

Faculty of Law

Department of Public Law

Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (one year, renewable up to three years)

The Department of Public Law at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, invites applications for a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in legal theory, environmental law, or public international law.

The fellowship is intended for an emerging scholar whose research complements the work of Dr Nico Buitendag. Applications are particularly encouraged from candidates working in one or more of the following areas:

- *Legal and social theory, especially autopoietic systems theory;*
- *Public international law and international legal theory;*
- *Environmental law, climate governance and planetary challenges;*
- *The relationship between law, science, technology and knowledge;*
- *Sovereignty, territory, statehood and global or regional governance;*
- *Constitutional theory, human rights and the relationship between law, politics and society.*

Duties and responsibilities:

- Conduct innovative and theoretically rigorous research in an agreed field;
- Develop and implement an annual research and publication plan in consultation with the mentor;
- Publish a minimum of two peer-reviewed, DHET-accredited research outputs per year;
- Work towards collaborative research and co-authored publications where appropriate;
- Present research at national or international conferences and academic seminars;
- Participate actively in departmental, faculty and university research activities;
- Contribute to research seminars, workshops and other scholarly events;
- Assist, where appropriate, with the supervision or mentoring of postgraduate students;
- Contribute to grant applications, conference proposals or other collaborative research initiatives;
- Submit the reports required by the University; and
- Register and reside as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of the Free State.

Interdisciplinary projects drawing on social sciences or humanities are especially welcome.

The successful candidate will conduct an independent research project under the mentorship of Dr Nico Buitendag while participating in the broader research activities of the Department of Public Law and the Faculty of Law. The fellowship provides an opportunity for an outstanding doctoral graduate to develop an independent research profile, produce high-quality publications, gain experience in academic collaboration and postgraduate supervision, and participate in an active and internationally connected research environment.

The fellowship will be awarded competitively, taking into account applicants' academic achievements, publication record, research potential and the fit between their proposed project and the identified research areas. It is available for an initial period of one year and is renewable annually for up to three years, subject to satisfactory performance and the submission of annual progress reports.

Eligibility criteria

- Open to all South African and foreign nationals.
- Hold a doctoral degree in Law or a closely related discipline;
- Have obtained the doctoral degree within the five years preceding the commencement of the fellowship;
- Demonstrate a strong academic record and the potential to publish in reputable peer-reviewed journals;
- Propose an original and feasible research project falling within, or closely related to, the research areas identified above;
- Possess academic writing and communication skills in English; and
- Be able to conduct research independently while contributing constructively to collaborative academic activities.

Application:

To apply, please email the following documentation by 07 October 2026 to email: BuitendagN@ufs.ac.za

- A motivation letter explaining the applicant's suitability for the fellowship and the relationship between the proposed research and the fields identified in this call;
- A full curriculum vitae, including a complete list of publications, conference presentations and other scholarly outputs;
- A representative writing sample, preferably a published article or a chapter from the applicant's doctoral thesis;
- A copy of the doctoral degree certificate, or official confirmation that all requirements for the degree have been completed;
- A copy of the applicant's South African identity document or foreign passport; and
- The names and contact details of two academic referees.

Value of the fellowship:

- R 270,000 annual fellowship.
- R 30,000 additional research expenses fund.

Closing date:

07 October 2026

Commencement of fellowship:

As soon as possible after a successful application

General:

The University processes personal information in line with its obligations under the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and any personal information provided to the University will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with the rights provided to data subjects under POPIA.

The University reserves the right not to fill the post. The UFS will only consider applications of candidates who meet all the inherent requirements of the position. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Communication will be limited to shortlisted candidates only. Should you not be contacted within six weeks of the closing date for applications, you may assume that your application was unsuccessful.