S&E Research Ethics Committee
Online Approval Portal Guidance

Ver 1.1 – Updated 15/05/2025

Guidance document outline

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2. REC review and approval process
3. REC approval portal guidance for PI / Supervisor
4. REC approval portal guidance for REC members
5. Troubleshooting
6. Helpful tips
7. Further resources
8. Reference images

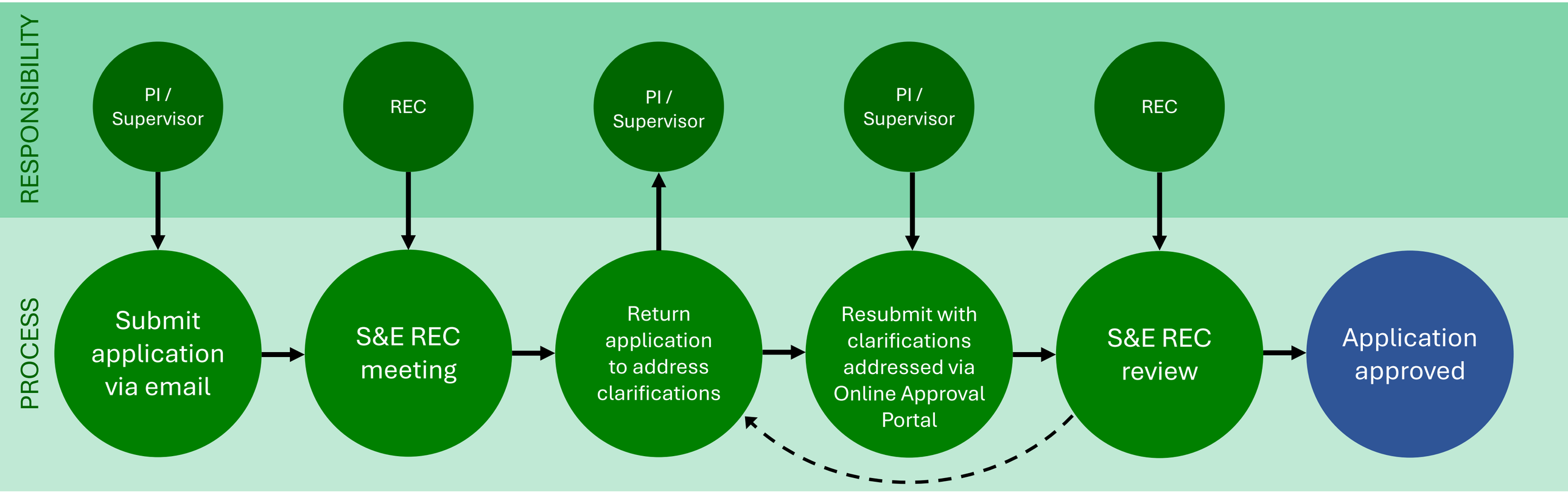
1. Introduction

The S&E REC Online Approval Portal provides a standard approval workflow for all ethics applications submitted by members of the Faculty of Science & Engineering.

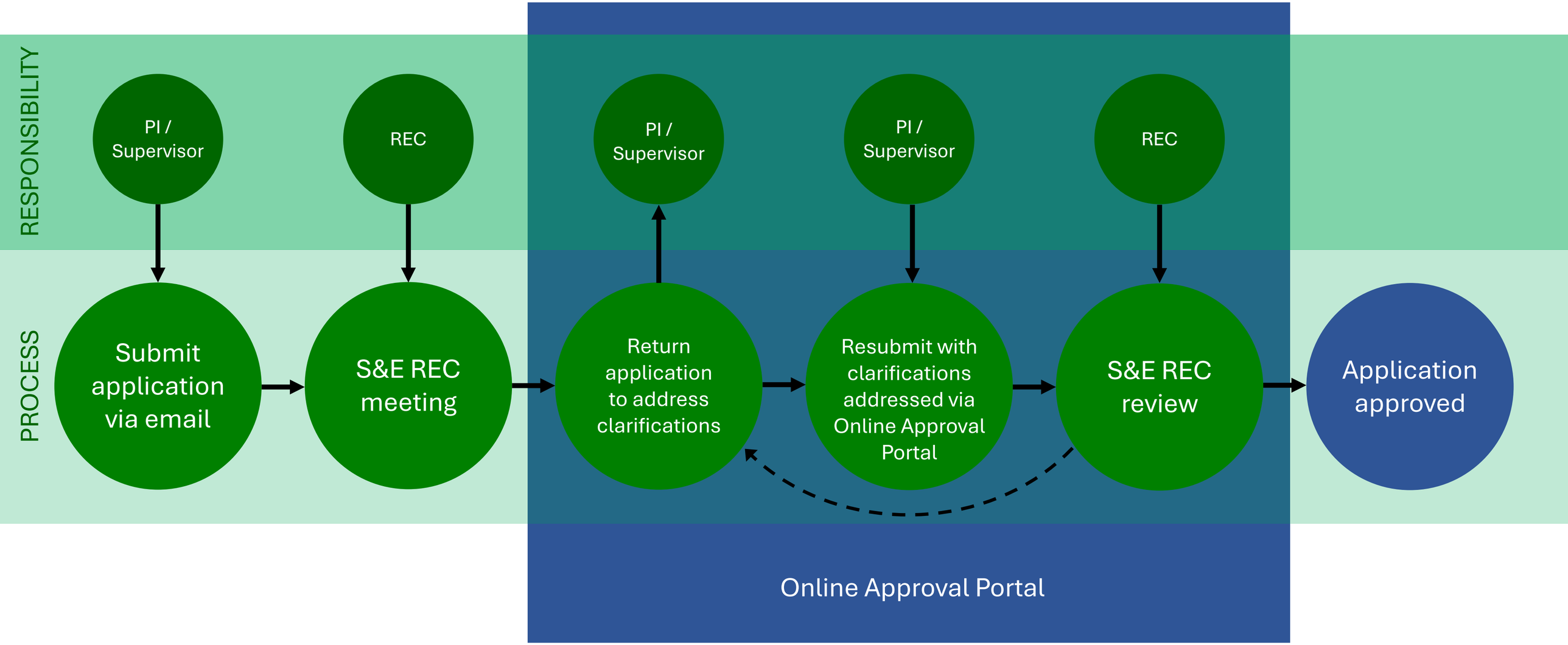
This process aims to increase transparency and accountability in the approval process, ensuring that all decisions are recorded and all clarifications are tracked, reducing processing time and increasing overall efficiency.

The portal is designed to keep all stakeholders (applicants and reviewers) informed at all points throughout the process as to the status of each ethics application.

2. REC review and approval process



2. REC review and approval process



3. REC approval portal guidance for PI/Supervisor

1. PI / Supervisor receives an email from S&E Research Ethics Committee Coordinator (Johanna Griffin) with decision, next steps, and the link to the ethics application on the portal with clarifications from REC meeting.
    - All clarification requests are contained within the application.
2. PI / Supervisor addresses clarifications in Section A, making tracked changes to the application as appropriate.
    - The PI / Supervisor is responsible for making the changes to the application.
    - The application CAN be downloaded and distributed to other named researchers/students on the application and then reuploaded if preferred.
    - Direct access to the portal CAN be granted to postgraduate students and researchers (level 9+) upon request.
3. Once clarifications are addressed and the application updated on the portal, PI / Supervisor clicks “PI Submit”, and then “Run Flow”.
4. Once reviewed, PI receives an email with an updated decision.

