

Processes followed by the Engineering Faculty Ethics Screening Committee (FESC)

Presented by [Tanya Ficker](#) on 18 Aug '25



Created by Oswald Huber

Engineering FESC and DESC

- FESC: established in Jun '15 - all low risk applications (except MEM Structured)
- DESC: established in Jan '25 - low risk applications (only MEM Structured - large group)
- FESC members: Prof Corné Schutte (chairperson), Prof Marion Sinclair, and Tanya Ficker
- DESC members: Prof Taryn Bond-Barnard, Dr Michelle Smit, and **TBC**



Prof Corné
Schutte
Reviewer (FESC)



Prof Marion
Sinclair
Reviewer (FESC)



Tanya Ficker
Reviewer (FESC)



Prof Taryn
Barnard
Reviewer (DESC)

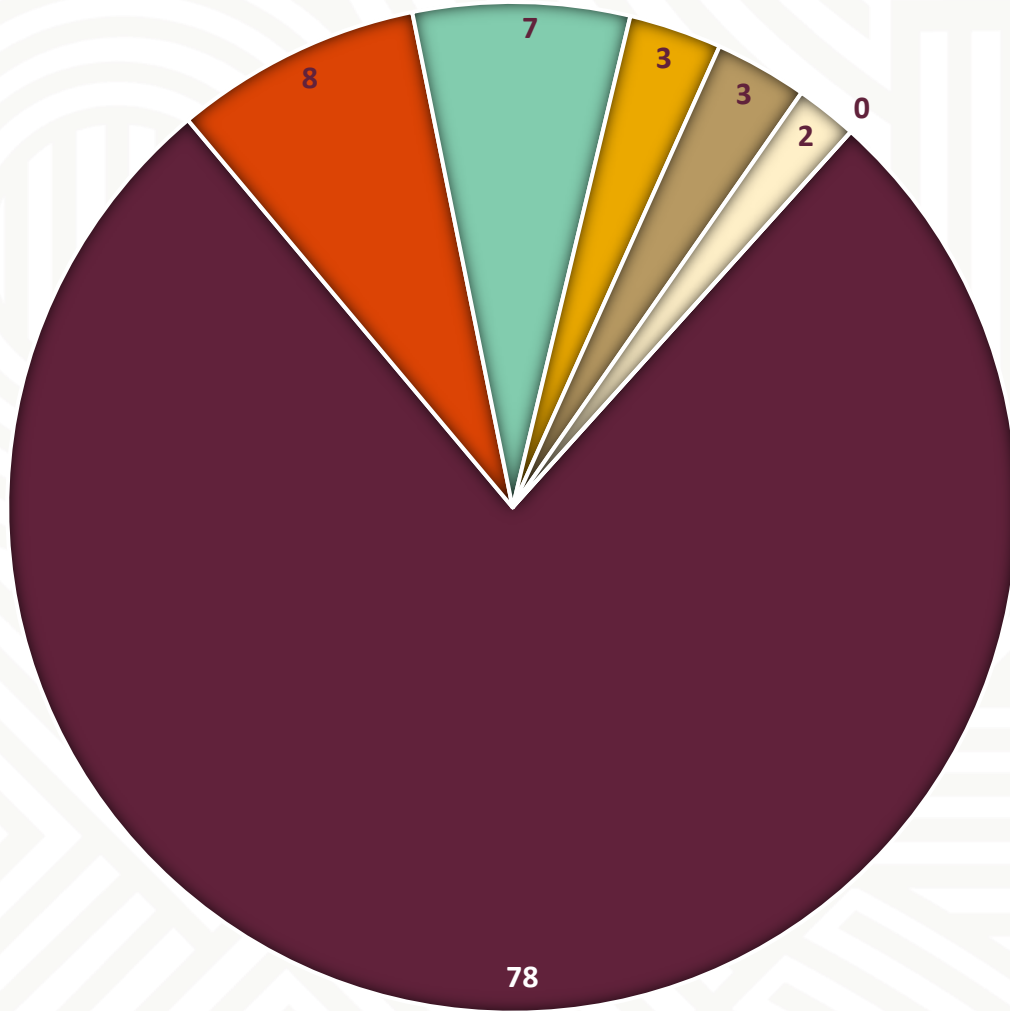


Dr Michelle Smit
Reviewer (DESC)



Send HELP!
Reviewer (DESC)

FESC reviewed 101 ethics applications (2024)



○ Submitted to REC: SBE as low risk (78)

○ Exempt from ethics clearance (8)

○ Incomplete/withdraw applications (7)

