Dear Researcher

Below you will find a template, created by the FESC, which we use to create the "changes requested" email that you'll receive after you have submitted your ethics application for the first time. After an initial submission, most ethics applications are sent back for "changes requested", which can cause significant delays, so familarising yourself with the information below will help you to submit a complete and thorough ethics application. The list of "changes requested" below has been created to cover a wide area of research, though – as such, only some of the points below will be applicable to your research. Kindly use your discretion to determine which of the following points apply to your research project.

The Faculty Ethics Screening Committee (FESC) has been appointed to ensure that your application meets all the requirements set out by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) at Stellenbosch University.

GRAMMAR, SPELLING & PUNCTUATION

- Our FESC members are very prone to rejecting an ethics application if a proper check (grammar, punctuation, abbreviations/acronyms, sentence construction, spelling) hasn't been done before you resubmit your ethics application. This includes your application form, as well as all supporting documentation, such as your research proposal, consent form, application letter, data collection documents, etc. As such, you might find the following application useful:
    - 1) Download the "Grammarly" application (www.grammarly.com) to your desktop/laptop (the app is free of charge); 2) sign up; 3) in the first block on the left, click on the word "New", or click on the word "Upload"; 4) if you've clicked on the word "New", you can copy and paste all your responses to all the open-ended questions, as it appears in your application form; 5) if you've clicked on the word "Upload", you can upload any MS Word document from your desktop/laptop; 6) and voila… Grammarly will do the rest. Alternatively, you could use the "Save As" option to convert your ethics application form (or the PDF version of any other supporting document) into an MS Word document, and thereafter you can follow step 5.

SECTION 2 *[Project information]*

- **Question 2.2:**
    - Kindly include a summary of the background and rationale of your research project and, in particular, regarding your research design and methodology (i.e. a summary of your response to Questions 5.2 and 5.3).
- **Question 2.3:**
    - Kindly include a problem statement, research aims and objectives, proposed study approach and methodology, project timeline, and structure of the report.
    - Kindly add a "Table of Contents" at the top/start of your research proposal.
    - Kindly include information in your methodology section on the expected or minimum sample size, seeing as the company will need to have an idea of how many employees will be approached.
    - Kindly ensure that *all* the information included in your amended consent form (refer to Questions 5.16 and/or 5.17 below) is also incorporated into the Methodology section of your research proposal.
    - Kindly ensure that *all* the information included in your amended response to Questions 5.2 and 5.3 of the application form is also incorporated into the Methodology section of your research proposal.
    - Kindly check and amend (where applicable) the information contained in your research proposal, as well as in your supporting documents, to ensure that none of

the amended responses to the questions in your application form differs from the information provided in your research proposal and supporting documents.

- Kindly state here, as well as in your response to Question 9.2, that this application is considered a snowball application since the project will be executed in various phases, and that the data collection from the first phase will influence the structure of the follow-up phases.

- **Question 2.4**: n/a
  - **Question 2.4.1:** Please also state whether the funder has any requirements regarding the ethics review and approval of your project. If there are special requirements, please list the requirements.
- **Question 2.6**: n/a
  - **Question 2.6.1:** Just to make things 100% clear, please also state in your response to this question that no formal recruitment has taken place and that no data has been collected as yet for this research project.

SECTION 3 ***[SU Principal Investigator (PI/applicant details]***

- **Question 3.1:** Kindly select the "YES" option for this question and then stipulate the type of degree.
- **Question 3.3:** n/a
  - **Question 3.3.2:** You've mentioned in your application that ___. Kindly specify if any of your data collection methods will include collecting data from individuals who are in *unequal* power relationships with you as the main researcher. If, for example, you intend to interview employees who are employed in a "lower" position than you, then it will affect how the prospective employees should be invited to participate in your research. The reason is to prevent the prospective participants from experiencing any kind of pressure to participate in your research. You've mentioned that you will be interviewing ten PathCare employees, i.e. senior staff from the logistics department, area managers, LIS analysts, laboratory assistants and courier drivers. What I would strongly advise, is to ask an impartial person in your company (perhaps someone from HR) to send the invitations via email to the prospective participants, to prevent the prospective participants from experiencing any pressure whatsoever to participate in your research.
- **Question 3.4:** The Infonetica system is supposed to automatically populate this section, based on the information that is registered on the SU database. However, for some reason, this did not happen in your case – as such, kindly create and then upload an MS Word or PDF document under Section 9 of the application form, providing details regarding *all* the fields required for the "Principal Investigator (applicant) information".