4. REC approval portal guidance for REC members

1. Reviewer 1 receives an email from S&E Research Ethics Committee Coordinator (Johanna Griffin) once PI / Supervisor submits the amended application.
2. Reviewer 1 reviews amendments as per requested clarifications.
    - If the initial clarifications are not sufficiently addressed, Reviewer 1 can request they be readdressed in the application.
3. Once a decision is made, Reviewer 1 clicks “Reviewer 1 Ready”, and then “Run Flow”.

4. Reviewer 2 receives an email from S&E Research Ethics Committee Coordinator (Johanna Griffin) once Reviewer 1 submits their decision.
5. Reviewer 2 reviews amendments as per requested clarifications.
    - If the initial clarifications are not sufficiently addressed, Reviewer 2 can request they be readdressed in the application.

If Reviewer 2’s decision **matches** Reviewer 1’s decision, Reviewer 2 clicks “Reviewer 2 Ready” and then “Run Flow”.

If Reviewer 2’s decision **does not match** Reviewer 1’s decision, both reviewers must meet to discuss and arrive at an agreed decision, prior to clicking “Reviewer 2 Ready” and “Run Flow”.

S&E REC decision types

Four decision options – Approve, minor clarifications required, major clarifications required, and not approved/reject

- Approve:
  - Application is fully approved, either through one review, or after addressing major/minor clarifications. The researcher(s) can begin the research as proposed.
- Minor:
  - Application is mostly acceptable, but there are minor adjustments or clarifications needed before approval can be granted. These issues are straightforward to address and do not require substantial changes to the research design.
- Major:
  - Application requires another round of review by the original reviewers, as significant revisions/changes are needed before the research can be approved.
- Not approved/Reject:
  - Application is rejected, and the research cannot proceed as proposed. Usually, this decision is made after multiple rounds of reviews, or in extreme cases, when there are fundamental ethical concerns that cannot be resolved without a complete redesign of the study.

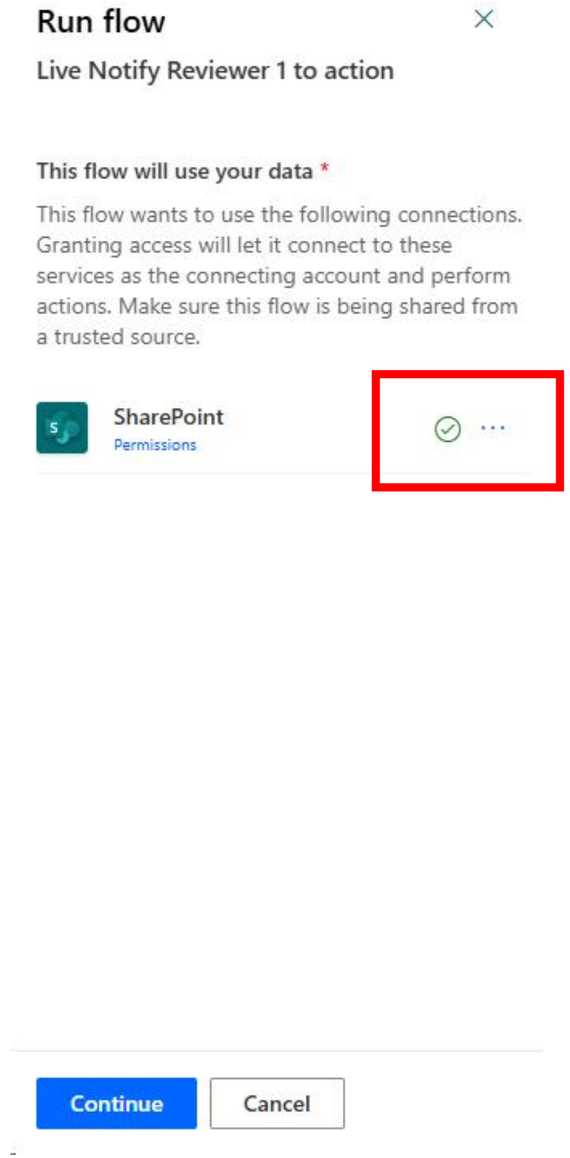
More detailed decision definitions can be found here.

5. Troubleshooting

If you are encountering an issue accessing, editing, or submitting a decision on the S&E REC Online Approval portal, please try the following:

1. Ensure you are logged into you Microsoft 365 with your UL email account.
2. Ensure all permissions are granted for the Portal. This is usually requested upon first time access, or when clicking “Run Flow”.

If the above steps do not solve your issue, please contact Johanna.Griffin@ul.ie for further guidance.



6. Helpful tips for PI / Supervisor

- View the tutorial videos regarding how to fill out an application on the S&E REC website.
- Ensure you submit your ethics application as a Word document. Do not submit it as a PDF.
- Deadline for applications is the first Thursday of each month (except August).
- Ethics approval must be obtained prior to conducting research.
- Interviews or questionnaires conducted online must have a gated consent form, whereby a potential research participant must explicitly consent to taking part in the study, prior to accessing an interview link or survey questions.
- Applications submitted must have at least the following attached:
    - Potential interview/questionnaire questions
    - Information sheet(s)(printed and/or gated)
    - Consent form(s) (printed and/or gated)
    - Advertising / recruitment emails / letters etc.
- Standard templates for printed and online information sheets/consent forms (included in the form) must be used.
- Please do not reach out directly to REC reviewers when addressing clarifications. All communication must be done. through the portal. If you wish to seek further guidance on your application, please email Johanna.Griffin@ul.ie.

6. Helpful tips for REC members

- Deadline for applications is the first Thursday of each month (except August).
- REC meets on the third week of each month to review applications.
- If minor clarifications are required, they can be approved by the Chair without going through the committee again.
- If major clarifications or resubmission is required, the REC may need to review it again, adding a longer delay to your research.
- Any question left ambiguous can be input to the summary sheet, so that it can be clearly addressed prior to resubmission.
- We advise creating a rule in your Outlook Inbox to move all emails with the heading “S&E Research Ethics” into a dedicated folder to keep all REC activities collated.

7. Further resources

- S&E REC website
- Expedited Ethics Application Form
- Full Ethics Application Form (if you tick any boxes in sections 2 – 4)

8. Reference images

For PI / Supervisor:

1. PI /Supervisor notification email
2. How to find the status of your application
3. How to access your application
4. How to download your application
5. How to reupload your application
6. How to submit your applications clarifications/updates

For REC members:

7. Reviewer 1 email
8. Reviewer 2 email
9. S&E REC Online Approval Portal access for REC members
10. How to add requests to readdress clarifications
11. How to submit a new decision (Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2)

Reference images for PI / Supervisor

1. PI / Supervisor notification email

Dear Name of PI / Supervisor,

This is a notification to inform you that S&E Research Ethics application 202X_01_01_S&E Name of research project has been updated to Major

Please address the comments from the committee.

To submit your amendments, complete the following:

1. Double-click anywhere along your application row in SharePoint.
2. Scroll down on the dialog box and open your application in word (*paperclip).*
3. Ensure **track changes** is enabled.
4. Follow the instructions on the **cover sheet** of your application.
5. Insert your amendments on the cover sheet and the **appropriate sections** of the ethics application. Your application will automatically save each amendment.
6. Once completed, **close** the Word document(s).
7. When completed, in full, click the **PI submit** button and **Run flow** to submit your application for further review.

You will receive an update once your application is reviewed further.

Please click here to access SharePoint and amend your application.

For further information on this automated process please see this **presentation**.

Click on the link in the email to access the portal.