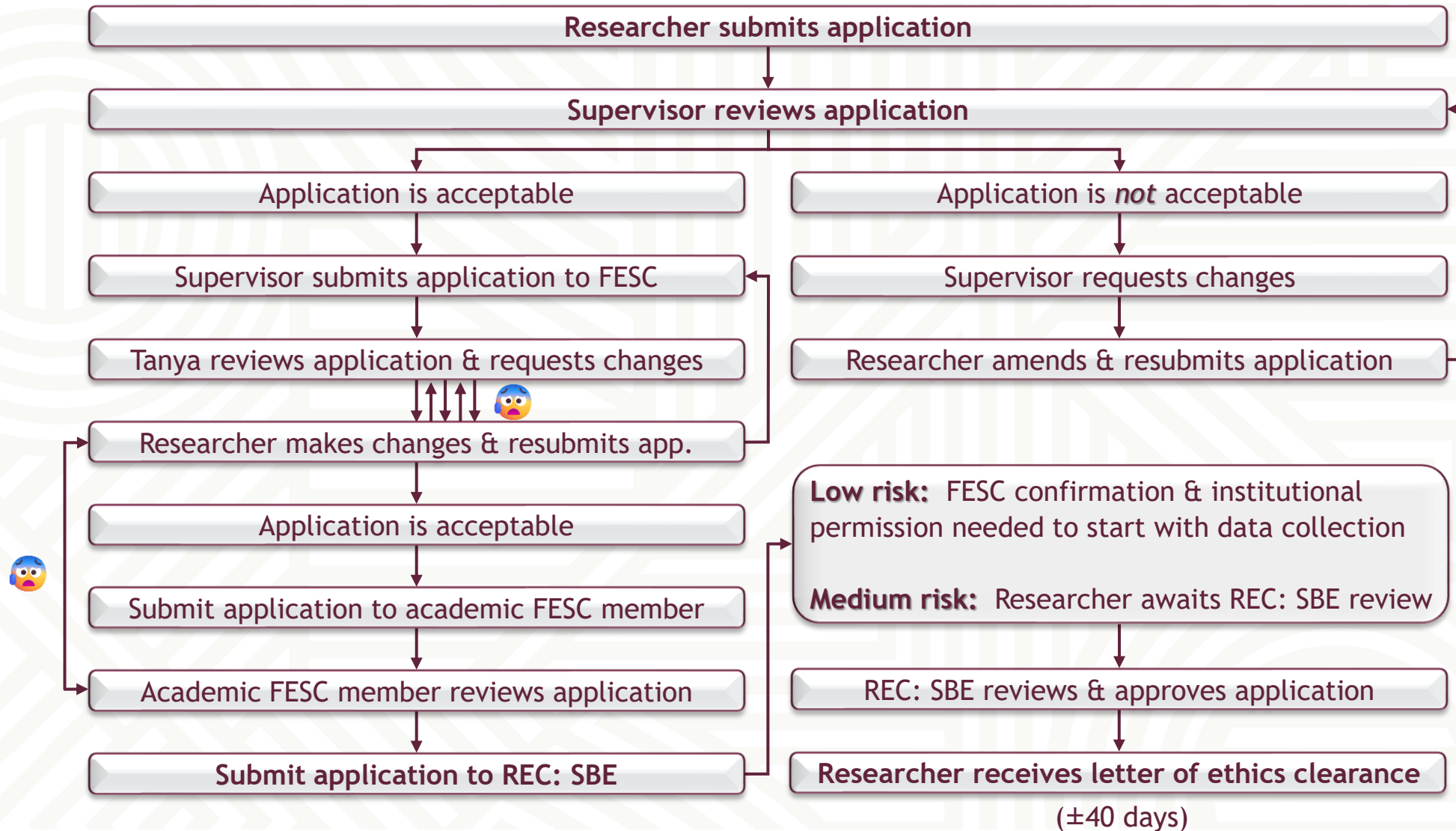
○ Submitted to REC: SBE as medium risk (3)

○ Researcher still needs to resubmit (3)

○ Submitted to HREC (2)

○ Retrospective applications (0)

FESC Process Flow



PRE-SUBMISSION PHASE



Regular & Consistent Communication

Regular emails to researchers (info & updates)