SECTION 3 ***[Research assistants / Field workers]***

- **Question 3.8**: The FESC members strongly advise that you select the "YES" option for this question, and that you make use of Template 9 as a base for creating a confidentiality/non-disclosure agreement to be signed by the field workers. Kindly complete all the relevant sections in Template 9, and then upload the document under this section of the application form.

SECTION 3 ***[Conflict of interest statement]***

- **Question 3.9:** You've mentioned that "_____". An NDA is *not* necessary unless the *participating institution* initiates such a request (i.e. if the institution does *not* initiate such a request, then the onus is not on you to do so). However, if the participating institution requires you to sign a non-disclosure agreement, I would strongly advise you to contact

the Division for Research Development (DRD) via email (contracts@sun.ac.za) to ensure that the correct legal processes are followed.

SECTION 4 ***[Does this project require ethics review?]***

- **Question 4.1 - Option 1:** Please select the tick box for this option *[I will collect data from (or interact with) one or more individuals through interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations, video recording, etc]*.
- **Question 4.1 - Option 2:** Seeing as the data you'll be collecting from the ____ is with regards to ___, i.e. the data is related to human beings, as opposed to (for example) soil samples or finances, please select the tick box for this option *[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 4.1 - Option 2:** You've selected Option 2. An NDA is *not* necessary unless the *participating institution* initiates such a request (i.e. if the institution does *not* initiate such a request, then the onus is not on you to do so). However, if the participating institution requires you to sign a non-disclosure agreement, I would strongly advise you to contact the Division for Research Development (DRD) via email (contracts@sun.ac.za) to ensure that the correct legal processes are followed.
- **Question 4.1 - Option 3:** Seeing as the data you'll be collecting from the ___ is indeed linked to individuals (even though it doesn't include any personal identifiers), please de-select (or unselect) the tick box for this option *[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)].*
- **Question 4.1 - Option 3:** You've selected Option 3. An NDA is *not* necessary unless the *participating institution* initiates such a request (i.e. if the institution does *not* initiate such a request, then the onus is not on you to do so). However, if the participating institution requires you to sign a non-disclosure agreement, I would strongly advise you to contact the Division for Research Development (DRD) via email (contracts@sun.ac.za) to ensure that the correct legal processes are followed.
- **Question 4.1 - Option 4:** Please select the tick box for this option *[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 link the information to personal identifiers].*
- **Question 4.1 - Option 4:** You've selected Option 4. An NDA is *not* necessary unless the *participating institution* initiates such a request (i.e. if the institution does *not* initiate such a request, then the onus is not on you to do so). However, if the participating institution requires you to sign a non-disclosure agreement, I would strongly advise you to contact the Division for Research Development (DRD) via email (contracts@sun.ac.za) to ensure that the correct legal processes are followed.
- **Question 4.1 - Option 5:** Please select the tick box for this option *[I will gather information/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)].*

SECTION 5 ***[Participants requiring special/careful consideration by the REC]***

- **Question 5.1:**
  - Please select the tick box for the following category: *SU-affiliated personnel, students, or alumni*

- Please also select the tick box for the following category: *Persons functioning in dependent or unequal power relationships (in relation to the researcher or the person involved in recruiting participants)*
- It is important to note that a low-risk ethics application was recently rejected by the REC (the researcher had to stop their data collection for the time being), based on the fact that a third-party application, i.e. Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, was used to administer online surveys. The REC states that you may unfortunately **not** make use of third-party applications, such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, to administer online surveys. The reason, according to the REC, is that if you are collecting or storing data on Google Drive or Google Forms, you might as well be sharing it internationally, seeing as it is not 100% clear where those servers are based and whether the information is protected by information protection laws. As such, kindly approach the Research ICT service desk at SU for guidance on using MS Forms or REDCap or SUNsurveys (you can register as a new user by completing THIS form) to administer online surveys. You can log a request for assistance via the Research ICT Helpdesk. If, however, there are technical reasons why you need to make use of other software, or another platform not vetted by IT, then please first consult with the REC and their IT services to ensure that the software you are going to use is indeed secure and meets the required standards.
- **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 for institutional permission (click HERE) from Stellenbosch University's Division for Information Governance (IG) as soon as possible, seeing as the approval process takes approximately 3 - 5 weeks.
  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, and urgent queries about *privacy* to 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 and/or 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.