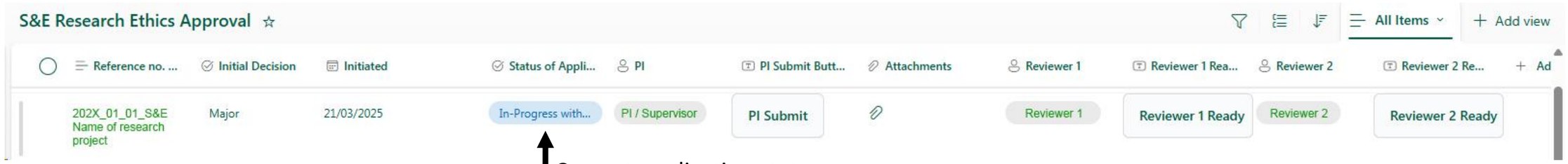
Kind regards,

Johanna Griffin,

S&E Research Ethics Committee Executive Administrator

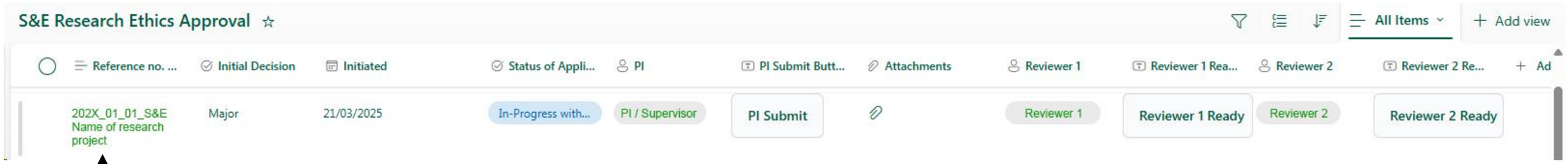
2. How to find the status of your application

1. Click on the link in the email to access the portal.



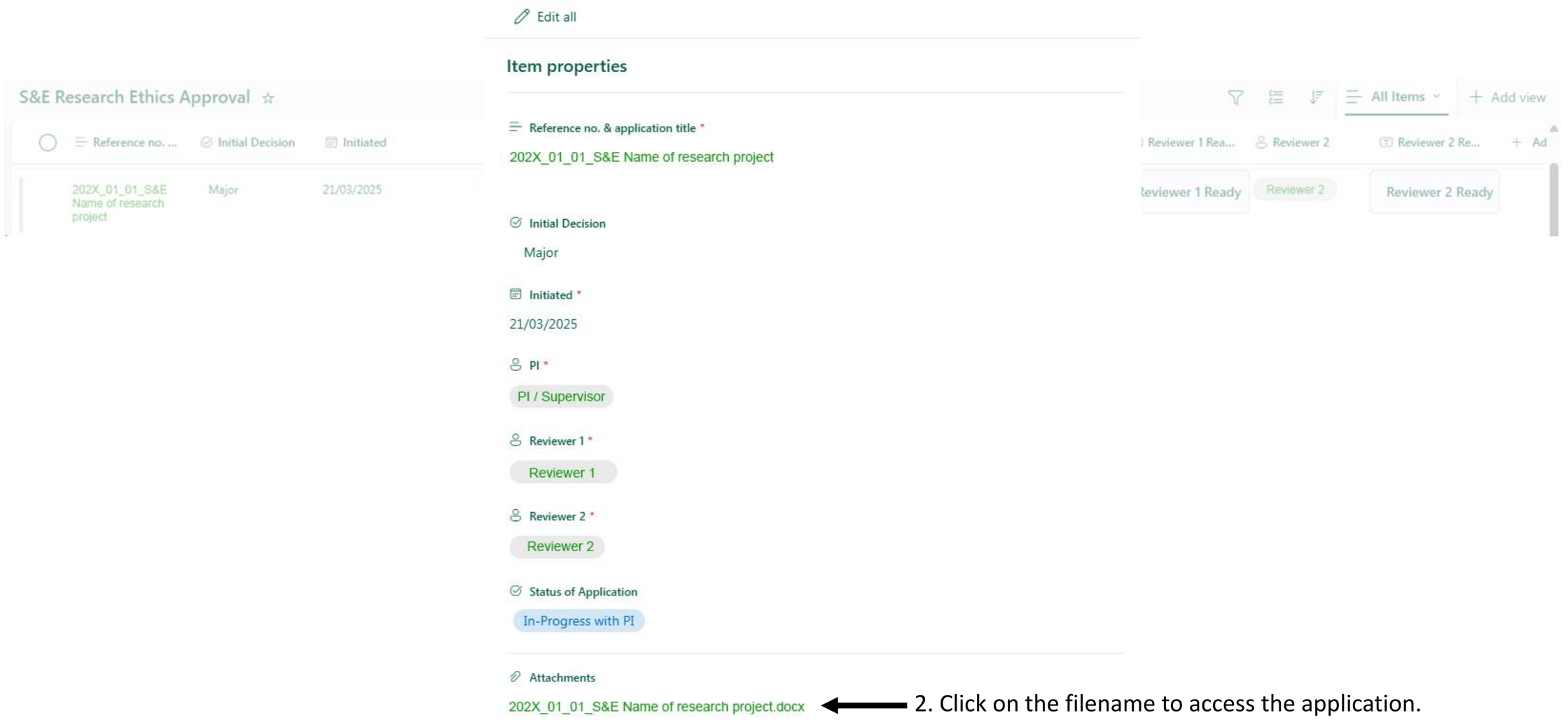
Current application status.
This will update as the application is progressed.

