https://ratt.center

RATT

Centre For Radio Astronomy Techniques & Technologies • Rhodes University

Postgraduate Student Handbook

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

NRF | SARAO
National Research | South African Radio
Foundation | Astronomy Observatory

Radio Astronomy Techniques & Technologies

Rhodes University
2025

Contents

1   Introduction

This is the *Postgraduate Student Handbook* for the *Centre for Radio Astronomy Techniques and Technologies* (RATT) group at Rhodes University. It provides information for both new and existing postgraduate students on various aspects of the group and its activities. In addition, it contains useful onboarding and academic information for areas such as presenting, events, education, academic adminIstration and useful resources.

The handbook will be updated on a yearly basis to ensure it provides the latest updates and new information. Therefore, please ensure to download the newest version of this handbook each year.

> Important information text goes here ...

```
1  # This specific code block will have line numbers
2  def example():
3      return "This has line numbers for reference"
```

1.1   Git Repository

This handbook lives in the following repository

https://github.com/ratt-ru/baby-ratts

All references to the student repository refers to the above link. Moreover, all files given throughout this handbook are given relative to the repository directory `ratt-students/` or the sub-directory `resources/` in the same repository, unless otherwise stated. All resources used in the compilation of this handbook are found within the same directory.

The latest RATT Student Handbook PDF can be downloaded via this link:

If you wish to compile the document yourself, you only need to have `lualatex` compiler available on your system in combination with `biber` with the following recipe:

```bash
lualatex ratt-handbook.tex
biber ratt-handbook
lualatex ratt-handbook.tex
```

For any issues in this regard, please refer to the contact details given in **??**.

1.2 Research Focus Areas

- Radio Interferometry Techniques

- Calibration and imaging

- Signal Processing Algorithms

- Next-gen Telescope Software Development

- Galactic science

2 Events

There are several events that RATT is involved. Some are optional while others are mandatory. Each depends on your field of study, so please investigate whether or not it applies to you if not stated.

2.1 SARAO Scholarship Conference

Overview

The SARAO Scholarship is a *mandatory* conference for all postgraduate students part of SARAO, which includes RATT students. It happens yearly at the end of November/start of December. The conference brings together all students and researchers involved with radio astronomy and interferometry to provide a platform for research professionals to provide key-note talks and reports, and, most importantly, for students to present on their research progress so far. It is a great opportunity to network with fellow peers and industry experts. Moreover, it is an opportunity for students to practice public speaking and presentation skills.

The location of the conference changes year-to-year, with the details usually provided earlier in the year. It is up to you to ensure that the exact dates and times are noted in your calendar. The exact dates are generally provided earlier in the year. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by SARAO and organisation is handled by RATT administrative team. Note, the conference is usually five days long and scheduled from Monday to Friday. During the conference, there is several informal and fun activities organised for students to take part in. In previous years, we have had speed-meets, gameboard nights, karaoke and team-building competitions.

Presentations

At the conference, each student will create and present a short talk on their work to an academically diverse audience. For guidance on presenting, see **??**. Specific information about the SARAO conference presentations are given below. Note, any file paths given below are either found in the `resources/` directory in the git repository, or are explicit links to follow.

- The presentation is to be in *PDF* format, unless stated otherwise.

- The slides should be presentable and appropriate for the academic crowd.

- Ensure you include the following logos on the front slide in this order:

Order	Logo	Filename
First	SARAO-NRF	`sarao-logo.png`
Second	Rhodes University	`rhodes-logo-1.png`
Last	RATT	`ratt-logo.png`

These files can be found in `resources/images/logos/`.

The presentation file is normally required to be in *PDF* format, unless stated otherwise. The date for the SARAO conference is given out earlier in the year for students to mark down in their calendars.

3 Meetings

There are three general cateogries of meetings at RATT:

Main Group meetings: Every Thursday at 12 pm, the entire RATT group (i.e. staff, students, postdocs) meet for a presentation by a scheduled speaker. This is a journal paper presentation usually

Students Journal meetings: Every Friday at 11 am, students and postdocs meet to. These are **MANDATORY** for all students.

Project progress meetings: These are the one-to-one meetings with your supervisors, or the members of your sub-groups. They are generally scheduled by the supervisor, of course, you are expected to attend an present your progress and ask for help.