- **Question 5.1.3 (continued)**: Once you have applied to the IG Service Desk, you'll receive an email from them confirming that you have started the application process. Please remove the document that you've currently uploaded to this section of the application form, and rather replace it with a copy of the email that you have received from the IG Service Desk. It should look similar to the attached document.

SECTION 5 ***[Participant recruitment and selection]***

- **Question 5.2:**

- Please also describe in detail what the specific inclusion/exclusion criteria are for prospective participants – e.g. what would the screening questions be to ascertain whether or not a prospective participant qualifies to participate in your research (perhaps they need to have a certain level of education, or a certain number of years of experience in a certain industry)?
- Kindly also ensure that all your qualifiers (or screening questions) are included at the start of your data collection (interview/survey) document/s, to ensure that only qualified individuals participate in your research.
- Kindly ensure that your full response to this question is incorporated into the methodology section of your research proposal.
- Kindly ensure that you do *not* interview any participants under the age of 18, and please state this in both your ethics application form, as well as in your research proposal.

- **Question 5.3:**
  - Please specify how exactly you intend to go about *inviting* the prospective participants to participate in your research (i.e. via telephone, email, face-to-face, etc).
  - Please specify if the institution is going to provide you with a contact list of their employees/customers/members/staff/students for you to *personally* contact and invite their employees/customers/members/staff/students to participate in your research; or if the institution is going to contact and invite their employees/customers/members/staff/students *on your behalf* (i.e. you will **not** have access to any personal details of prospective participants, such as their names, contact numbers, email addresses, physical addresses, etc). If not, please specify how (or from whom, i.e. your supervisor) you intend to obtain the contact details (email addresses and telephone numbers) of the prospective participants.
  - Please specify *where and when* (e.g. during work hours, etc) the interviews will take place, or please specify how and when you plan to distribute the questionnaires/surveys.
  - Please provide detailed information on how the interviews/surveys will be conducted or administered (i.e. will the interviews take place online or in-person, and how will you distribute the questionnaires/surveys)? It is important to note that a low-risk ethics application was recently rejected by the REC (the researcher had to stop their data collection for the time being), based on the fact that a third-party application, i.e. Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, was used to administer online surveys. The REC states that you may unfortunately **not** make use of third-party applications, such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, to administer online surveys. The reason, according to the REC, is that if you are collecting or storing data on Google Drive or Google Forms, you might as well be sharing it internationally, seeing as it is not 100% clear where those servers are based and whether the information is protected by information protection laws. As such, kindly approach the Research ICT service desk at SU for guidance on using MS Forms or REDCap or SUNsurveys (you can register as a new user by completing THIS form) to administer online surveys. You can log a request for assistance via the Research ICT Helpdesk. If, however, there are technical reasons why you need to make use of other software, or another platform not vetted by IT, then please first consult with the REC and their IT services to ensure that the software you are going to use is indeed secure and meets the required standards.
  - Please specify what exactly these participants *will be asked to do* if they agree to participate in your research project (e.g. they will have to share their thoughts and opinions about XYZ).

- Please specify how you intend to *obtain consent* from the prospective participants before they participate in your research project (i.e. will you email the online consent form to prospective participants, or will you give them a hard-copy version of the consent form to sign, etc)?
- The Research Ethics Committee (REC) states that if you are *present* (either in person or online) when a participant responds to your questions, then this constitutes either an in-person or online "Interview". However, if you are *not present* when a participant completes a hard-copy questionnaire, or if the participant completes an online/electronic questionnaire, then this constitutes a "Survey" or a "Questionnaire". As such, please ensure that the correct terminology is used in your application form, research proposal and supporting documents to reflect the correct definition of the words "survey" and "interview". Please also ensure that you've selected the correct option in response to Question 7.2.
- Kindly ensure that your full response to this question is incorporated into the methodology section of your research proposal.
- As far as I understand, the surveys that you are referring to will either take place during the face-to-face or online interview process. Is this correct? If so, please include this information 1) in response to this question, 2) in your response to Question 5.3, 3) in your research proposal, 4) in your consent form, and 5) in your application letter. The reason for this, is that the REC usually refers to surveys as taking place exclusively on an online platform, where the participants have little to no contact with the researcher, so it is important to clarify what type of surveys you are referring to.