3. How to access your application

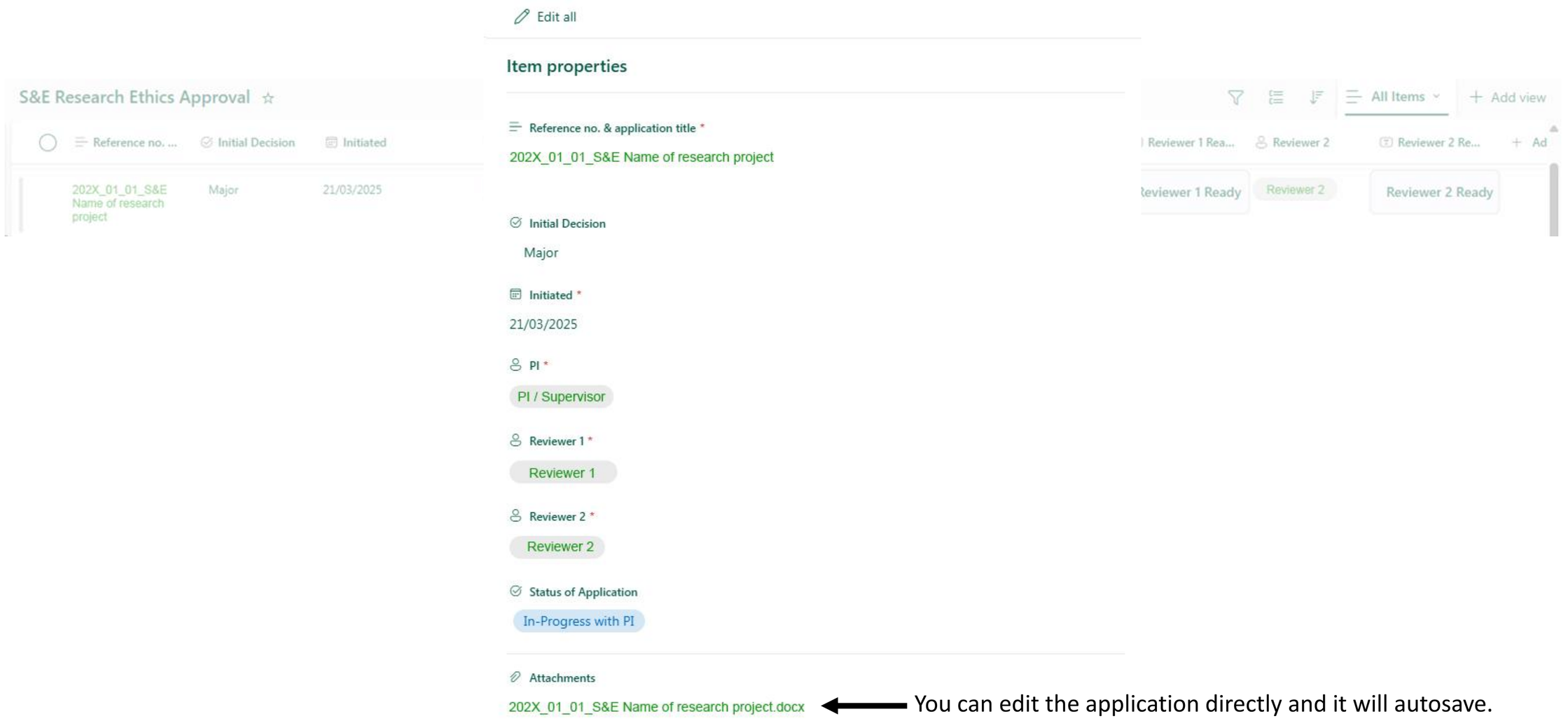


1. Double click anywhere along this row to access your application.

3. How to access your application

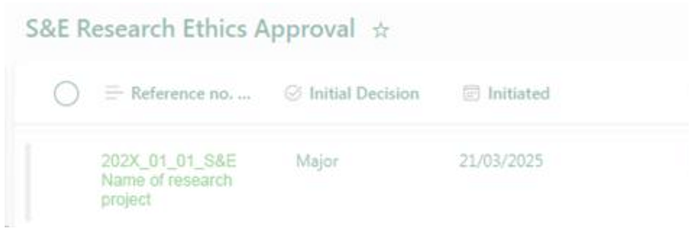


4. How to download your application

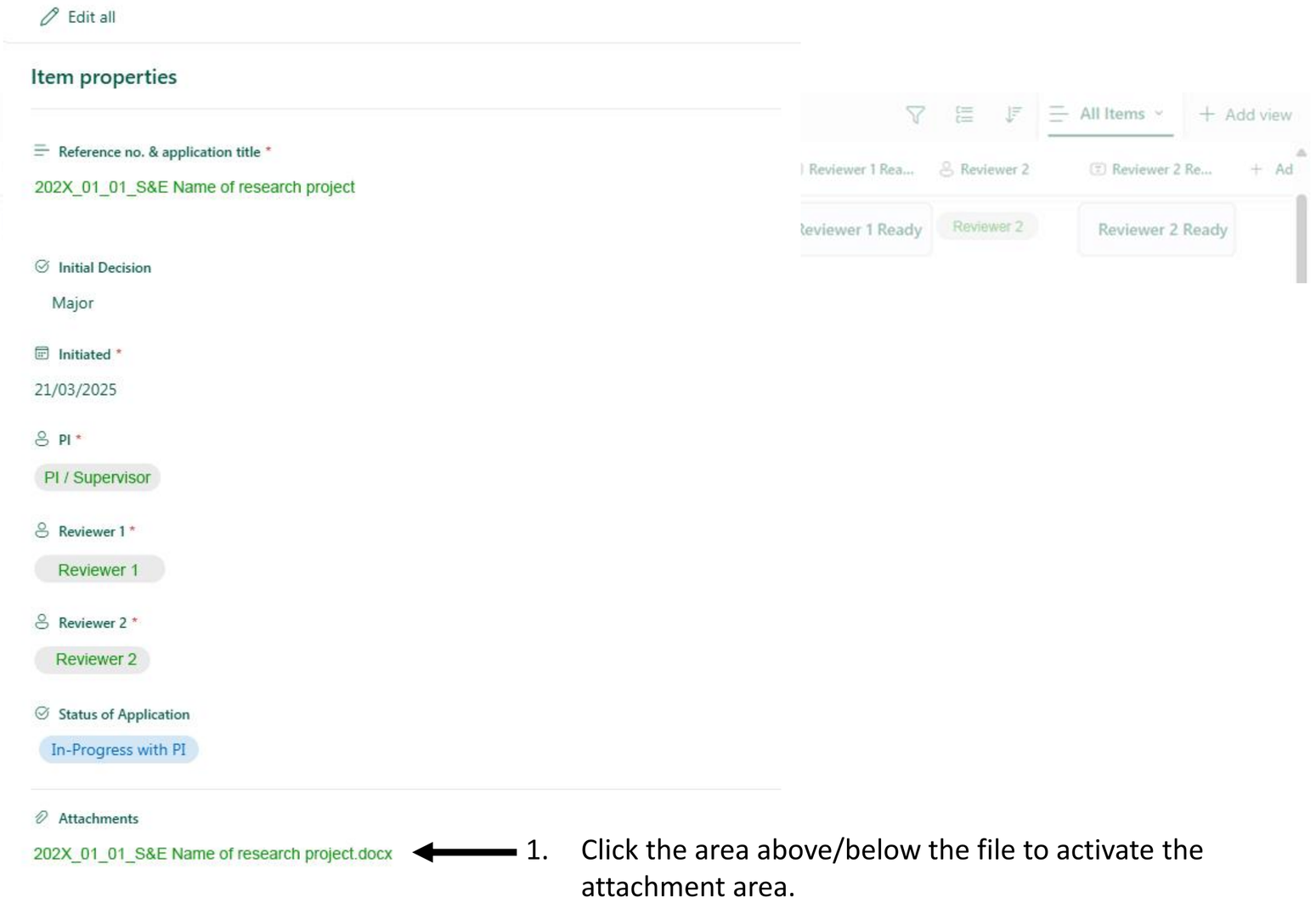


You can edit the application directly and it will autosave.
You can also download it.

