

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**.