

## How do I know if INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION is required?

### SECTION 8 [*Gatekeeper permission*]

- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from Stellenbosch University:** If you plan on inviting students/staff/alumni from Stellenbosch University to participate in your research, it is vital that you apply as soon as possible for institutional permission (click [HERE](#)) at Stellenbosch University's [Division for Information Governance](#) (IG), seeing as **the approval process takes approximately 12 weeks during peak times**.  
**NB:** This is the case merely as a result of the fact that the prospective participants are staff/students at SU – so even if your data collection (i.e. surveys/interviews etc) has nothing whatsoever to do with SU, or its processes, you will unfortunately still need to submit a separate application for institutional permission. Submitting an ethics application is *not* a simultaneous application for institutional permission – you will need to apply *separately* for SU institutional permission via the IG Service Desk: <http://www.sun.ac.za/permission>. It is important to note that a letter of institutional permission will need to be obtained from the IG *before* you can start with your data collection (i.e. before you invite students and/or staff to participate in your research). You can direct urgent queries about *institutional permission* to [permission@sun.ac.za](mailto:permission@sun.ac.za), and urgent queries about *privacy* to [privacy@sun.ac.za](mailto:privacy@sun.ac.za). For more information about institutional permission, or to access general information in this regard, please visit [www.sun.ac.za/paia](http://www.sun.ac.za/paia) and/or [www.sun.ac.za/privacy](http://www.sun.ac.za/privacy).  
**NB:** The ethics application form will require you to submit proof of institutional permission clearance and, in turn, the institutional permission application form will require you to submit proof of ethics clearance. When completing your ethics application form, you can upload a screenshot of the email that you've received from the Division for Information Governance, to prove that you have indeed applied for institutional permission. Alternatively, when completing your institutional permission application form, you can include your ethics application reference number (e.g. ING-2023-29040), to prove that you have indeed applied for ethics clearance. By doing it this way, it will not affect the outcome of one application process if, for some reason, the other application process is delayed.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED):** If you intend to invite *public* schools in the Western Cape to participate in your research, you'll need to apply for institutional permission at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) before you can start with your data collection (this does not apply to private schools, though). You will need to submit a *separate* online application to obtain institutional permission from the WCED (please click on [THIS](#) link to complete the online application form). **The approval process takes approximately 2 - 4 weeks**, and you can send an email to Mr Meshack Kanzi ([Meshack.Kanzi@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Meshack.Kanzi@westerncape.gov.za)) or contact him at 021 021 467 9272 if you have any queries.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from the National Department of Health (NDoH):** If you intend to invite *provincial/public/state* hospitals or clinics to participate in your research, you'll need to apply for institutional permission at the National Department of Health (NDoH) before you can start with your data collection (this does *not* apply to private hospitals or clinics). You will need to submit a *separate* application to obtain institutional permission from the NDoH (please click on [THIS](#) link to complete the application form via the National Health Research Database (NHRD) website). This website requires an ethics approval number (e.g. ING-2023-11011) before the application can be submitted, which means that you will first need to submit your ethics application via [Infonetica](#), then wait for ethics clearance to be granted by the FESC or the REC, and only then will you be able to apply for institutional permission via the NHRD website. **The approval process takes approximately 4 – 6 weeks**, and you can click on [THIS](#) link to access the Researcher Manual, and on [THIS](#) link to access the FAQ section.
  - Once the NDoH has provided you with a written letter of permission (on company letterhead), the signed Permission Letter needs to be uploaded to your ethics application form. However, you will *only* be able to upload this letter to your application form *after* you've received a formal letter of ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (REC). To upload the permission letter, you'll need to create a "Documentation Form" (follow the steps in [THIS](#) manual, but please select the "Documentation Form" as opposed to the "Amendment Form" as depicted in this manual). Once you have created the

“Documentation Form”, you’ll be able to upload the signed institutional permission letter, and thereafter both you and your supervisor will need to sign your ethics application form, so that the system can automatically submit your application to the REC.

