

How do I know if INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION is required?

SECTION 8 [*Gatekeeper permission*]

- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from Stellenbosch University:**
 - If you plan to invite students, staff, or alumni of Stellenbosch University (SU) to participate in your research, you must [apply for institutional permission](#) as soon as possible from SU's Division for Information Governance (IG). Institutional permission is required solely because the participants are affiliated with SU, even if your research topic is unrelated to SU or its processes.
 - The approval process can take up to *12 weeks during peak periods*.
 - Submitting an ethics application does not automatically include an application for institutional permission – you need to apply separately via the [IG Service Desk](#).
 - A letter of institutional permission from IG is required before you may start your data collection (e.g., before inviting students or staff to participate).
 - Urgent queries about institutional permission: permission@sun.ac.za
 - Urgent queries about privacy: privacy@sun.ac.za
 - The ethics application form requires proof of institutional permission, while the institutional permission application form requires proof of ethics clearance. To ensure that delays in one process will not automatically affect the outcome of the other, follow these tips to avoid delays:
 - When completing your *ethics* application, upload a screenshot of the IG confirmation email showing you have applied for institutional permission.
 - When completing your *institutional permission* application, include your ethics application reference number (e.g., ING-2025-29040) as proof you have applied for ethics clearance.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED):**
 - If you plan to invite *public* schools in the Western Cape to participate in your research, you must first obtain institutional permission from the [Western Cape Education Department \(WCED\)](#). This requirement does not apply to *private* schools.
 - A separate online application must be submitted to the WCED to obtain this permission. You may begin data collection only after WCED approval has been granted.
 - Processing time: Approximately 2 - 4 weeks
 - Queries: Contact Mr Meshack Kanzi at Meshack.Kanzi@westerncape.gov.za or 021 467 9272.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from the National Department of Health (NDoH):**
 - If you plan to invite *provincial, public, or state hospitals or clinics* to participate in your research, you must obtain institutional permission from the National Department of Health (NDoH) before starting data collection. This requirement does not apply to *private* hospitals or clinics – please notify me immediately if you intend to involve a *private* facility, as the procedure differs.
 - The NHRD application requires an ethics approval number (e.g., ING-2025-11011) before submission. As such, submit your ethics application *first* via the [REC: SBE Application Portal](#) and obtain ethics clearance from the REC: SBE.
 - Once ethics clearance is granted, complete the NDoH institutional permission application via the [National Health Research Database \(NHRD\)](#).

- Processing time: Approximately 4 - 6 weeks
- Additional resources: [Researcher Manual](#)
- After NDoH approval, you will receive a written Permission Letter on official NDoH letterhead. Upload this letter to your ethics application:
 - Create a "Documentation Form" (see [manual](#), but select *Documentation Form* instead of *Amendment Form*).
 - Upload the signed permission letter.
 - Both you and your supervisor must sign the updated ethics application so it can be resubmitted to the REC: SBE.
- You may only begin data collection (e.g., interviews, online questionnaires, or collect company data at participating facilities) after receiving the written NDoH Permission Letter.
- **Obtaining Institutional Permission from *external institutions*:**
 - You must obtain written and signed institutional (gatekeeper) permission on official letterhead from an institution if any of the following apply:
 - Access to *non-public* quantitative data – e.g. financial records, consumer demographics, statistical datasets.
 - Collection of *institution-related* information from participants – i.e. any question in your data collection document (e.g., interview, survey, questionnaire) which requires the participant to share:
 - The institution's name
 - Number of employees
 - Information on its processes, procedures, or policies (i.e. how the institution performs specific tasks)
 - Information relevant only to that institution
 - Information that would only be accessible to someone employed by the organisation
 - You have targeted a *specific* institution and plan to conduct research (e.g. interviews, surveys, observations, etc) with its members, employees, customers, staff, or students – even if all questions focus solely on personal opinions, unrelated to the institution.
 - Targeted research within a *specific* institution, i.e. conducting interviews, surveys, or observations with that institution's employees, members, customers, staff, or students – even if all questions relate solely to personal opinions unrelated to the institution.
 - **Exceptions** – institutional permission is *not* required if any of the following apply:
 - The *owner* or *CEO* of an institution participates in your research. This applies exclusively to the *owner* or *CEO* (not managers or any other employees).
 - Participants are interviewed solely as independent experts (not as representatives of their employer) **and** no information will be collected about the institution, including:
 - Processes, procedures, or policies
 - How the institution performs specific activities
 - Information unique to the institution
 - Information only accessible to employees
 - It is important to note that, if the owner or CEO participates in your research, an informed consent form must still be signed by each participant before data collection begins.

