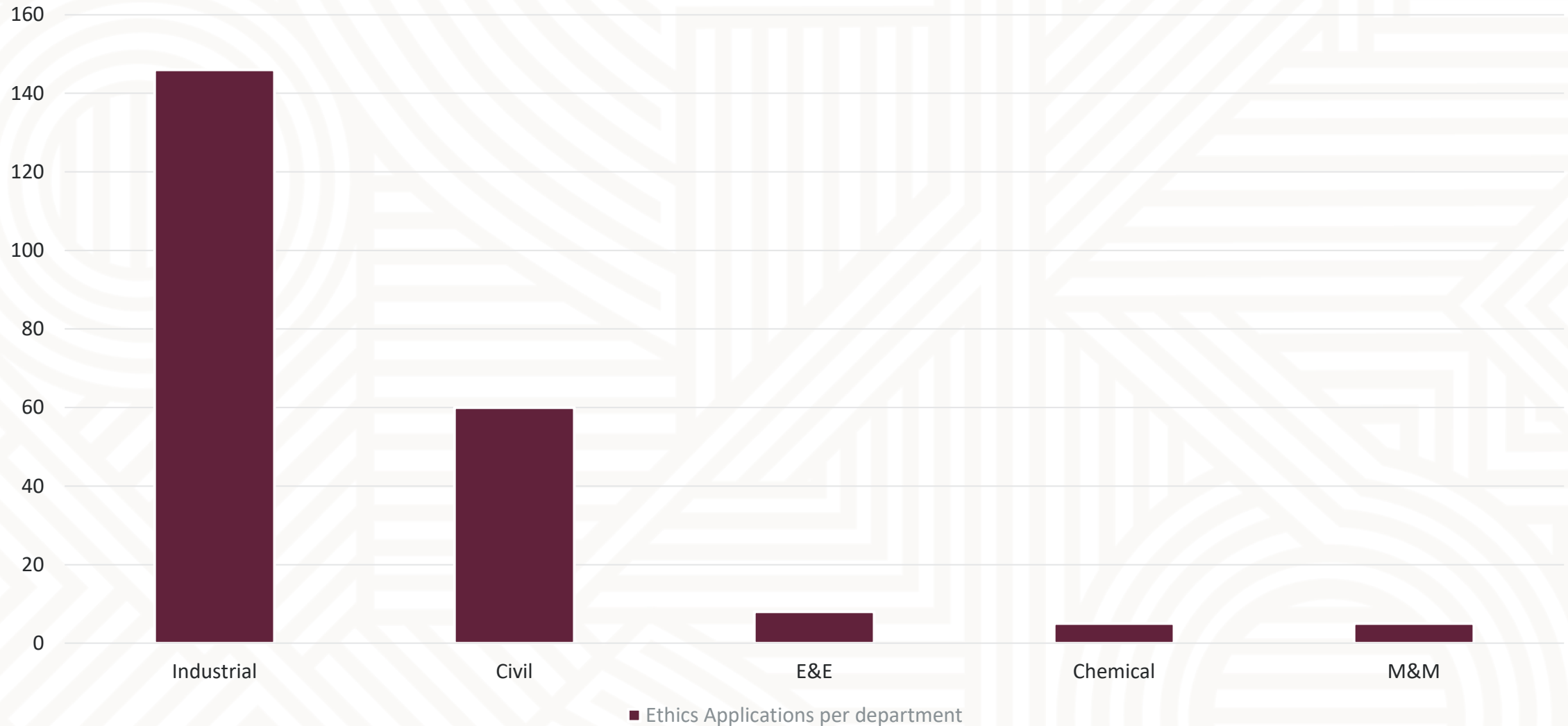
The FESC has received a total of 561 ethics applications (Jul '15 - Dec '23):

Year	Classified as low-risk	Exempt	Referred to REC: SBE	Withdrawn	Retro-spective	Applicants still to make changes	Referred to Health REC	TOTAL APPLICATIONS
2015	37			1	6			44
2016	56	13		4	6		1	80
2017	47	15	2	2			2	68
2018	52	6			1			59
2019	45	7	1	1				54
2020	33	3	4	1			1	42
2021	38	5	16	5			1	65
2022	49	20	7	2				78
2023	57	4	3	3		4		71
	414	73	33	19	13	4	5	561

Total ethics applications received per year (Jul '15 - Dec '23):



Low-risk ethics applications received per department (Jun '19 - Dec '23):



When should a postgraduate student submit an ethics application?