- You will need to wait until you receive a written Permission Letter from the NDoH *before being able to start with your data collection* (i.e. the conducting of interviews, the distribution of online questionnaires, the collection of company data, etc) at any clinic and/or hospital. However, if the clinic and/or hospital is privately owned, then the procedure is slightly different – as such, kindly let me know ASAP if you intend to invite a private clinic and/or hospital to participate in your research.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from various *outside* institutions:** It is necessary for written and signed gatekeeper (institutional) permission to be obtained (on official letterhead) from an institution -
  - if you plan to obtain quantitative data from the institution (i.e. financial data, consumer demographics, statistical data, etc.) that is not in the public domain;
  - if the type of questions included in your data collection document (interview/survey/questionnaire) requires a prospective participant to share any of the following information related to the company/institution they work for:
    - the name of the institution, how many employees work at that institution, any information related to the processes or procedures or policies followed by that institution (i.e. how the institution goes about doing specific things), any information that is relevant only to that specific institution, or any information that a prospective participant wouldn’t have access to unless they were employed by that institution.
  - if you have targeted a specific institution and would like to conduct research via interviews/surveys/observations, etc, with that specific institution’s employees/members/customers/staff/students (even if, for example, all the questions are geared towards the prospective participant’s personal opinion about things that aren’t in any way related to the institution itself).
  - In light of the above three points, kindly also note that there are only two instances where institutional permission is not required. In both instances below, it is important to note that an informed consent form would still need to be signed by each participant before you start with your data collection. Kindly also stipulate in your research proposal, in your application form, as well as in your informed consent form, that the prospective participants (as well as the institutions they represent) will not be identifiable in your research results. If perhaps it does become necessary to identify the institutions, then institutional permission must be sought from these institutions before you report on, or publish, your research findings. Institutional permission is not required:
    - if you plan to collect data from either the owner or the CEO of a particular institution (i.e. this does not apply to managers or any other employees employed by that institution); and/or
    - if you plan on interviewing 1) individuals as experts in their own right (i.e. not as representatives of the institution they work for), and 2) you are not going to obtain any information about the institution they work for (i.e. info regarding the institutional processes/procedures/policies, or how the institution does specific things, or information that is relevant to that particular institution, or any information that the prospective participant wouldn’t have access to unless they were employed by that institution).

**NB:** Based on the section marked in green above, please follow these step-by-step instructions:

- **Question 8.1:** Please select the “yes” option in response to this question.
  - **Question 8.1.1:** Please list the names of all the institutions/organisations you would need to obtain permission from. **NB:** Your application can unfortunately not be accepted unless your “Application Letter for Institutional Permission” (see below) contains *all* the relevant contact details (i.e. name, telephone number, email address) of the person in charge of granting you the necessary permission at that particular institution. If you are unsure at this

stage, as to which institutions will participate in your research, then you will need to fully complete and upload *at least one* "Application Letter for Institutional Permission" before you can sign your application form. **NB:** Where applicable, please also stipulate here that you're not exactly sure at this stage which other institutions will participate in your research, but that you'll definitely obtain written institutional (gatekeeper) permission from the relevant institution BEFORE you start with your data collection at that particular institution.