- **Question 5.4:**
  - I would recommend you write your entire recruitment letter in the 1st person, i.e. "I am a Masters student at the Stellenbosch University, and I am currently conducting research for my Masters project…" etc.
  - Kindly add the following sentence to your recruitment letter: "The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University has approved this study (Project ID 29301)."
  - Kindly add the following sentence, or something to this effect, to your recruitment letter: "If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to share your experience regarding the role of institutions such as the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), Council for the Built Environment (CBE) and the South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors (SAFCEC) in the development of the construction industry in South Africa. You will also be requested to share your knowledge regarding gaps that exist in the development of the construction industry in South Africa."
  - If your recruitment material is in the form of an email, kindly ignore this point. If, however, your recruitment material is in the form of a letter, kindly add the attached SU logo to the top of your recruitment letter - if you wish, you could copy and paste the SU logo by making use of the "Snipping Tool" (click "Start" on your Windows computer, enter "snipping tool" in the search box, and then select "Snipping Tool" from the results. Press Windows logo key + Shift + S).

SECTION 5 ***[Informed consent process]***

- **Question 5.11:** Even though no personal or organizational information will be gathered and even though the data will be anonymous and no opinion could be linked to personal or organizational information, obtaining consent from the prospective participants is vital *before* you can conduct any interviews/surveys/questionnaires/focus groups, etc. A consent form needs to be signed between the researcher and the prospective participants for the researcher to obtain their voluntary consent to take part in the research

study, *before* data is collected from them. As such, please select the tick box for the following category:

- Please select the tick box for the 1st option: *I will obtain written consent from prospective participants/respondents (e.g. my participants will be asked to sign the informed consent form before data collection commences)*
- Please select the tick box for the 2nd option: *I will obtain consent from participants/respondents by means of an electronic consent process (e.g. for electronic surveys – participants will click a tick box or link to confirm consent)*
- Please select the tick box for the 3rd option: *I will use a verbal informed consent process (Note that a verbal consent process can only be approved with sufficient justification as to why a written or electronic consent process is not appropriate)*
- Please select the tick box for the 4th option: *I will not obtain informed consent from participants/respondents*
- **Question 5.11a:** Even though the research is completely anonymous and the pedestrian can choose to decline to answer the questionnaire, it would (under normal circumstances) be a requirement for you to ask prospective participants to complete a written or electronic consent form. In this case, seeing as you're inviting commuters to participate in your research, and you're not sure of their level of literacy, it will indeed be acceptable to make use of verbal consent, as opposed to written consent.

- **Question 5.13:** Please select the "YES" option for this question *(will participants be allowed to refuse to answer questions during the data collection process).*
- **Question 5.14:** Please select the "YES" option for this question *(will participants be given the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any given time during the project).*
  - **Question 5.14.1:**
    - Please specify that a prospective participant will not be able to submit the survey (i.e. press the SUBMIT button) unless they have completed all the questions, which means that you won't have access to any incomplete surveys. Please also stipulate that if (after the interview/survey has been completed) a participant decides to withdraw, you will not incorporate any of their responses into your research. What works quite well, is if you include an option at the top/start of your survey/questionnaire, where participants can insert their own six-digit ID code (they can decide which numbers to use). If they decide to withdraw from the study after having completed/submitted the survey (of course within a reasonable time frame) they will have to option to contact you, provide their own ID code, and request that you remove all data linked to their own ID code.
    - It is very important that the participants feel completely comfortable before or during the interview/survey process and that, if they no longer choose to participate, they should be able to withdraw either before or during the interview/survey without feeling any kind of guilt or pressure.
    - As such, please stipulate that you will disregard/destroy any responses that have been provided by a participant if they decide to withdraw *mid-way* through the interview/survey.
    - Please also specify that a prospective participant will not be able to submit the survey (i.e. press the SUBMIT button) unless they have completed all the questions, which means that you won't have access to any incomplete surveys.
    - Finally, please also stipulate that if (after the interview/survey has been completed) a participant decides to withdraw, you will not incorporate any of

their responses into your research and you will also destroy any written notes or electronic copies related to their responses.