3.1 During Meetings

Sometimes it can be difficult to keep track of what was said during meetings. It is easy to misunderstand what one is supposed to do. If English is not one's native language, it can make things 10x more difficult. Therefore, some options could be:

1. Closed captions (subtitles) for zoom meetings [1]

2. Make minutes of your meeting and write summary notes of that meeting. These could also be used in making a to-do list of your next meeting items.

---

[1]https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/6643177746829-Viewing-captions-in-another-language

3. Tools like github issues/project broads, trello boards, notion boards can be useful in keeping track of what to do. You could also keep ideas for future use here.

4. Ask questions: don't be afraid to ask your project buddy, your supervisors, basically anyone who can give you answers that you need.

5. Record the meeting. With permission of course, you could record your project meetings and play them back so that nothing is missed. This can be done using your phone, zoom or any other software available to you.

4 Writing Aids

4.1 Grammarly

If you're starting to write a thesis/paper please request for a premium Grammarly account (for spell check) from Oleg, there is a provision for that. Rhodes actually provides full Grammarly education access to students "for free". The process is:

1. Go to this link https://login.ru.ac.za/to/grammarly

2. Log in with your RU/ROSS credentials

3. Go to https://www.grammarly.com/ (if not automatically redirected to Grammarly)

Just be aware of the context of replacement words/suggestions when using these grammar correction tools (especially for the non-english speaking people). This can often lead to unintended consequences.

Another tool that was also suggested is Prowriting aid

4.2 Text to Speech Readers

Another hack I recently discovered while writing is using a text to speech (TTS) reader for your thesis/paper. These can come integrated with a PDF reader (e.g I know it

is available in adobe PDF viewer Okular), or some chrome/firefox extensions, and definitely microsoft edge. The gist here is to have the TTS read and dictate portions of your text. This way, you could have some help in picking up a bit more easily misplaced punctuations, or even mis-spelled words. A good, free one I've found for chrome is Readme-TTS, while my favourite is the Adobe PDF reader one. Please suggest any better ones you may find.

4.3   ChatGPT

- Use it for skeletal stuff only, don't use it to write it all

- Be very specific in asking it to do things

- Be wary of how you ask it to do something; you may have to iterate a few times with more specific guidelines as you go to get what you want

- Can you ask it to "read" something you've written and write something in that style? Yes.

- Referencing: it can give you a place to start, and prompts on where to look for stuff, but can also "hallucinate" references

- Plagiarism and self-plagiarism.

5   Previous Theses

It is almost always a good idea to check previous theses in your department for some inspiration on how your thesis structure should be like. Furthermore, older theses relevant to your area of study could provide more insights and understanding to your own work. Fortunately, most universities around the world publish PhD and MSc theses from their students on the open web, making them accessible to those who need access. Rhodes is no exception, as Masters and PhD theses from the Department of Physics are available at the online e-thesis repository.

Regrettably, not all theses submitted to the library make an appearance to this repository for one reason or another. In case you submitted your thesis to the library and it is not showing up in that repository, please contact the relevant authorities and **INSIST** on your thesis being made available. You may need it one day.

![RATT logo](https://ratt.center)

6   Writing

We most probably all use latex to write our academic material. For beginners, Overleaf is easier to use because it's online and installations don't have to be manually done. However, if one does not like working online because of load shedding and internet problems, there are various other tools that could be used. These include but are not limited to:

- vscode + latex workshop extension

- texstudio

- texlive

- lyx

Many options are available for the taking. See this wikipedia page for some more information. If you need help in setting these up locally on your computer, please reach out.

7   How to Read?

Reading papers, books can be slightly overwhelming sometimes. Some suggestions for helping with this:

1. Making notes/bullet points as one reads.

2. Annotate, draw, highlight

3. Reading papers using the Abstract, Introduction, Conclusion/Summary Method. This can be useful in getting through papers quickly and gathering as much as possible. However, it could be counter-productive if one is new to a field because of jargon and whatnots. In this case reading almost the entire paper might not be a bad idea.