5. How to reupload your application

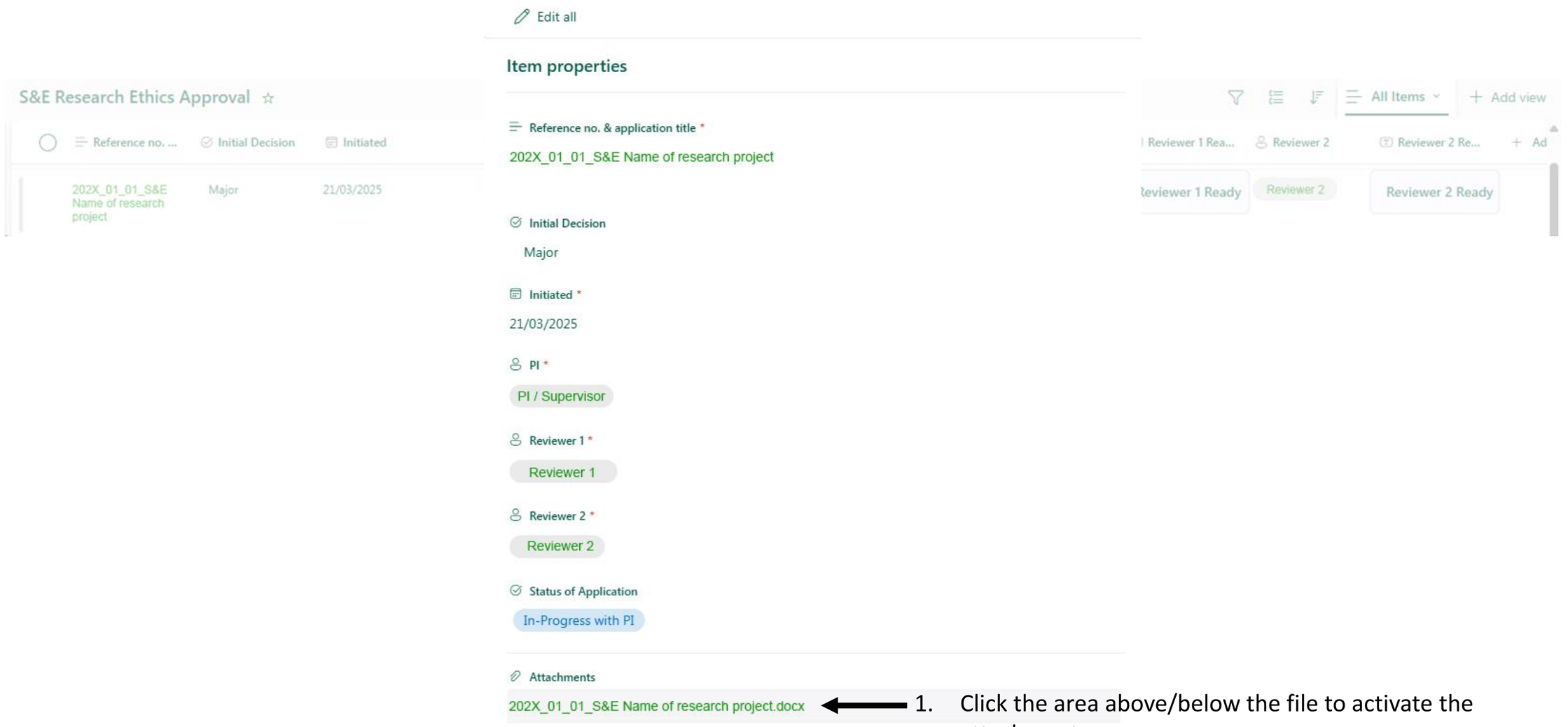


Note: This is an optional step. You can work directly on your application on the portal. Only download it if you wish to work on it offline, or if you need to send it to a collaborator or student who does not have access to the portal.



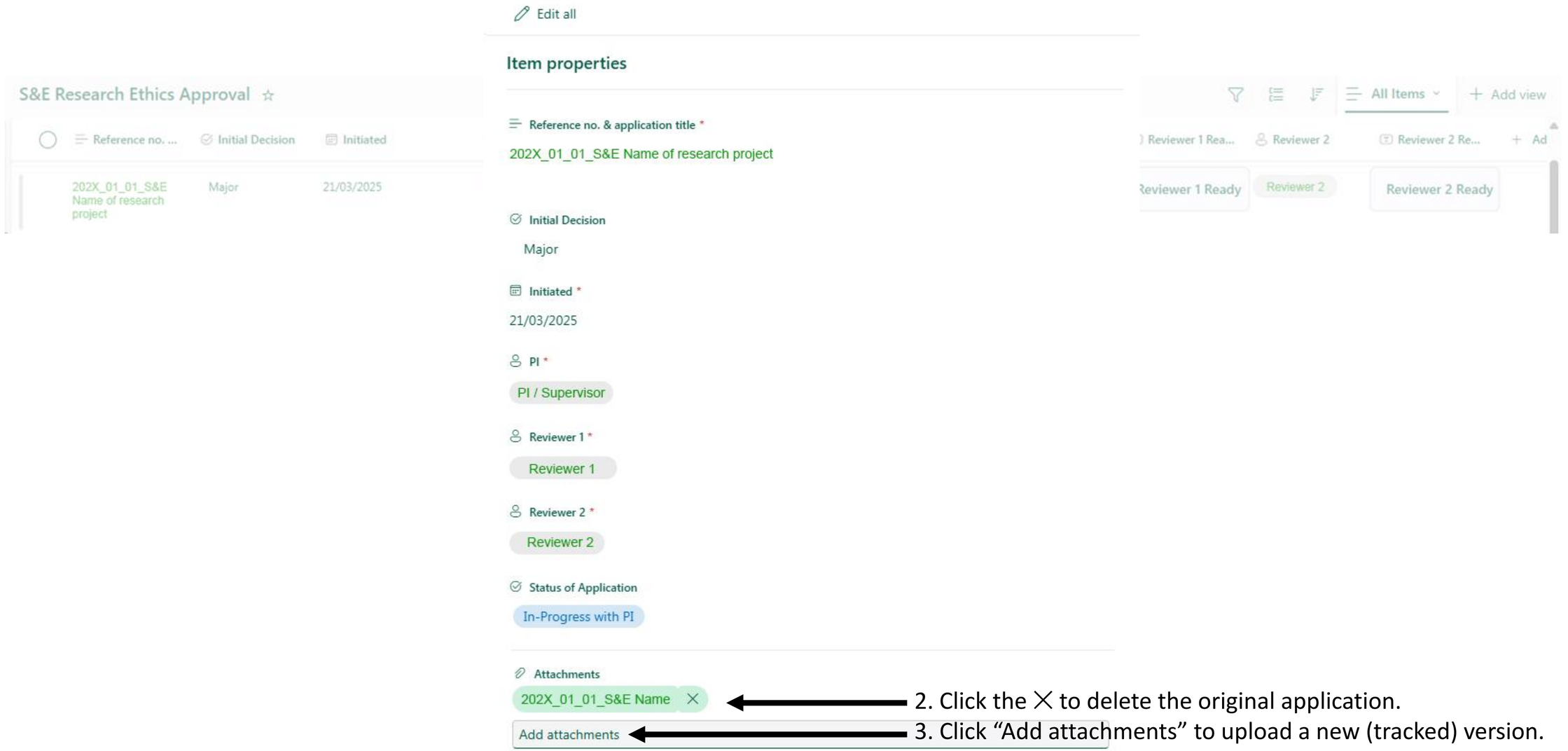
1. Click the area above/below the file to activate the attachment area.