- Please state in your research proposal, ethics application form, and consent form that neither participants nor the institutions they represent will be identifiable in your results.
- If, at any stage, you need to identify an institution in your reporting or publications, you must first obtain formal institutional permission.

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

- **Question 8.1:** Please select "yes" for this question.
 - **Question 8.1.1:**
 - Please list the names of all institutions/organisations from which you will need to obtain permission.
 - Your application cannot be accepted unless your *Application Letter for Institutional Permission* includes full contact details of the person authorised to grant permission at each institution (name, telephone number, email address).
 - If you are unsure which institutions will participate at this stage, you must:
 - Upload *at least one* completed *Application Letter for Institutional Permission* before signing your application form.
 - State that the full list of participating institutions is not yet confirmed, and that written institutional (gatekeeper) permission will be obtained from each relevant institution before data collection begins.
 - **Question 8.1.2:** Please select "no" for this question (*would seeking permission from gatekeepers jeopardise access to data/participants*).
 - **Question 8.1.3:** Please select "no" for this question (*have you obtained permission from the relevant organisations/authorities*).
 - **Question 8.1.6:** Use [Template 5](#) (*Application Letter for Institutional Permission*) and [Template 6](#) (*Permission Letter*) to prepare and upload the required documents for obtaining institutional permission. These templates are provided to help you save time and ensure all necessary information is included.
 - **Template 5 (Application Letter for Institutional Permission):**
 - Customise [Template 5](#):
 - Complete all sections highlighted in yellow, including the name, telephone number, and email address of the person authorised to grant institutional permission.
 - Indicate that you have included the survey/interview questions at the end of the document, or as an attachment to your email.
 - Attach data collection documents:
 - Attach all interview/survey documents (with the full list of questions) before sending the completed *Application Letter* to the institution.
 - Alternatively, copy and paste the questions at the end of the Application Letter so it forms a single combined document.
 - Email the completed letter:
 - Send the completed *Application Letter* to the authorised person – preferably the Managing Director, CEO, or owner (as soon as possible).
 - Upload to the application form:
 - Upload the completed *Application Letter* to this section of the application form.

- **NB:** At this stage, *only* the Application Letter needs to be uploaded. The signed Permission Letter can be uploaded once it has been received.
- Prepare one *Application Letter* per institution:
 - Create and upload a separate *Application Letter* for each participating institution.
- Include Data Collection documents in the Letter:
 - Add a copy of your interview/survey document(s) directly below the *Application Letter* to ensure the institution can review any company-related questions in advance.
 - Include this sentence (or similar) in the letter: "Please refer to the company-related questions below, which will form part of the interview/questionnaire."
- **Template 6 (Permission Letter):**
 - Purpose:
 - The institution must provide a signed Permission Letter, on official letterhead, confirming that they have reviewed your *Application Letter* ([Template 5](#)) and granting approval for you to begin data collection at their institution.
 - Customising [Template 6](#):
 - Complete all the sections highlighted in yellow in Template 6, including the name, telephone number, and email address of the authorised person.
 - Email the customised Template 6 to this person (preferably the MD, CEO, or owner) as soon as possible.
 - Request that they complete all the sections highlighted in **green**, sign the document, and return an electronic copy on company letterhead.
 - Timing considerations:
 - **NB:** You do *not* need to wait for the signed *Permission Letter* before resubmitting your ethics application.
 - **NB:** You must have the signed *Permission Letter* *before* starting any data collection (e.g., interviews, distributing questionnaires, collecting company data).
 - If received after resubmission:
 - If the signed *Permission Letter* is received later, upload it to your application form *after* the FESC has submitted your ethics application to the REC: SBE for final review and ratification.