4. Read theses to get you acquainted with a subject. Because these usually start from the basic fundamentals, one may get eased into a topic more favourably

5. Perhaps consider getting a tablet (with a pen) to keep track of these?

8   Referencing

8.1   Finding References

Did you know that Arxiv is not the only place where one could look for papers? Remember that arxiv may not necessarily contain the final form of a paper, just the preprints. Thus, it is good to find the published text if it is already available.

A good place to start is Google scholar. This is google for academic texts and can be time saving. Searching for a paper title, or even just the author and year will list all occurrences where the paper exists. More often than not, you will find the published paper here and links to the paper will be provided already.

Another option is ADS and here one can even maintain an online library of one's papers. Just search and select.

Sometimes you will find papers listed but are not available because of some paywall (read Nat... and future MNRA... ahem). In this case, Scihub will help. The links change often because .. of .. legal .. issues, but this will help accessing the inaccessible.

8.2   Keeping Track of References

Zotero

I have found Zotero to be the most convenient in keeping track of references online and locally on my computer. Zotero has a web browser add on and luckily, an actively maintained ubuntu/linux app. The good thing is that, when papers are added to Zotero using the web addon, it is automatically synced with the local computer client. So you can have access to all your references in a single place.

Furthermore, one can categorise papers e.g. if you are working on a specific project,

you can add references relating to that paper in that category, instead of having just one very large and general set of references. These can then be easily exported as .bib (latex bibliography files) – already formatted and all – for use in your thesis or paper.

There are also extensions for Zotero to make it even better. One very convenient one is Better BibTeX for Zotero. For example, Vanilla Zotero does not have the option of customising and managing one's citation keys (i.e. the key that you use while citing in latex e.g. `\citep{ratt2020}`) because it automatically generates them. And they are not the cutest. But Better BibTeX allows this. Another advantage is that one can pick and choose which fields should go into your bib file, something that Zotero on its own does not offer. Download, installation, and setup instructions are found at https://www.zotero.org/download/ . There's even an android app!

Mendeley

Mendeley is another option. However, they now have a purely online ref manager (i.e there is no local client). This mostly works but I find it slightly laggy (but this could just be my computer, please test for yourself and see). Here references can also be added on the browser add on and entire libraries exported as .bib files.

Stone Age

If you just like the extreme sport of manually adding references to the bib file, google scholar could also assist with this. Just search for the paper, below its listing you will see a cite link. Click on that and click on BibTex at the bottom of the popup window. You can then copy this into your bib file.

9   Foreword

This document is meant as a checklist/primer for newly arriving RATTs. This is meant to cover all aspects of studying at RATT, so older RATTs, please feel free to extend with your advice. Admin matters When in doubt, please contact Zizipo Lusizi <z.lusizi@ru.ac.za> and Verushca Kiewiets <v.kiewiets@ru.ac.za> for all matters related to admin.

10   Bursaries, registration and visas

Your letter of offer should be sufficient for registration at Rhodes. For visa matters, please contact the International students office (https://www.ru.ac.za/internationalisation) and/or Zizipo.

Please be advised that your bursaries can often be slow to arrive (as late as March of a given year). We work with several sources of funding, and bureaucracy can be merciless. The University registrar will be understanding about this (as long as you have the bursary offer letter), your landlord perhaps less so. There is a Postgraduate Advance account you can draw on for rent and such until your bursary arrives. This requires a few days to arrange, so please contact Zizipo in advance if you need an ... advance.

11   Personae and policies

See https://ratt.center/everyone/ for a list of people. If you're not already included on this list, please send an email to Lexy (andatilexy@gmail.com) with your picture and your fields of interest/area of study.

![RATT logo](https://ratt.center)

11.1   Weekly group meeting and journal club

The weekly group meeting / journal club is every Thursday at 12:00 in room 42, with a remote connection to Cape Town via the CISCO unit. Everyone is expected to attend. A journal club speaker is designated on a rotating basis, however, if you come across an interesting paper that you would like to report on for the group, feel free to volunteer out of turn. For the students, the purpose of you speaking at the journal club is twofold:

(a) you get to introduce your colleagues to interesting material,

(b) you get to practise your presentation skills.