- Kindly ensure that *all* of this information is included in your consent form.

SECTION 5 ***[Informed consent form(s)]***

- **Question 5.16 (written consent):**
  - Thank you for uploading your written consent form, but please rather make use of one of the REC-approved templates to create your your written consent form.
  - Kindly complete one of the REC-approved templates for your written consent form.
  - Kindly follow the instructions in the block at the top of the consent form template:
    - add the new SU logo (see below) at the top of your consent form,
    - add detailed information below each of the sub-section headings before uploading the consent form to your application,
    - please do not delete or remove any of the sub-headings (i.e. who is conducting this study, why do we invite you to participate, what is this research project about, etc) before uploading your consent form, and
    - delete the instruction box, at the top, once you've completed your consent form.

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- **Question 5.17 (online consent):**
  - Thank you for uploading your online consent form, but please rather make use of one of the REC-approved templates to create your your online consent form. You'll notice that there are two different online consent forms – one for online surveys/questionnaires, and another one for online interviews.
  - Kindly complete one of the REC-approved templates for your online consent form. You'll notice that there are two different online consent forms – one for online surveys/questionnaires, and another one for online interviews.
  - Kindly follow the instructions in the block at the top of the consent form template:
    - add detailed information below each of the sub-section headings before uploading the consent form to your application,
    - please do not delete or remove any of the sub-headings (i.e. who is conducting this study, why do we invite you to participate, what is this research project about, etc) before uploading your consent form, and
    - delete the instruction box, at the top, once you've completed your consent form.
  - I would suggest that (it is entirely up to you, though) you copy and paste your questionnaire/survey questions directly after (or just below) your online consent form, so that your online consent form and your questionnaire/survey questions become one combined document. If you do it this way, the prospective participant

can view the consent form, "sign" it with an X, and then start with the questionnaire/survey questions.

- **Question 5.16 / 5.17:** You have already included some of the following information, but kindly provide a bit more detail with regards to the confidentiality of prospective participants – below are a few examples of the type of information required, but please ensure that only the applicable examples (or variations thereof) are included in your consent form:
    - The information gathered during this interview/questionnaire will only be used for research purposes, specifically related to my thesis.
    - You will not be requested to provide any personal information during the interview/questionnaire, which can identify you as an individual.
    - Your identity will not be disclosed or published. The only form of personal data required is your ____ *(e.g. their job title and area of expertise – however, to protect the prospective participant's privacy, their names and the name of their employer or the company they work for will not be disclosed).*
    - Your name will be replaced by ID codes in my research report.
    - My research report will contain no direct quotes or links to any personal identifiers.
    - Any form of correspondence between you and the investigators will be kept confidential, and only my supervisor and I will have access to this information.
    - The responses obtained during this interview/questionnaire will be assigned a unique reference number, which will be used to identify data in the thesis itself.
- **Question 5.20:** Seeing as English might be the second or third language for some of your prospective participants, it might be worthwhile to also complete Template 7 *or* Template 8 and to hand over a copy of both the English and the Xhosa consent forms to the prospective participants so that they have a choice regarding which one they'd like to sign. You can add information underneath each of the sub-sections in Template 7 *or* 8, but it is important that you please do *not* delete any of the sub-sections in Template 7 *or* 8. Once all the missing sections (marked in yellow) in Template 7 *or* 8 have been completed (in English), please upload your amended consent form under Question 5 of this section of the application form. PS: If you're planning to give the consent form to prospective participants during a *face-to-face interview*, then Template 7 would be more suitable. If you're planning to *email* the consent form to prospective participants, or if you want to incorporate your consent form as part of your questionnaire/survey, then Template 8 would be more suitable.