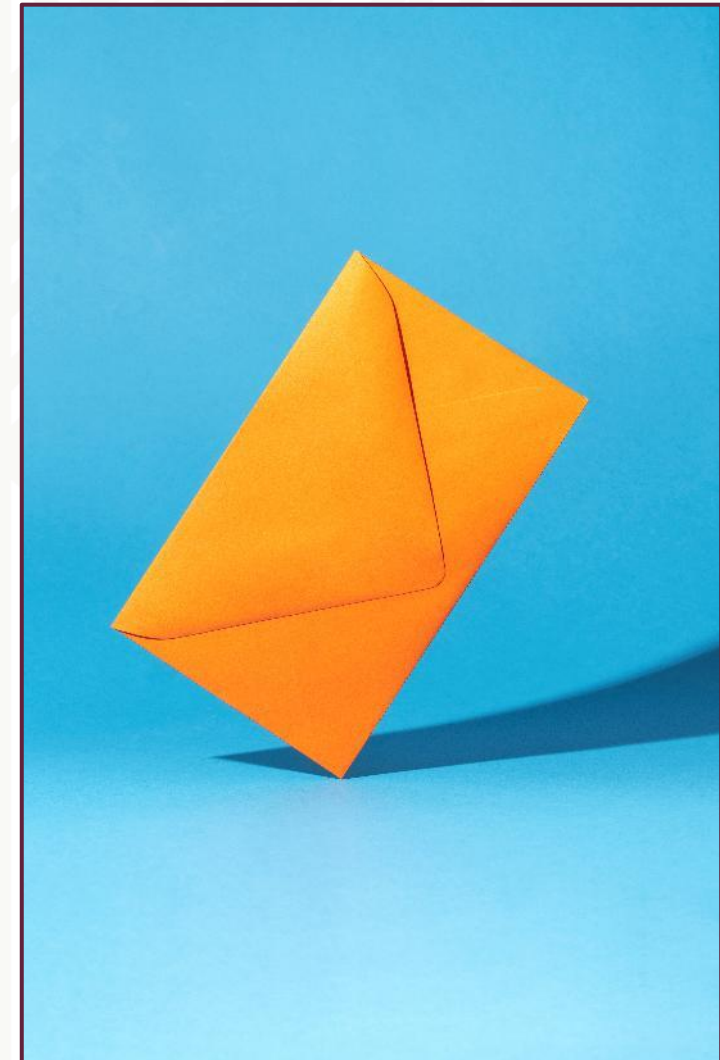
- Obtain updated student list - [Kezia Gordon](#) (Feb, Mar)
- POPIA - personal email addresses may **not** be included
- Send four emails - all PG students (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug)
- Send two emails - all supervisors (Feb, Jun)
 - Do I need to apply (FAQ # 1) on [ethics web page](#)
 - Info sessions: In-person & online (Mar/Apr)
 - Ethics clearance - **not** granted retrospectively



Email Essentials

Responsible person ➡ researcher (*not supervisor*)

- No confirmation email → application **not** received
- Before starting the application:
 - [25 FAQs](#) (review all FAQs)
 - [Application Guide](#) (FAQ # 6)
 - [Ethics Application Templates](#) (FAQ # 7)
 - [Institutional Permission](#) (FAQ # 8) - apply early
- Cuts down on repetitive enquiries from researchers