Therefore

(a) make your presentation interesting (not just "in this paper they did this and that and got this" – tell us why it's important and why should we care), and

(b) prepare slides. It is not acceptable to just share a PDF of the paper and scroll over it as you talk, even if some of your senior colleagues have gotten away with it in the past.

11.2   Students-only Journal club

We encourage (by which we mean, it is mandatory! –Oleg) students to also take part in the students-only journal club which takes place every Friday at 11 am in room 42. The aim of these meetings is similar to the regular journal club, to give students an opportunity to learn and improve their presentation skills in a less intimidating setting, without the senior staff looking on. During these meetings, students are selected to present on a rotating basis (but are very much encouraged to volunteer themselves). A student can present on any of the following topics: Their research project, i.e. a simple progress report, and they can also share any difficulties they are facing with the project.

Any paper the student thinks might be interesting to themselves and/or the group. Any software tool they use regularly that they think can be beneficial to others in the group. This could also be used as an opportunity to practise for an upcoming conference. New students should email Lexy (andatilexy@gmail.com) in order to be

added to the mailing list (RATT-Students-journal-club@googlegroups.com) that we use for these meetings. Computing matters

12   Mailing lists

ratt-omnibus@googlegroups.com is the universal RATT mailing list for everybody (students, staff and even ex-RATTs). ratt-busy-weeks@googlegroups.com is for busy week-related matters. If you haven't already been added to both mailing lists, drop Oleg <osmirnov@gmail.com> an e-mail. Also sign up for the RATT-students mailing list, through this form: https://lists.ru.ac.za/mailman/listinfo/ratt-students Slack This is the general RATT Slack workspace: https://ratt-rarg.slack.com/. Send Oleg an e-mail if you haven't already got an invitation. There are channels for various topics, including private channels for projects.

12.1   RATT cluster and github access

You will also need a github account. Make one if you don't have one, and send the github ID to Oleg. And learn to use git and github (online tutorial, anyone?) EM: Please find a nice github tutorial by Brian from RATT here An additional collection of detailed git tutorials can be found here.

12.2   RATT cluster technical support

If you need to report a problem, or request a feature (e.g. a package install) on the cluster, open an issue here: https://github.com/ratt-ru/systems/issues. However, it should also be possible to install and run the desired package locally using either Homebrew on Linux or making an ubuntu singularity container on your computer, installing the required software then running on the server. Please refer to this link on how to install and run Homebrew locally, and this link on how to install and use singularity containers. If you need assistance please do not hesitate to reach out on the Whatsapp group here.

For minor questions about the cluster, use the `#systems-issues` channel on the Slack. If in doubt which, rather open an issue.

For all other tech support not related to the RATT cluster, e-mail Rhodes IT support on support@ru.ac.za. You can also get support from Andy <A.Youthed@ru.ac.za> at the department of physics, or the library IT help desk.

12.3   Laptops

All postdocs and students have a one-off equipment grant to buy a laptop (+monitors, external mice, laptop bags and all that). The maximum total budget is set each year by SARAO HCD, and Zizipo can advise on the exact amount (not everybody is funded by SARAO, but the equipment budgets are identical as a matter of policy). Within the budget, choice of laptop brand, model and configuration is completely up to you. Consult the other students for advice. The Rhodes IT shop will have some standard models which you can obtain very quickly, anything non-standard will need to be ordered and can take two or three weeks depending on availability.

In terms of operating system, Ubuntu is highly recommended, unless you really can't live without a Mac. If you want to run Windows, please reformat your hard drive immediately, then think again. If you want to experience both Windows and Ubuntu, please follow the instructions here on how to dual boot Windows 10 and Ubuntu 22.04. If you don't have a Mac but long to experience the joys of having one, please follow the instructions here to make your Ubuntu look and feel like a Mac, or at the very least, make Ubuntu look pretty.

The number 1 overwhelming reason to use Ubuntu is the excellent KERN suite maintained by your colleagues Gijs and Athanaseus. Every radio astronomy package you can think of (and some you can't) can be installed from KERN with zero hassle.

You can also think about running a "Virtual Machine" (VM) on your favourite laptop (e.g. Virtual Box on a Mac host, running the latest Ubuntu). It can be useful if you do not own the computer, you will be able to export and redeploy your working environment on your next machine. Be aware that running a Virtual Box inside a host will pump some of your computing resources. Remember, best developers and scientists code in Linux. (Or just try to compile something on Mac OS and you will see that bash is not so unfriendly after all.)