If any of the following five options (refer to Question 4.1 of the ethics application form) apply, then a postgraduate student would need to submit an ethics application (there is one exception, though, as explained in the next slide). If none of the following five options apply, then kindly ask your students to not submit an ethics application.

Option 1: I will collect data from (or interact with) one or more individuals through interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, video recording, etc.

Option 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.)

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

Option 4: I will have access to a database/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

Option 5: I will access data that is available in the public domain, but that could be regarded as private or potentially sensitive information (e.g. you will collect data via social media networks or public profiles such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook - where the line between what is public and private is unclear.)

There is **ONE** exception for postgraduate students...

Option 3 (refer to Question 4.1 of the ethics application form): I am collaborating with an institution (or organisation or company) that is giving me access to physical data (or financial data) that is NOT linked to individuals or any personal accounts (or information). I have been granted access to this data by an authorised representative of the organisation (or institution or company).

- Has the applicant answered “YES” to option 3, and “NO” to all the other options (1, 2, 4, 5)?
- If so, then the research project is indeed exempt from ethics clearance.
- If the research project is exempt from ethics clearance, please do not submit an ethics application.
- 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 the applicant or the researcher to initiate an NDA.
- However, it is strongly advised that you contact the Division for Research Development (DRD) via email (contracts@sun.ac.za) prior to signing an NDA with an outside institution.

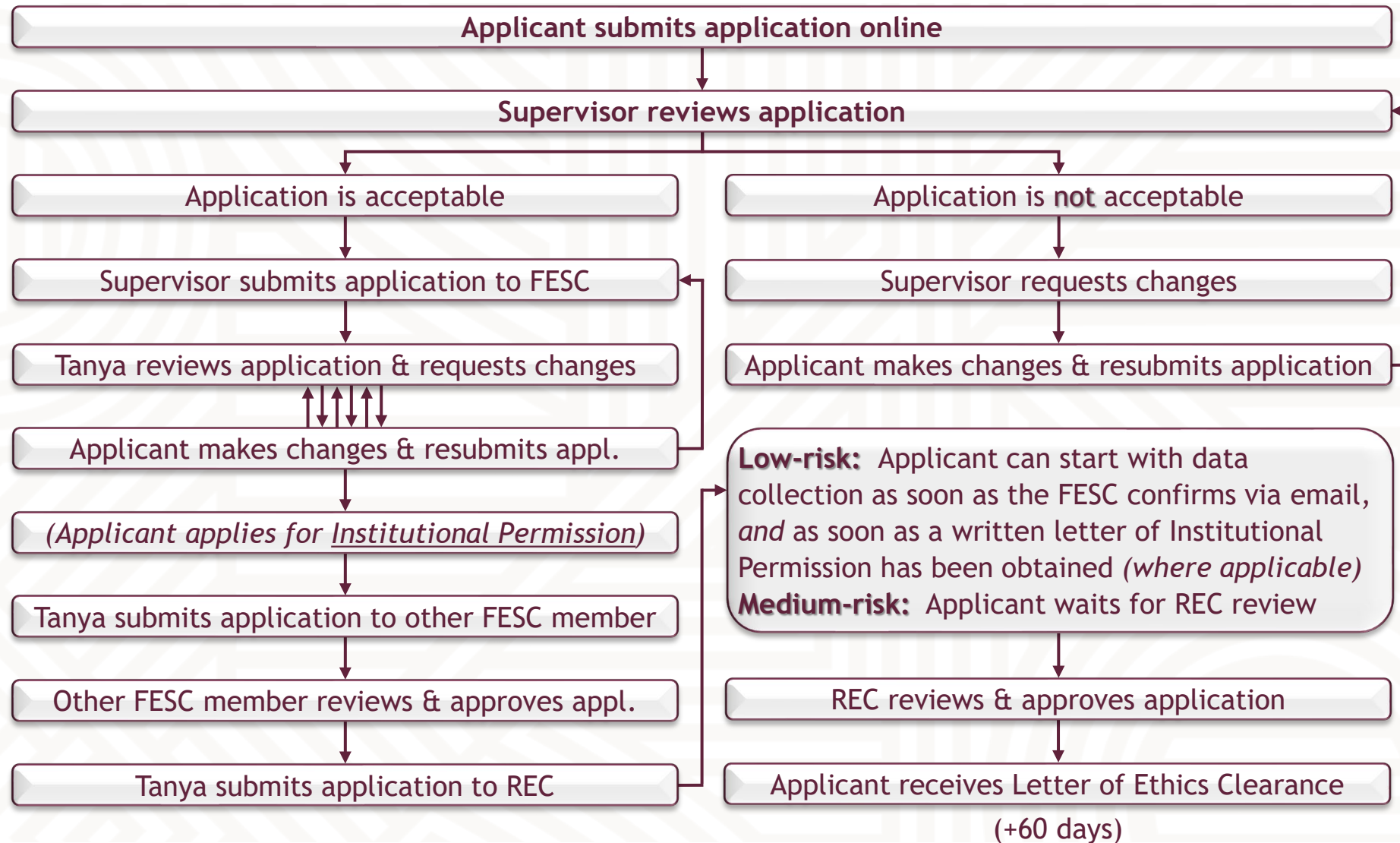
When should an undergraduate student submit an ethics application?