5. How to reupload your application



1. Click the area above/below the file to activate the attachment area.

5. How to reupload your application

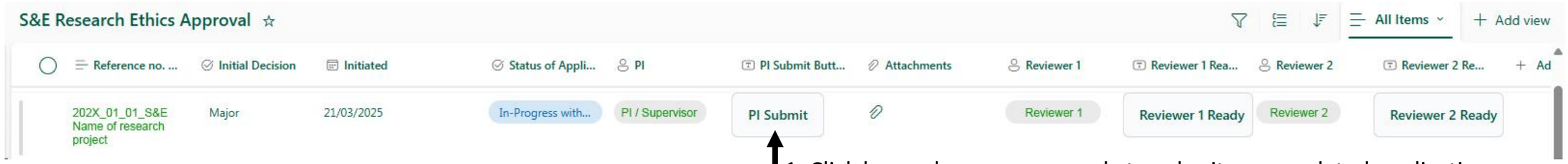


2. Click the ✕ to delete the original application.

3. Click “Add attachments” to upload a new (tracked) version.

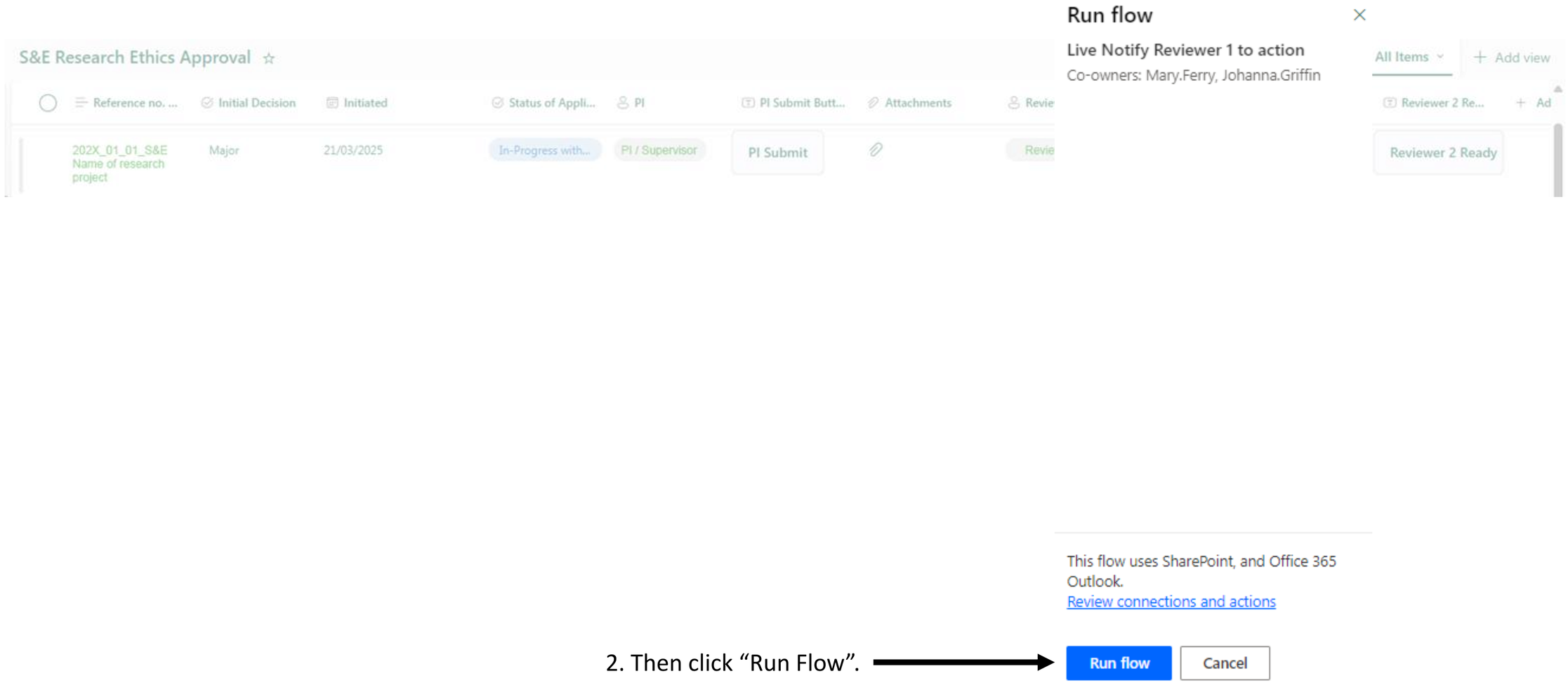
6. How to submit your application clarifications/updates

1. Click on the link in the email to access the portal.



1. Click here when you are ready to submit your updated application.

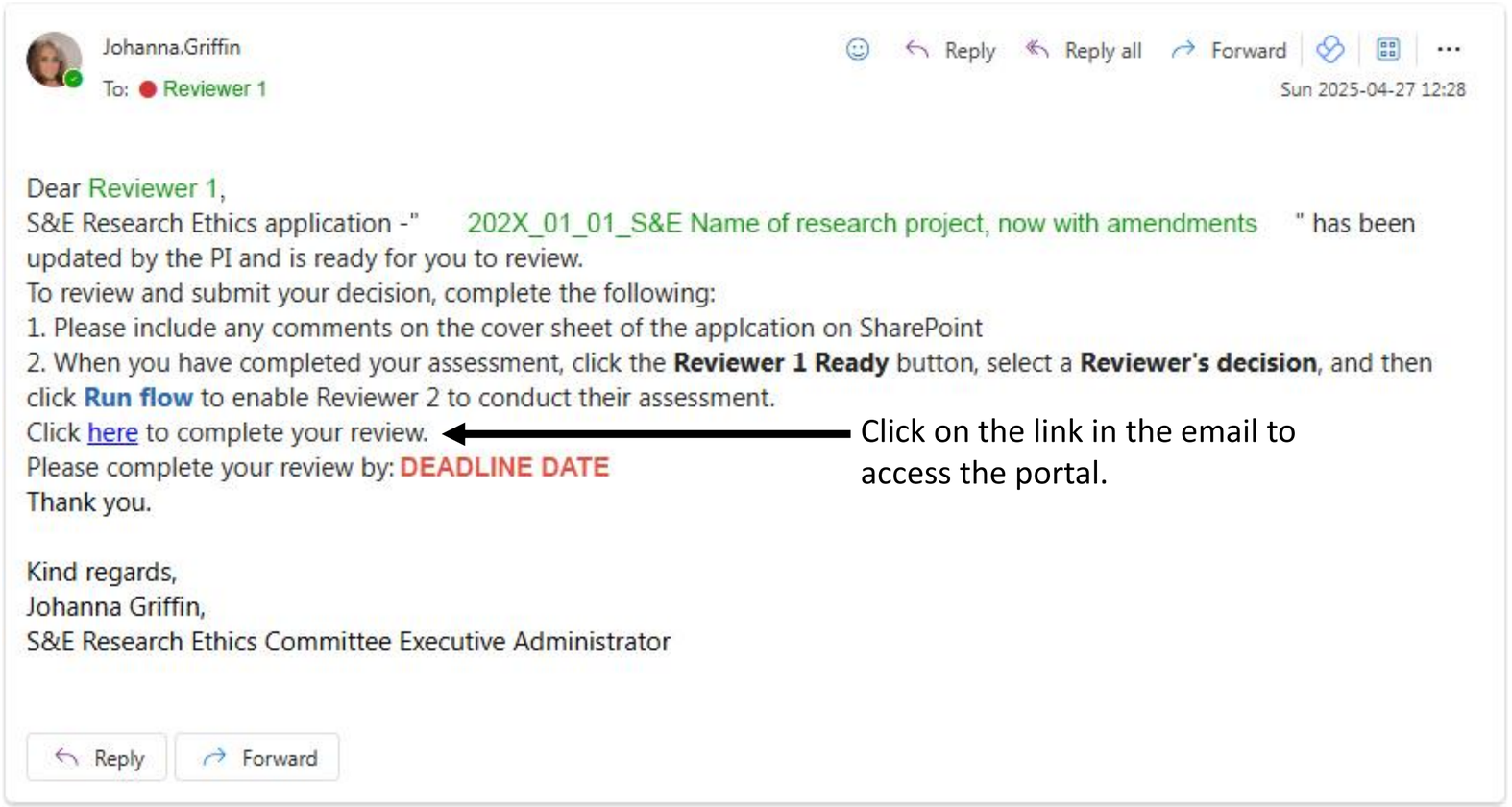
6. Portal submission process (PI Submit and Run Flow)