13   Software

13.1   LaTeX

During your studies, you will need to produce notes, reports and articles. The standard way to write scientific articles is. This might look strange and difficult at first glance but it will quickly become your friend to cherish during your career. The most straightforward way to install a working LaTeX distribution is to go for:

- Ubuntu: TeXLive

- Mac OS: MacTex

- Windows: remember we talked about formatting? go check MiKTeX or TeXLive

For online application addicts, you can use Overleaf with a free plan (limited compilation time and project size but ok for most papers + thesis) After choosing your installation, go check this latex tutorial.

13.2   Spelling and Grammar

You are strongly encouraged to use the online or offline app from Grammarly. The free version is already very useful. RATT has a commercial subscription to Grammarly with extended features, but this is limited to 10 users at a time, so access is only granted to those busy working on a paper or their thesis – talk to Oleg when it's that time for you.

13.3   Translation

Google Translate has very much improved since the past years, but a recent alternative exists such as DeepL that can integrate seamlessly your OS

13.4   Python

Ubuntu: comes standard. Mac OS: do not spend a second and install Anaconda (Python 3) Setting up and using Python virtual environments: Report to this guide or this other guide If you want to easily change python versions, please refer to this guide For python tutorials, please refer to this google drive EM: For other python learning tools, you can refer to caktus.ai at the python writer section or ChatGPT and simply type what you want the python code to do. Please keep in mind these tools may not be 100% accurate so you will have to run the code to check.

13.5   Python notebooks / Jupyter / Jupyterlab

(some motivational text to do notebooks to keep track of research and use it as a -reproducible- lab book). Manage bibliography Any good software for this? (I use Mendeley that is multiplatform and browser integration + smartphone) EM: I personally prefer Zotero as it can save your papers on google drive (15 GB storage) and rename them with author, year and title. Please refer to this link on how to setup. You can export these papers as a biblatex file. (Note on BibteX)

13.6   Other CS questions

The missing semester of your CS education (MIT): addressing, linux, bash, editor, version control, debugging, profiling, ... Science

13.7   Access knowledge

Arxiv: When you start, you usually need to do some bibliography to get acquainted with your research topic. The best and easiest way to find tons of materials is to use ArXiv and in particular the astro-ph subsection. It is a -big- repository of most published papers in the field. When a research team manages to get a journal paper accepted by an editor, the authors usually submit a version of their article on ArXiv (you may also do it someday). Beyond astronomy and astrophysics you can also find a lot of materials in mathematics, signal processing etc. Good habit: try to get the habit of consulting it daily to watch new papers, you might select an article there for your next journal club. You can access through the website, or decide to subscribe to the daily/weekly mail, or find an app to consult it from your phone. For

all the rest, follow what your supervisor recommends you to read. Some papers are not freely accessible, you may ask your supervisor or somebody from the lab to see if there is an active subscription for the journal you want to consult. Some ebooks and review articles are also available. Do not stop trying to find the content of a paper because it is not available to you, ask a colleague. A collection of useful learning materials on radio astronomy and interferometry are listed on the RATT website. These are mainly supplementary video tutorials. Radio science NRAO Essential Radio Astronomy: ERA Website of Tobias Westmeier: https://www.atnf.csiro.au/people/Tobias.Westmeier/index.php Interferometry NASSP course (JG: which repo is the latest?) EM: Place holder link Statistics JG: Anyone has a good primer on statistics in astronomy for Master / PhD candidate? EM: Potentially useful Bayesian Statistics resources KT: Modern Statistical Methods for Astronomy, Feigelson and Babu

Other Useful Resources EM: https://linktr.ee/ratt.center

14 Miscellaneous

14.1 Posters

Project posters e.g. those for the bursary conference, can be printed at Rhodes through the Printing Service Unit. Please contact Verushca or Zizipo when the need arises, they will guide you on how to get this done.

International Students

Registration

Registration is done at the student bureau in the Eden Grove building. This is also where you'll get your student card, proof of registration and proof of accommodation if you stay in Res. Please carry your passport on registration day. Once registered, you'll have access to ROSS where you can book meals, change passwords etc.

