

The Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA) applies to research activities that involve identifiable personal information of individuals or organisations. In terms of POPIA, you are required to consider the impact that research has on participants' right to privacy. In addition, this consideration is an integral part of research ethics.

DE-IDENTIFY WHEN POSSIBLE

De-identifying is when you store the personal information of research participants in an unidentifiable format. Instead of identifying research participants, you can choose to do the following



COLLECT ANONYMOUS RESEARCH DATA

If your project does not require that you know the identity of the research participants, don't collect information that identifies them.



DE-IDENTIFY THE INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Sometimes, you may need to know who the research participants are initially, but not for the duration of the project. If you subsequently de-identify information, POPIA no longer applies.



MASK THE IDENTITY OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (PSEUDONYMISATION)

You could also mask the research participants' identity by using pseudonyms. POPIA will still apply, but the information will remain secure.

COLLECT AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

Make sure that the personal information you collect is relevant to your project. Ask yourself:

- ? Why are you collecting personal information?
- ? How are you planning to use it?
- ? Can you achieve your goals without collecting personal information?

BE TRANSPARENT

Ensure that the research participants are well informed about the purpose of the research and how you are using their personal information. Make sure that your fellow researchers are aware of the privacy risks for the research participants and the steps they must take to mitigate those risks. Document the steps in your research management plans in a verifiable and transparent way and make sure that everybody understands their roles.

KEEP INFORMATION SAFE

Always safeguard your research data against unauthorised access, use, loss or destruction. For example:



Use a secure environment for storing and sharing files.



Make sure that you follow the University's policies and procedures for storing and retaining research data.



Encrypt sensitive research data.



Make sure you have secure back-ups.



Restrict access to identifiable personal information to as few people as possible.

ASK FOR HELP

Make sure that you read and understand your responsibilities. Familiarise yourself with the following Stellenbosch University policies and regulations:



- Research Policy
- Policy for Responsible Research Conduct
- Research Data Management Regulation
- Privacy Regulation

For questions regarding POPIA or related SU policies, contact: privacy@sun.ac.za or visit www.sun.ac.za/privacy