SECTION 5 ***[Assessment of the potential risks and benefits]***

- **Question 5.21:** Please select the "minimal inconvenience of time commitment or travel" option in response to this question.
- **Question 5.22:** n/a
    - **Question 5.22.1:** Please specify in as much detail as possible the steps you'll put in place to ensure your own safety, as well as the safety of the participants you'll be interviewing.

SECTION 7 ***[Identification of research methods]***

- **Question 7.2:**
    - The Research Ethics Committee (REC) states that if you are present (either in person or online) when a participant responds to your questions, then this constitutes either an in-person or online "Interview". However, if you are not present when a participant completes a hard-copy questionnaire, or if the participant completes an online/electronic questionnaire, then this constitutes a "Survey" or a "Questionnaire". As such, please ensure that the correct terminology is used in your application form, research proposal and supporting documents to reflect the correct definition of the

words "survey" and "interview". Please also ensure that you've selected the correct option in response to Question 7.2.

- Please create and upload a separate document for each of your methods of data collection (i.e. interviews, questionnaires/surveys, observations, focus groups, the collection of institutional data, etc). This document should include the various interview questions (as detailed as possible) that you'll ask whilst collecting data/information from prospective participants or institutions. It's important to note that a separate document needs to be uploaded for each of your methods of data collection.
- **NB**: It is important to note that a low-risk ethics application was recently rejected by the REC (the researcher had to stop their data collection for the time being), based on the fact that a third-party application, i.e. Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, was used to administer online surveys. The REC states that you may unfortunately **not** make use of third-party applications, such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, to administer online surveys. The reason, according to the REC, is that if you are collecting or storing data on Google Drive or Google Forms, you might as well be sharing it internationally, seeing as it is not 100% clear where those servers are based and whether the information is protected by information protection laws. As such, kindly approach the Research ICT service desk at SU for guidance on using MS Forms or REDCap or SUNsurveys (you can register as a new user by completing THIS form) to administer online surveys. You can log a request for assistance via the Research ICT Helpdesk. If, however, there are technical reasons why you need to make use of other software, or another platform not vetted by IT, then please first consult with the REC and their IT services to ensure that the software you are going to use is indeed secure and meets the required standards.
- Please elaborate as much as possible on the types of questions you'll be asking prospective participants, including all the sub-sections you've selected in response to Question 6.1 of your application form. Your data collection document/s (i.e. interview, survey, etc) needs to be as detailed as possible, seeing as we use this as a base for determining whether or not institutional permission is required.
- If you are collecting data from subject matter experts, and if you would like to avoid having to apply for institutional permission, kindly add the following tick box option as a screening question at the top/start of your *survey/questionnaire*: "I hereby confirm that I will not disclose the name of (or any of the processes followed by) my current employer, or any of my previous employers, in response to any of the questions included in this survey/questionnaire." Prospective participants will need to select this tick box for them to continue with the survey/questionnaire. Alternatively, kindly add the following sentence as a screening question at the top/start of your *interview sheet/guide*: "I hereby confirm that I will not disclose the name of (or any of the processes followed by) my current employer, or any of my previous employers, in response to any of the questions included in this interview."
- Whenever you include the words "your organization", "in your organization" or "in your company", you are asking questions that will very likely require you to obtain institutional permission before being able to start with your data collection (please refer to the section marked in green in Section 8 below). As such, if you would like to avoid having to apply for institutional permission, kindly remove or rephrase these questions so that the participant only provides you with information that is not in any way related to the company they are currently working for.
- Please include all your screening questions (refer to your amended response to Question 5.2) at the top of your data collection document/s. Taken one at a time, your screening (or "eligibility") questions might not pose any risk, but if you put the answers to all these screening questions together, then it might be easy to identify either the individual, and/or the company/institution that they work for. As such, please review your screening questions and only keep those questions where the

combination of questions won't allow a participant (or the organisation they work for) to be accidentally identified. We thus normally recommend that the screening questions be kept to a minimum, but please discuss this with your supervisor and then consider which of your screening questions you can remove to ensure the complete anonymity of the individual and/or their company/institution.