![RATT logo](https://ratt.center)
Phone Number

There are various telephone networks here: Vodacom, Telkom, MTN, Cellc, Rain etc. Some are better than others in terms of price and/or coverage. For example, Vodacom is known for good cell coverage but very expensive data. Cellc has good rates but poor coverage in some areas etc. Depending on your preferences, there is a variety of choices. You may be asked for the following to obtain a sim card:

- Proof of accommodation/address

- Your original passport

You can get the proof of accommodation from your Landlord or agent, or from Rhodes if you chose to stay in one of the postgraduate residences. It is also possible to get the proof of accommodation from the city hall located on High St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139. Just ask anyone you bump into in city hall to show you where you can get one.

Banking

In order to receive your bursary, you require a South African bank account. The main ones are FNB, ABSA, CAPITEC and NEDBANK. Since FNB is used by Rhodes, money seems to reflect faster there. However, the choice of bank is up to you. The following will be required:

- A copy of Passport with a valid VISA (Please also carry the original passport and VISA as they will need to verify)

- A copy of Proof of Accommodation/Address - as well as the original

- A copy of Proof of registration in the university (not sure of this one)

- A valid South African Phone number

Here you can find an article of customers rating different banks from best to worst as of 2022

14.2　　Accommodation

There are two types of accommodation for students in Makhanda: University residences (res) and digs.

Res

These are student housing units provided by the university. They are furnished (i.e have a bed, beddings, stove, vacuum cleaner, fridge, microwave, reading desk and lamp etc) and have wi-fi. You are at liberty to bring your own beddings, but you must buy your own kitchen utensils; they are not included. Here, rent includes water and electricity. There are three university residences for postgraduate students:

- **Oakdene:** Within campus. Consists of two or three bedroom flats, each with a common bathroom, kitchen and lounge area (with tv and couches) shared amongst the flatmates.

- **Celeste house:** Slightly outside campus. Similar to Oakdene but the lounge is a common room (ie accessible to all members of Celeste)

- **Post Graduate Village (PGV):** Further away from campus. However, these are single bedroom units i.e., you have no flatmate.

All these residences are differently priced. Therefore, please refer to the fee booklet for their prices. There are also options of having meals in the university dining halls. Usually, Drostdy hall is the post grad dining hall. The menus are here. However, these have to be booked 48 hours in advance on ROSS which you will only have access to once registered.

Reses also have a shared laundry area consisting of washing machines, dryers and a few hanging lines. Laundry soap/pegs are not provided.

For students new to Makhanda, it is advisable to stay in res at least for the first year, as it is easier and faster to get settled and know the way around. Here, there are hall wardens and sub wardens to welcome and assist new students, as well as showing them around if need be. It is also easier to know people and make new friends this way. Being away from home, having such a community may be a helpful addition ⏻.

Digs/Private Accommodation

Digs are usually shared houses/flats away from campus owned by individuals/families and can typically consist of between one bedroom and six bedrooms. They can either be furnished/unfurnished. Depending on their location and state and the number of people sharing the house/flat, these can be more expensive or much cheaper than Res. Additionally, be mindful that rent may or may not include electricity, water, and internet. Deposits are usually required beforehand in digs.

There are various facebook groups and pages where vacant digs are advertised e.g. looking for digsmates in grahamstown, Rhodes University - flatmates, flats, digsmates, digs, grahamstown accommodation etc. The best time to look for a digs on facebook is October to December. This is the time when most students' lease are coming to an end and the landlord or agent starts looking for someone for the following year. Its around this time when you can get good value for money when it comes to accommodation. There are also agencies and websites that advertise flats for rent such e.g.

- palm golding on 30 Somerset St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139,

- JUSTPROPERTY on Shop 8A, Peppergrove Mall, 22 African St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139

- ReMAX on 22 African St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139

- Oaktreeproperties on 67 African St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139

- Property24 e.t.c.