- **Question 8.1.2:** Please select the "NO" option for this question (*would seeking permission from gatekeepers jeopardise access to data/participants*).
- **Question 8.1.3:** Please select the "NO" option for this question (*have you obtained permission from the relevant organisations/authorities*).
- **Question 8.1.6:** Please upload the "Application Letter for Institutional Permission". To help you save time in this regard, we've created [Template 5](#) (Application Letter for Institutional Permission) and [Template 6](#) (Permission Letter), which you can use to create the necessary documents required for obtaining institutional permission.
- **Template 5 (Application Letter for Institutional Permission):**
  - [Template 5](#) should be customised before emailing it to the relevant institution. As such, please complete all the sections marked in **yellow** in Template 5, including the specific name, telephone number and email address of the person in charge of granting you the necessary institutional permission. Please also let them know that you've included a copy of the survey/interview questions at the end of the document, or that you'll include these interview questions as an attachment to your email. **NB:** Please attach all of your data collection (interview/survey) documents, detailing the type of questions you'll be asking, before sending the completed "Application Letter" to the relevant institution – alternatively, you can copy and paste all your interview questions at the end of your document, so that it forms one long combined document.
  - Once you've completed all the sections marked in yellow, you'll then need to email the completed version of [Template 5](#) (i.e. the "Application Letter") as soon as possible to the person in charge of granting you institutional permission – preferably either the MD, CEO or owner of the company.
  - Once you've emailed the Application Letter to the responsible person at the relevant institution, you'll need to upload the Application Letter to this section of your application form. **Please note that, at this stage, you *only* need to upload the "Application Letter" to this section of your application form, i.e. you don't need to upload the signed "Permission Letter" (unless, of course, you've already received it).**
  - Please create and upload a *separate* Application Letter for each of the participating institutions.
  - Please also add a copy of your data collection (interview/survey) document/s directly below your Application Letter for Institutional Permission. This means that your Application Letter will become quite lengthy, but it is much safer to do it this way, seeing as the institution can then be sure of what type of company-related questions are included in the interview/survey with its employees. Please also include the following sentence (or something to this effect) in your Application Letter for Institutional Permission: "For your information, kindly refer to the company-related questions below, which will form part of the interview/questionnaire."
- **Template 6 (Permission Letter):**
  - The relevant institution then needs to provide you with a *signed* Permission Letter, on official *company letterhead*, to indicate that they have read your Application Letter, and that they have given you permission to go ahead and start with your data collection at their institution.

- [Template 6](#) should be customised before emailing it to the relevant institution. As such, please complete all the sections marked in **yellow** in Template 6, including the specific name, telephone number and email address of the person in charge of granting you the necessary institutional permission.
- Once you've completed all the sections marked in yellow, you will need to email the customised version of [Template 6](#) (i.e. the "Permission Letter") as soon as possible to the person in charge of granting you institutional permission.
- Send an email to the designated person, the one authorised to grant you institutional permission, and ask them to complete all the sections marked in **green** in the customised version of Template 6 (i.e. the "Permission Letter").
- It may take some time for the institution to provide you with their signed Permission Letter (which you'll need *before* you can start with your data collection at their institution), so you do *not* need to upload the customised version of Template 6 (or the unsigned Permission Letter) to this section of the application form unless, of course, you have already received the signed version thereof. You *only* need to upload the completed version of [Template 5](#) (i.e. the "Application Letter") to this section of the application form for now. If you're lucky, and the relevant institution has *already* provided you with their *signed* Permission Letter by the time you're ready to resubmit your application, then by all means – go ahead and upload the final Permission Letter to this section of your application form. **NB:** It is very important to note, however, that you *don't* have to wait for the institution to provide you with a signed Permission Letter before you can resubmit your ethics application. You can go ahead and resubmit your ethics application whilst you're still waiting for the institution to prepare the Permission Letter. You *will*, however, need to wait for the signed Permission Letter *before* you can start with your data collection at that specific institution (i.e. before you start conducting interviews, distributing online questionnaires, collecting company data, etc).
- The person at the relevant institution, who is in charge of granting you institutional permission, will need to complete all the sections marked in green in the completed version of [Template 6](#), and thereafter he/she will need to send you an electronic copy of the completed and *signed* Permission Letter *on a company letterhead*.
- If you haven't yet received the signed Permission Letter by the time you'd like to resubmit your ethics application, then you'll need to upload the signed Permission Letter to your application form at a later stage, after your application has been submitted to the REC: SBE for final review and ratification (further details in this regard will follow a bit later).