- Sensitive information includes the participant's gender, age, profession, position and job description (i.e. the combination of screening questions should not allow a participant, or the organisation they work for, to be accidentally identified). As such, rather remove any open-ended screening questions and rather replace it with the following questions, which are more restrictive i.t.o. their background information:
    - Please add the following screening question, or something to this effect, at the top/start of your *interview sheet/guide*: "I confirm that I currently occupy a middle or senior management position in my organisation, and I have at least ten years experience working in the construction industry:"
    - Please add the following screening question, or something to this effect, at the top/start of your *interview sheet/guide*: "The highest academic qualification I have obtained is:"
        - Please create tick box options for the various options, i.e. Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, etc.
    - Please add the following screening question, or something to this effect, at the top/start of your *interview sheet/guide*: "My current role in the construction industry is:"
        - Please create tick box options for the various roles in the industry.
- Please do not ask participants to provide their name and surname during the data collection process – this question can negatively affect the risk level of your application, and it can also result in prospective participants becoming a bit hesitant to participate in your research (seeing as their identity might be leaked, and their responses might not be kept confidential). Other sensitive information includes their gender, age, profession, position and job description (i.e. the combination of screening questions should not allow a participant, or the organisation they work for, to be accidentally identified). If you want to include their age as a screening question, rather make use of options where an age bracket can be selected, i.e. 18 – 23, 24 – 29, etc.
- If you've selected the "demographics" or "background information" options in response to Question 6.1, please ensure that the exact type of demographic or background information you require is also included as a question (either open-ended or tick-box) at the top of in your data collection (interview/survey) document/s.
- To ensure that the "personal opinions" option in your response to Question 6.1 is 100% accurate, kindly rephrase some of your questions to include the fact that this is merely the personal opinion of prospective participants – i.e. "In your opinion…", "Do you think that…", "Would you say that…", "Based on your opinion…", etc.
- If you'll need to apply for institutional permission (kindly refer to Section 8 below), please add a copy of your data collection (interview/survey) document 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 will then be 100% sure of what type of company-related questions are included in the interview/survey with its employees. Please also amend your Application Letter for Institutional Permission so that it includes the following sentence (or something to this effect): "For your information, kindly refer to the company-related questions below, which will form part of the interview/questionnaire."

- You might want to copy all of the information that you've included in your online consent form and paste this information right at the top (on the first page) of your survey/questionnaire. By doing so, you'll be able to combine your online consent form and your survey/questionnaire into one document. Prospective participants can then read through the online consent form, and give their consent before they start answering the questions that will follow in your survey/questionnaire. If you choose to follow this route, please upload your amended data collection (interview/survey) document (i.e. the survey/questionnaire) to this section of the application form.
- You've mentioned that your research will take place in three phases, and that the interview questions for the 2nd and 3rd phases will be based on the feedback you receive from the interviews in the 1st and 2nd phases respectively. Based on your current data collection (interview/survey) document, it seems as though you've already included all the questions for all three phases, so it seems as though your main interview questions for the 2nd and 3rd phases have been finalised, and that it will not change significantly based on the feedback you receive in a previous phase. If this is indeed the case, please state this in both your research proposal, as well as in response to Question 5.2 of the application form.
- The Research Ethics Committee (REC) requires an amendment form to be completed (which can cause significant delays) if follow-up interview questions are newly created and if they differ significantly from the interview questions in previous phases, seeing as the risk-level will need to be re-evaluated based on the new set of questions. An amendment form is *only* required, though, if the interview questions for a follow-up phase will be **newly created**, but based on your current data collection (interview/survey) document, it seems as though the interview questions for your follow-up phases are already fixed/finalised. *If at all possible, I would strongly suggest avoiding the need for an amendment form, due to the excessive delays, so please feel free to call me if you require any additional information in this regard.*

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 for institutional permission (click HERE) from Stellenbosch University's Division for Information Governance (IG) as soon as possible, seeing as the approval process takes approximately 3 - 5 weeks.
  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, and urgent queries about *privacy* to 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 and/or 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) 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 (interview/survey) document requires prospective participants to share specific institutional information (i.e. the name of the institution, how many employees work at that institution, what type of processes/procedures are followed by that institution – i.e. how they go about doing specific things, or any other information that is relevant to that particular institution);
    - if you have targeted a specific institution and would like to interview the employees/members/customers/staff/students of that specific institution (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), then the researcher would still need to apply for institutional permission to invite the employees/members/customers/staff/students of that particular institution to participate in the research.