For your own sake, if you do choose to stay in digs, ensure that there is at least a supplementary water tank in case of water shortages, and put your safety first! Feel free to ask ratt members living in Makhanda for this. You can also find them on Whatsapp here. Side note: Towards the end of the year, students do a digs clearence by selling their belongings and its at this time when you can find good? Second hand items. Please check these links to find second hand items if need be.

- Rhodes Buy and Sell

- Grahamstown Makhanda Second Hand

- Grahamstown Makhanda - BUY & SELL

- Grahamstown Marketplace

14.3   Rhodes University Oppidan Bus

Students staying outside res are referred to oppidans. There is usually a 13? passenger taxi that comes every hour from 6 pm until midnight to take students from Rhodes to where they stay around Grahamstown. As of 2022, the taxi comes to pick up students outside Steve Biko building. You can join the UCKAR whatsapp group or the UCKAR facebook page where you will find fellow Rhodes oppidans who would most likely have updated information regarding this mode of transport. However, beware that weekends transportation times are from 6pm - 8pm and the taxi does not usually operate during the Rhodes vacation times.

Foreign Exchange / Pocket Money It can be really difficult to change money in South Africa on a student VISA. As a rule of thumb, and if possible, please carry some Rands from home before you arrive. Depending on your spending habits, R1000 can get you groceries and essential things for a few days until your bursary/advance is sorted out. If you do run out of money before you're sorted out, please shout. Do not sleep hungry! We're here

It is normally also possible to withdraw Rands from your home bank accounts through local ATMs if you have VISA or MasterCard. Money could also be withdrawn from the supermarket (PnP/Checkers). It is said to be cheaper this way, practically free of charge. Just go to the till and say that you'd like "cashback". You'll "pay" via a PoS and then they will give you cash. Groceries

You can buy groceries from the supermarket. In Grahamstown, we have:

- Pick n Pay on 22 African St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139 (closes 9PM)

- Checkers on The Carlton Centre, 109 High St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6139 (Closes 8PM)

- Spar on 35 African St, Grahamstown, Makhanda, 6140 (Closes by 11PM - needs to be verified)

- Shoprite on Cnr West and Beaufort Street Market Square Shoprite Building, Makhanda, 6140 (closes 6PM)

14.4   Water

Please note that tap water in Makhanda is mostly not potable. You may be required to buy drinking water from supermarkets such as Pick n Pay (Going for R5 a litre) or Spar (R6 a litre - need to confirm). As of 2022, Grahamstown water infrastructure is old and prone to breakdowns. This translates into periods of water shortages and hence, the importance of having a watertank or borehole as backup in your digs or res. However, the municipality does announce when to expect the shortage on the Makana Local Municipality facebook page.

14.5   Electricity

Electricity in digs is usually prepaid, which means you buy tokens that will last you for some time. If you get lucky, your digs will have electricity and water included in the rent. Rhodes res do not require you to pay for electricity or water separately. In South Africa, we experience loadshedding periods when we have planned power outages. This happens in different provinces at different times as the country tries to ration power. The rationing comes about when the demand for electricity exceeds supply. To get updated, you can either download the Loadshedding EskomSePush (ESP) app on android, or check updates from the Hi-Tec Security facebook page (They also give updates on unplanned outages - accidents, e.t.c), or, if you'd prefer having this information integrated to your google calendar, please follow these instructions. Please note that South African plugs and sockets are round as shown on this image. If you cannot find such a plug, it should be fairly easy to find adapters locally, that are compatible with your plug, from the local electronics stores or the Clicks Pharmacy Grahamstown

The department of physics has electricity and wifi even when there is loadshedding so you can work from here.

14.6   Eduroam wi-fi

There is very good wi-fi coverage all over campus. After registration, you will be able to use eduroam. Please refer to this article on how to set it up. If you need internet to connect to eduroam, a classic catch 22, you can get a temporary hotspot setup at the Rhodes library, the IT department, Andy at the department of physics can also help, or just ask any one of us with an ethernet port to setup a hotspot for you.

14.7   What to Carry

Feel free to carry essential spices, food or utensils that you may miss from home. Basically anything legal that you can get through the airport within weight limits. There are supermarket(s) near campus where you can get the usual toiletries. Summers (Oct Feb) can get quite hot and winters (Jun Aug) quite cold, please carry appropriate clothing for these temperature changes ⍰.