Even if an undergraduate student answers “YES” to any of the previous five options, an undergraduate student will only need to apply for ethics clearance if their application will be classified as medium or high-risk; or if their ethics application will be classified as low-risk and if one of the following five points apply to their research report:

1. If the undergraduate student’s research report will 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.
5. If supervisors or promoters or postgraduate students intend to use the undergraduate student’s results as part of their (current or future) research.

Undergraduate students must still obtain permission from the Division for Information Governance if any information (via interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc) will be obtained from Stellenbosch University staff/students/alumni. You can click HERE to apply for institutional permission at SU, or queries can be sent to permission@sun.ac.za.

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



FAQ - contact tanya@sun.ac.za or refer to www.eng.sun.ac.za/before-you-apply:

1. Should I apply to the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE)?
2. How do I apply for ethics clearance at the REC: SBE? (scroll down, click on “How-To Manuals” in the bottom left corner, then click on “Application Guide”)
3. Which form should I select if I apply for ethics clearance at the REC: SBE?
4. How do I know if my application will be classified as low, medium or high risk?
5. Are there specific submission closing dates for medium-risk applications?
6. Is there an APPLICATION GUIDE I can refer to, with standard responses from the FESC for each individual question?
7. How do I know if Institutional Permission is required?
8. Where can I download the various templates?
9. Can I include a Lucky Draw to motivate people to participate?
10. How can my supervisor sign my application form?
11. How do I respond to changes requested by my supervisor or by the FESC?
12. Troubleshooting - how do I sign in to Infonetica?
13. How do I edit my application form?
14. When can I start with my data collection?
15. How long will it take to obtain ethics clearance?
16. How do I change my email address as displayed in my application form?
17. How do I update or amend my personal details under Question 3.4 of the application form?
18. How do I respond to stipulations or modifications from the REC?
19. How do I submit a final report to the REC, or how do I create a sub-form in order to amend my application or upload a document? (this can only be done once your application has been *approved* by the REC)
20. How do I share my application form?
21. What are the REC’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)?
22. Ethics clearance for a joint degree (partnership agreement with an international institution)

Thank you
Enkosi
Dankie



Photo by Stefan Els