2. Then click “Run Flow”.

Reference images for REC members

7. Reviewer 1 email



Johanna.Griffin
To: Reviewer 1

Reply | Reply all | Forward
Sun 2025-04-27 12:28

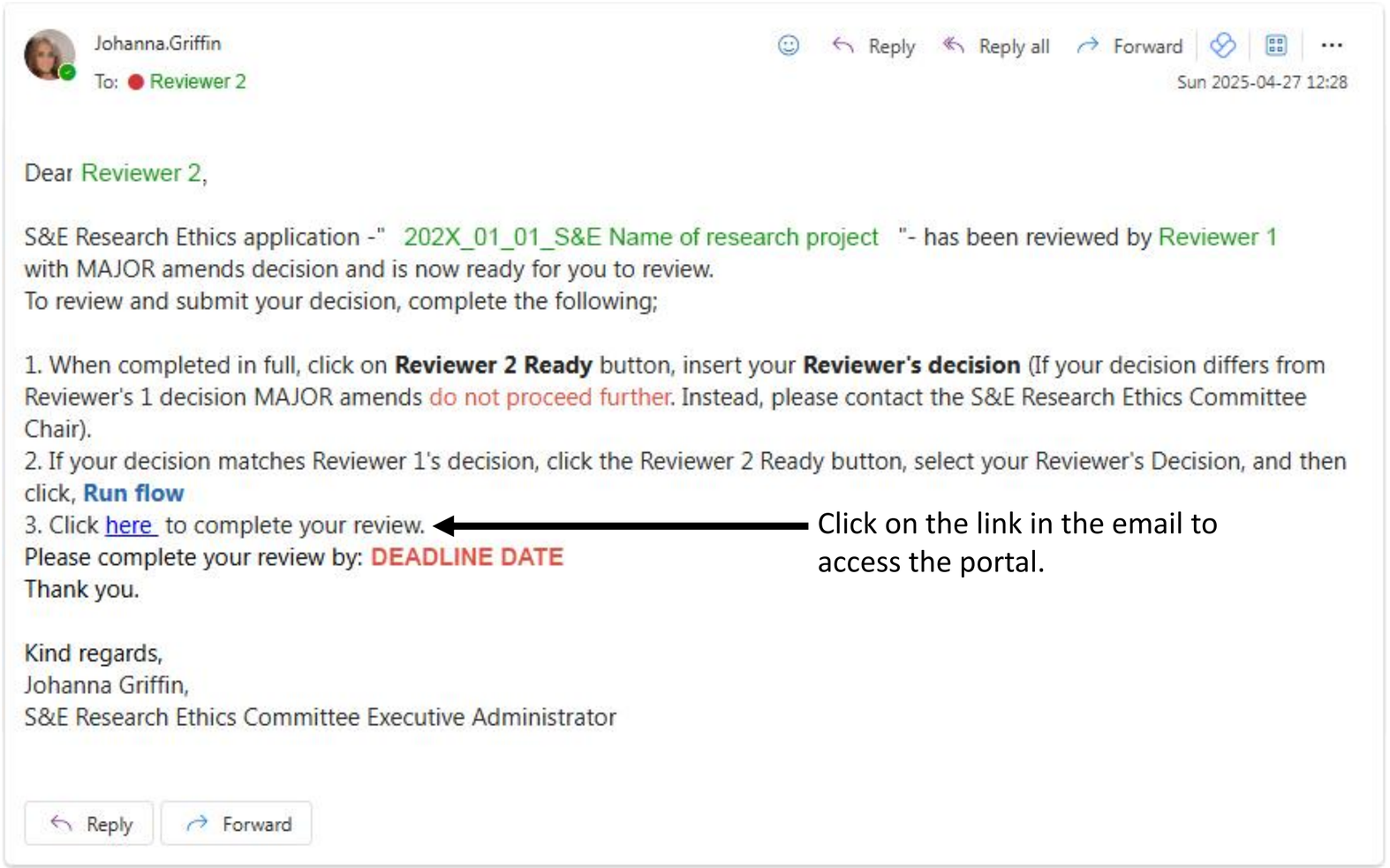
Dear Reviewer 1,
S&E Research Ethics application -" 202X_01_01_S&E Name of research project, now with amendments " has been updated by the PI and is ready for you to review.
To review and submit your decision, complete the following:
1. Please include any comments on the cover sheet of the applcation on SharePoint
2. When you have completed your assessment, click the **Reviewer 1 Ready** button, select a **Reviewer's decision**, and then click **Run flow** to enable Reviewer 2 to conduct their assessment.
Click here to complete your review.
Please complete your review by: DEADLINE DATE
Thank you.

Kind regards,
Johanna Griffin,
S&E Research Ethics Committee Executive Administrator

Reply | Forward

Click on the link in the email to access the portal.

8. Reviewer 2 email



Johanna.Griffin
To: Reviewer 2

Reply | Reply all | Forward
Sun 2025-04-27 12:28

Dear Reviewer 2,

S&E Research Ethics application -" 202X_01_01_S&E Name of research project "- has been reviewed by Reviewer 1 with MAJOR amends decision and is now ready for you to review.
To review and submit your decision, complete the following;

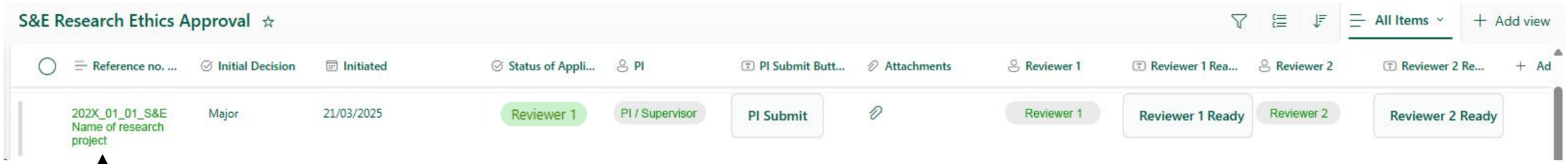
1. When completed in full, click on **Reviewer 2 Ready** button, insert your **Reviewer's decision** (If your decision differs from Reviewer's 1 decision MAJOR amends do not proceed further. Instead, please contact the S&E Research Ethics Committee Chair).
2. If your decision matches Reviewer 1's decision, click the Reviewer 2 Ready button, select your Reviewer's Decision, and then click, **Run flow**
3. Click here to complete your review.
Please complete your review by: DEADLINE DATE
Thank you.

Click on the link in the email to access the portal.

Kind regards,
Johanna Griffin,
S&E Research Ethics Committee Executive Administrator