- 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 individuals as experts in their own right (i.e. *not* as representatives of the institution they work for) and if, at the same time, you are not going to obtain *any* information about the institution they work for (i.e. their company processes/procedures/policies, or how they go about doing specific things, or any other information that is relevant to their particular institution). PS: Individuals as experts in their own right can be defined as subject-matter experts, where the institution they work for is completely incidental to your research – i.e. it makes no difference who their employer is, or which company they work for, as long as they are subject-matter experts.

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

- **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 not 100% sure 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 ensure that you stipulate here that you're not exactly sure at this stage which other institutions will participate in your research, but that you'll most 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 attach the "Application Letter for Institutional Permission". To help you save time in this regard, we've created Template 4 (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 4 (Application Letter for Institutional Permission):**
    - Template 4 should be customised before emailing it to the relevant institution. As such, please complete all the sections marked in yellow in

Template 4, 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 4 (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 ensure that a *separate* Application Letter is created (and uploaded to this section of your application form) for every participating institution.
- 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 will then be 100% 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 4** (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).

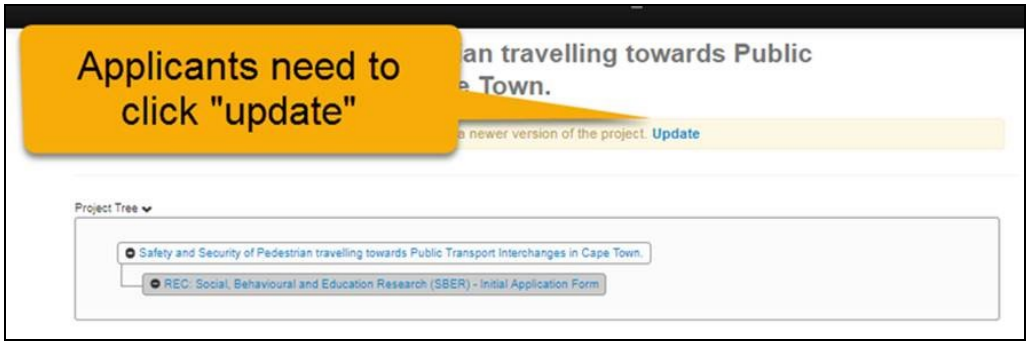
- The person at the relevant institution, who is in charge of granting you institutional permission, will need to complete all the sections marked in green in the completed version of Template 6, and thereafter he/she will need to send you an electronic copy of the completed and *signed* Permission Letter *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 for final review and ratification (further details in this regard will follow a bit later).

SECTION 9 ***[Additional information and documents]***

- **Question 9.2:**
  - **NB:** Please confirm that *all* of the changes listed above have been made by uploading the amended version of the attached "FESC feedback" document to this section of the application form, i.e. once your comments have been added (and highlighted in yellow) next to each of the changes listed above.
  - Please add any additional information here that you think might be noteworthy.

Important Information

- Kindly ensure that only the most recent/updated versions of your research proposal and supporting documents form part of your ethics application – as such, please remove all the older/outdated versions of your supporting documents before resubmitting your application.
- Please note that, once both you and your supervisor have resubmitted your application form, I will send you a confirmation email within 48 hours of receiving your application. As such, if you do *not* receive such a confirmation email from me within 48 hours, please follow up with me via email as a matter of urgency.
- **Update your Application Form**: It does happen a few times per year that the developers need to update the Infonetica system, and/or the back end of the ethics application form. Subsequently, if your initial application was submitted before the update took place, then the Infonetica system will prompt you to "**Update**" (see screenshot below) your application form **before** you sign your application form *(refer to number 6)*. **NB**: It is thus very important to note that, even if both you and your supervisor sign your application form, I won't receive your ethics application form unless you update your application when the system prompts you to do so.



Thank you in advance for your effort in making these necessary changes and I look forward to receiving your resubmitted application.

Kind regards,
Tanya

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