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

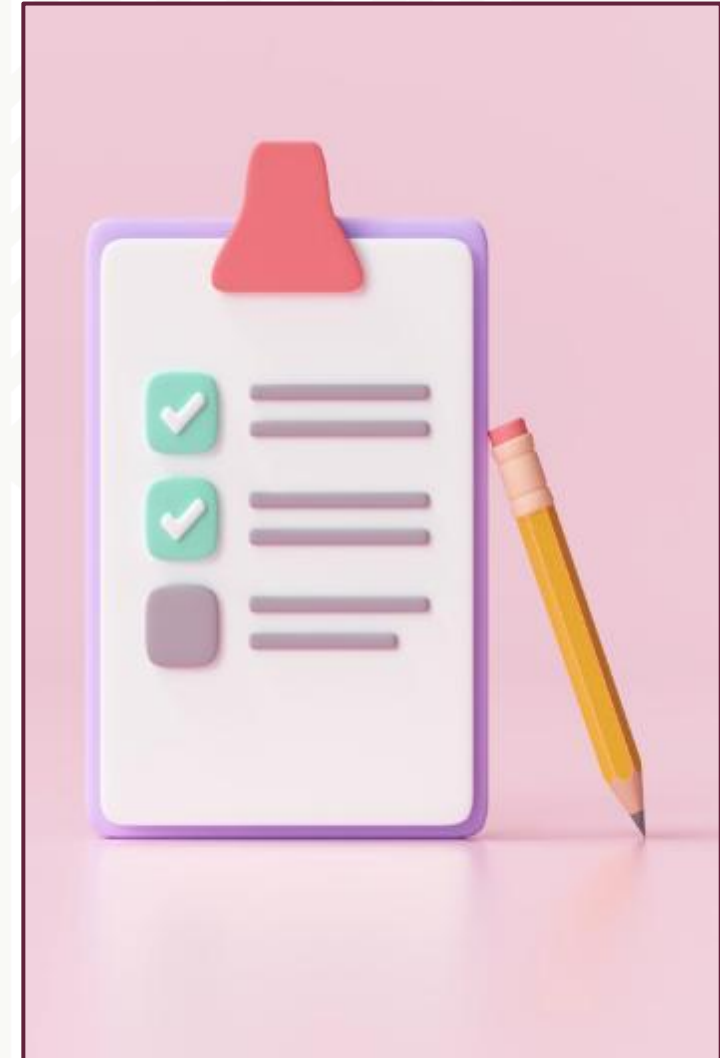
1. Do I need to apply for ethics clearance? (PG students refer to slides 1 & 2)
2. When should I apply to the HREC (Health)?
3. When should I apply to the REC: SBE (Social, Behavioural and Education)?
4. How do I know if my application will be classified as low, medium or high risk?
5. Are there submission deadlines for medium-risk applications? (n/a for low-risk)
6. Is there an 'Application Guide' with standard responses for each question?
7. Where can I download the various templates?
8. How do I know if Institutional Permission is required?
9. Can I include a 'lucky draw' to motivate people to participate?
10. How can my supervisor sign/submit 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 EthicsRM?
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 update my personal details in the application form?
17. How do I change my email address in the application form?
18. How do I share my application form?
19. How do I respond to stipulations or modifications from the REC?
20. Is there a template for the REC Response Letter?
21. How do I submit an amendment/final report to the REC (after approved by REC)
22. How do I submit a progress report for the renewal of REC approval?
23. How do I apply for an amendment to my REC-approved project?
24. What are the REC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)?
25. Ethics clearance for a joint degree (partnership with international institution)



Application Guide (FAQ # 6)

Application Guide – our key to faster ethics approval

- Provides step-by-step guidance for faster approval
- Matches guidance to each question in application form
- Ensures all required steps are covered
- Offers customised templates & sample text (examples)
- FIRST Step: Complete Template 10 (Research Proposal)
- Respond to 9 methodology questions (Question 5.3)
- Helps navigate complex issues (Institutional Permission)



Application Guide (FAQ # 6) - *click play*



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saam vorentoe

Dear Researcher

We kindly request that you take a moment to review the following important points:

Please find below a template created by the Faculty Ethics Screening Committee (FESC). This template will be used to generate the “changes requested” email that you will receive after your initial ethics application submission.

1. Please note that, after the first submission, 99% of ethics applications are typically returned for minor changes. However, in some cases, more significant changes may be required, which could result in delays.
2. To help ensure a smooth process and minimise the need for major changes, we encourage you to carefully review and apply the information provided below. This will support you in submitting a thorough and complete ethics application.
3. The “changes requested” list below is designed to cover a broad range of research areas, so some points may not apply to your specific project. We trust you will use your best judgement to determine which changes requested are applicable to your research.



Ethics Application Templates (FAQ # 7)

- Template 1: Written Consent Form (for **in-person** interviews)
- Template 2: Electronic Consent Form (for **online** interviews)
- Template 3: Electronic Consent Form (for **online** surveys/questionnaires)
- Template 4: Verbal Consent Form
- Template 5: Application Letter for Institutional Permission (send **to** external institution)
- Template 6: Permission Letter (receive **from** external institution)
- Template 7: Written Consent Form (Xhosa)
- Template 8: Electronic Consent Form (Xhosa)
- Template 9: NDA (Field Workers)
- Template 10: Research Proposal

Research Proposal (Template 10)

Thank you to the creators: Prof T Barnard & Prof M Sinclair

- Clear headings with removable guidance notes
- Matches application form questions for faster completion
- Copy-paste crosswalk for quick completion of form
- 7,500-word cap with section length guidelines
- Prompts for permissions, identifiers, and data use
- Ethics emphasis on harm prevention and consent
- Tools for timeline, engagement, bias checks



Research Proposal (Template 10) - *click play*



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RESEARCH PROPOSAL TEMPLATE FOR ETHICS APPLICATION (Jan 2025)

ENGINEERING
EYOBUNJINELI
INGENIEURSWESE

STUDENT NAME:

SU NUMBER:

STUDY LEADER:

PROJECT TITLE:

The research project title should preferably not be more than 15 words. It should **summarise the content of the research proposal, avoiding unnecessary words, acronyms and jargon.**

DATE:

1. Introduction and Background (½ page)

The Introduction summarises the purpose/goal of your research project you are proposing. The Background gives the reader brief information about the problem and context against which

[Please delete this
guidance column
after finalising your
research proposal]

POST-SUBMISSION PHASE



Email Templates (*click play*)

Use 'Signature' function (Outlook) to send quick emails

- Create email templates - use as Signatures (instructions)

File Message Insert Options Format Text Review Help Acrobat

 Send

Subject

| 



Infamous 'Changes Requested' Email

Use 'Application Guide' to draft 'Changes Requested' email

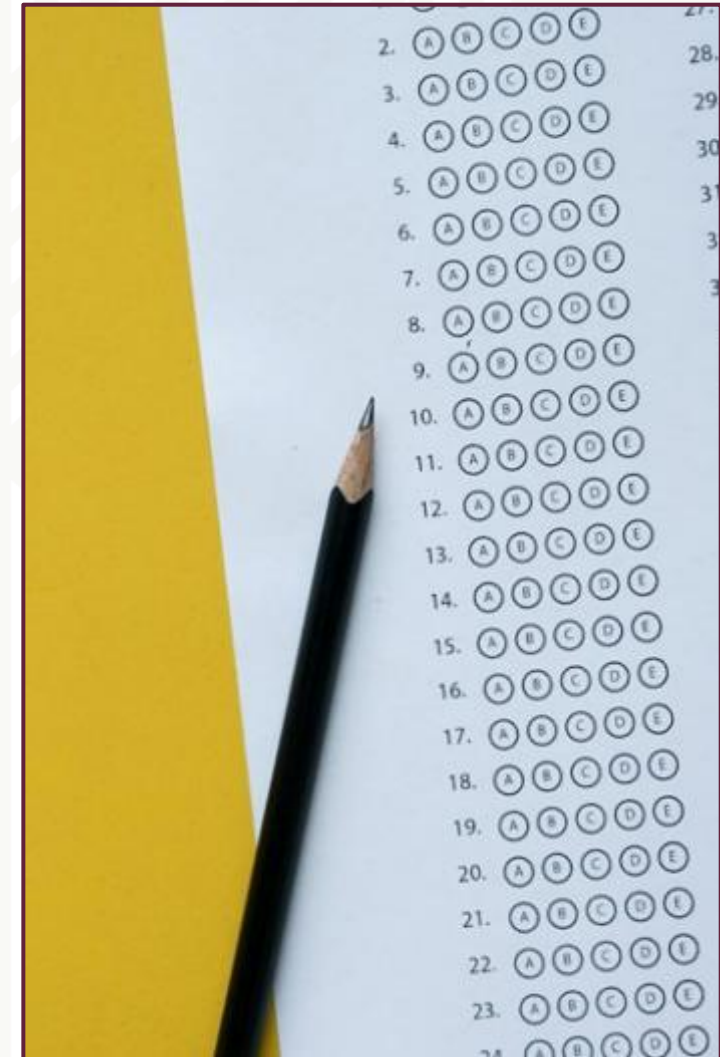
- Guides researchers' revisions via email [email template](#)
- Includes only feedback relevant to each application
- Links directly to required forms and resources
- The 'Personal Touch': why it works
 - Boosts responsiveness & follow-through
 - Enables tailored, two-way communication
 - Builds rapport and trust (personal connection)



The Review Process: A Personal Approach

The devil is in the details...

- Download each doc *separately* to cross-reference info
- Step 1: Screen application for completeness
- Step 2: Review Questions 5.2 & 5.3 (application form)
- Step 3: Review Recruitment Letter & Consent Forms
- Step 4: Review Data Collection documents
- Step 5: Review Institutional Permission letters (app)
- Step 6: Review Research Proposal & Application Form



Personal Review Strategies

- Central coordination helps keep the process clear
- Pre-screen within 48 hours for correct forms and docs
- Review the full application in one uninterrupted go
- Align details across application form and supporting docs
- Track recurring/tricky issues for faster future reviews
- Update 'Application Guide' regularly (avoid recurring issues)
- Communicate consistently - researchers, reviewers & REC
- Recharge with a break after one full review



TYING THE THREADS TOGETHER



How We Aim to Keep the Pulse on Reviews

- We aim to be thorough - details matter
- We aim to be consistent - it builds trust
- We aim to be proactive - it prevents roadblocks
- If all else fails, we phone a friend at the REC!



Thank you - and good luck to us all!



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