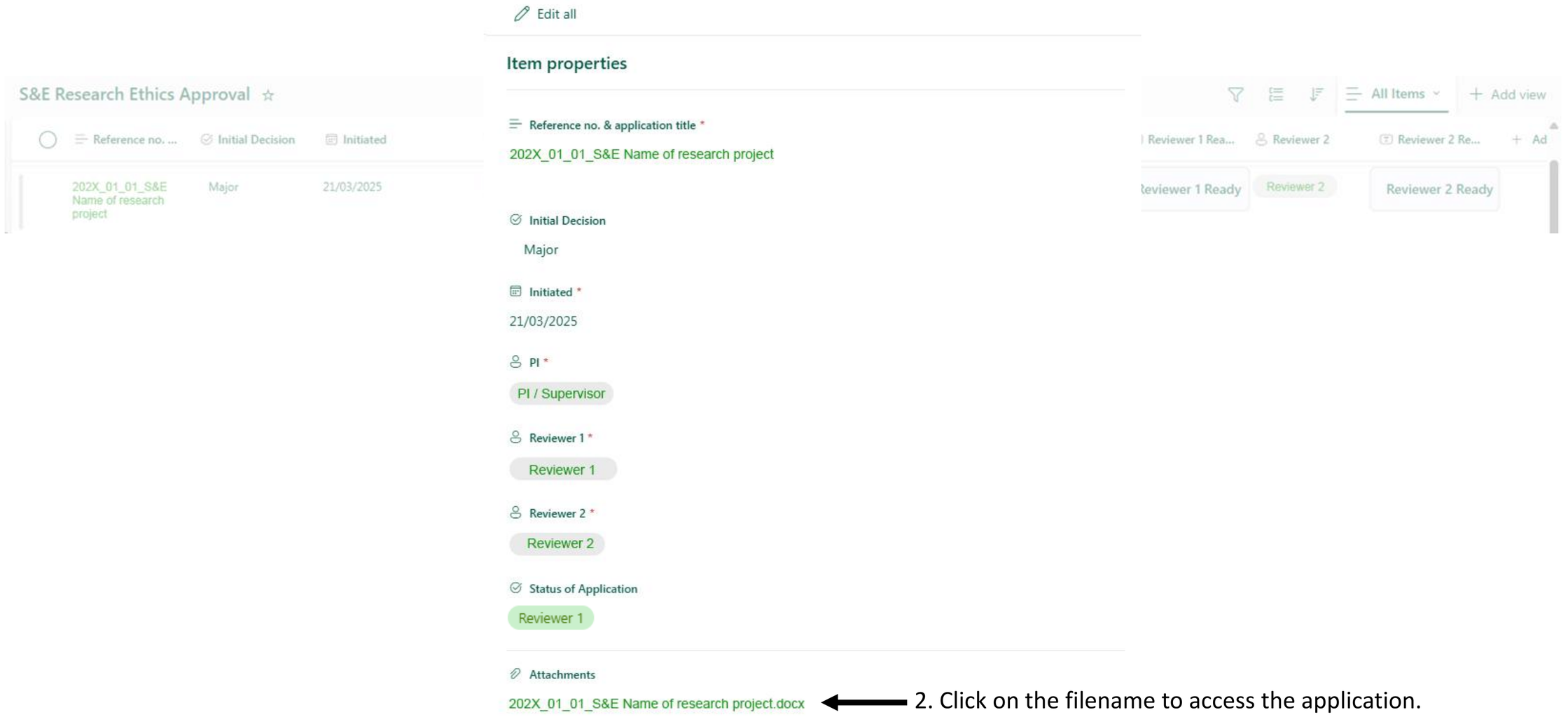
Reply | Forward

9. S&E REC Online Approval Portal access for REC members



1. Double click anywhere along this row to access the application.

9. S&E REC Online Approval Portal access for REC members



2. Click on the filename to access the application.

10. How to add requests to readdress clarifications

SECTION A

Please ensure Track Changes is enabled (*in the Review tab above*) before addressing the below clarifications

Clarifications:

Amendments: 1. example text 2. example text 3. example text

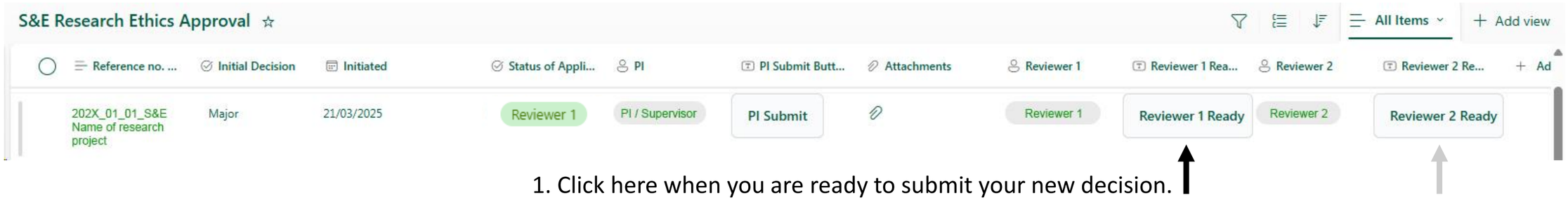
Responses:

Please use this section to address all current and future clarifications.

Application No.: APPLICATION NO.		Application title: APPLICATION TITLE	
No.	**Supervisor response**	**Reviewer 1 comments**	**Reviewer 2 comments**
1	**example text PI/Supervisor inserts Reponses here**	Reviewer 1 inserts comments here	Reviewer 2 inserts comments here
2	**example text PI/Supervisor inserts Reponses here**	Reviewer 1 inserts comments here	Reviewer 2 inserts comments here
3	**example text PI/Supervisor inserts Reponses here**	Reviewer 1 inserts comments here	Reviewer 2 inserts comments here
4			
5			
6	*Add rows as necessary*		

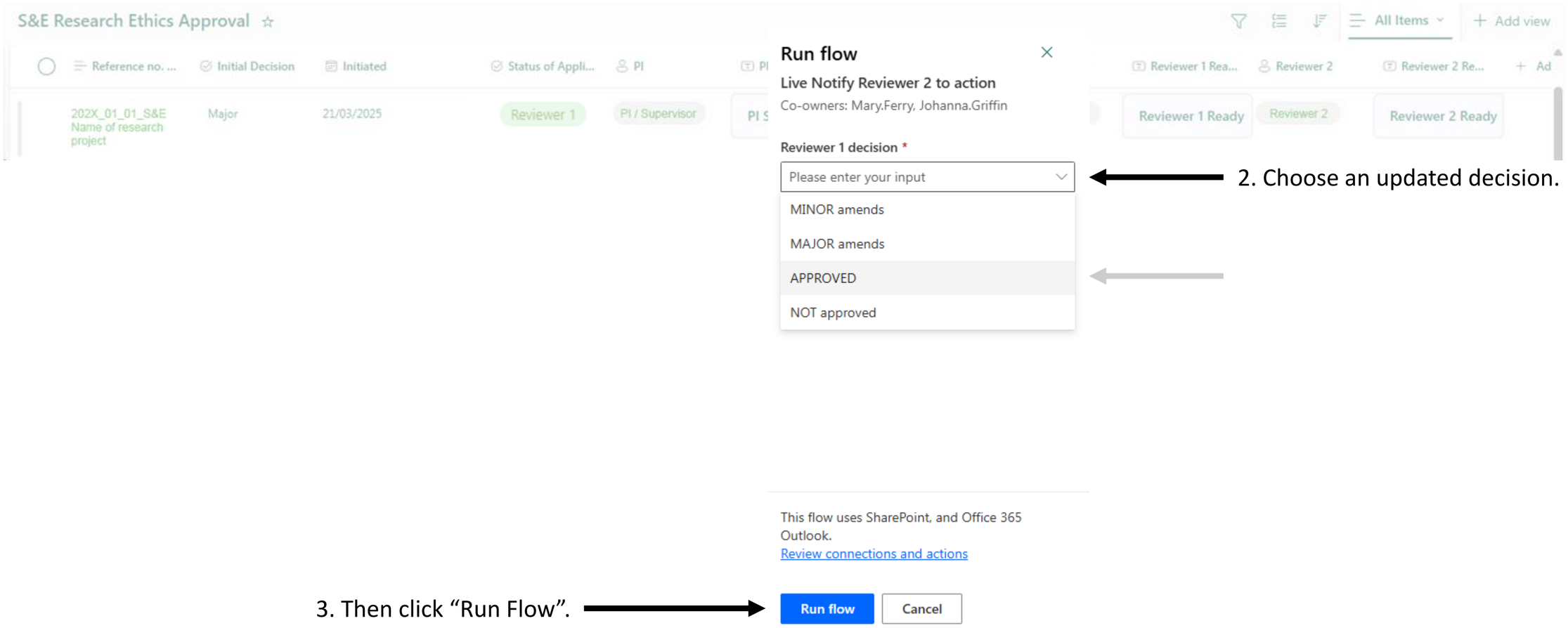
If the clarifications and edits submitted do not adequately address the reviewers' concerns, the reviewers can request they be readdressed in the comments column in Section A.

11. How to submit a new decision (Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2)



1. Click here when you are ready to submit your new decision.
   (You may need to scroll to the right to see these options)

11. How to submit a new decision (Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2)



Thank you.