

Nicolene Renske Steyn (LLB (cum laude), LLM by Research (cum laude), PhD in Law and Development) is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the NRF South African Research Chair: Cities, Law and Environmental Sustainability (CLES). Her scholarship is devoted to novel and unconventional research topics, and she remains dedicated and passionate about examining the sometimes unfamiliar nexus between law and technology. Nicolene completed her PhD in Law and Development at age 25 and within two years of registration on the topic of 'The Realisation of the Constitutional Water Right in South African Cities through Intelligent Water Management Technologies'. Dr Steyn is the youngest PhD graduate in the history of the North-West University (NWU) Faculty of Law's since the merger of the University in the year 2000.

During her PhD studies, Nicolene was employed at CLES as a PhD Researcher. Dr Steyn was employed as a temporary lecturer at the NWU's Faculty of Law from January-July 2021 during which time she taught introduction to contract and business law to first year students at the Mahikeng campus (online mode). Dr Steyn is also a co-supervisor of a Master's student at CLES, and has peer read several PhD students' theses chapters. She also regularly acts as a peer reviewer for journals such as the Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal, Southern African Public Law, and De Jure. Previously, she was employed as a Research Assistant to Prof Christa Rautenbach at the Faculty of Law of the NWU where she worked on the "Use of Foreign Precedents by the Constitutional Court" depository, and assisted with the collection of Traditional Governance instruments in South Africa

Nicolene's current research pertains the linkages between environmental law, climate change law, sustainability and technological advancements in the South African urban context. Dr Steyn successfully planned and hosted a Post-Doctoral colloquium on "The Potential of Technology and Innovation Towards Realising the South African Constitutional Water Right" in August 2021 which included several speakers from academia and the private sector. Moreover, she is involved with several research projects at CLES such as the UN-Habitat UrbanLex project, and is one of the chief researchers for the Alexander von Humboldt Digital Cooperation Fellowship Project 2021-2022 led by Prof Anél du Plessis. The latter project concerns the local law and policy transitions in Southern African cities towards climate resilient development. She was selected to participate in the high-level National Development Plan Review Colloquium organised by the National Planning Commission on 26 – 27 July 2019. In September 2019, Nicolene embarked on a two-week research visit to the Freie University in Berlin, Germany, under the joint project of the Freie University and the North-West University on "Safe and Sustainable Cities". Dr Steyn is a member of both the ELA, and the Golden Key International Honour Society.

Nicolene has published in international journals, and has presented at numerous national and international conferences. She was invited to speak at the Inaugural International Conference of the Mediterranean Urban Law and Policy Network at Reichman University in Herzliya, Israel in June 2022. Dr Steyn was also selected to present on her LLM research at the Association of Human Rights Institutions conference in September 2019 in Potsdam, Germany. She has also delivered virtual presentations at, for example, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's annual conference in 2021, and the International Society of Public Law's ICONS Mundo conference in 2021. In November 2019, at the CLES and South African Local Government Association's Conference, Nicolene delivered a presentation on achieving the constitutional water right through intelligent water management technologies and obtained 2nd place in the Best Student Paper and Presentation Awards. In late 2020, Nicolene presented at the South African Environmental Law Association (ELA) Annual Conference on the topic of the constitutional water right and water service delivery in South Africa, and achieved 2nd place in the Best Speaker Awards.

Nicolene received the award for the best research master's student from the Faculty of Law in early 2019, and subsequently obtained the Vice Chancellor's Medal for the Most Outstanding Master's Student – Law, at the North-West University's Research Excellence & Innovation Awards.