



OPPIDAN LIFE

LIVING OFF CAMPUS



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Welcome from the Oppidan Committee

A very warm welcome to all Oppidans, especially our new first year students.

The Committee is comprised of wardens, sub-wardens, and a wide range of committee members, each who play a specific role in ensuring that the Oppidan Union runs smoothly and efficiently while planning and facilitating a large range of events and functions for each one of you to participate in, regardless of your personal preference. We as the Oppidan Committee strive to rope each one of you in to ensure your University experience is as rewarding as possible, and thus we urge first year students to participate in the Oppidan and University events, and returning Oppidan students to continue to show their much appreciated support.

We have a number of workshops and functions planned during the year, including the ever-famous Digs Olympics and the Oppidan Ball (remember those suits for 2nd semester!). Besides these grander events, there will always be something for Oppidan students to participate in from community engagement activities through to inter-res sporting activities, ensuring there is never a dull moment!

Digs life takes a fair amount of getting used to, but can be extremely rewarding when you get it right. However, there may be those times when it all gets a bit tough and overwhelming, and it is at this time when you must not hesitate to make use of the willing members of the Oppidan Committee. They are there to lend you a helping hand or sympathetic ear should you need them.

Think of us as an information service here to alert you to all the ins and outs of what makes being a member of the Oppidan community so great. Get familiar with who the significant role players are in the Oppidan Union and please don't hesitate to seek their services as soon as the need arises. Good luck for the year ahead

Work hard, play hard and respect your community.

Kind regards
Oppidan Committee



The Oppidan Hall Wardens
Raymond and Janie Harris
extend a warm welcome to all
Oppi's, new and old.

Living Off-Campus: Everything Oppidan Students Need to Know

What you'll find in this booklet

- What is an Oppidan?
- What is the Oppidan Union?
- What is the Oppidan Committee?
- What are Oppidan sub-wardens and what do they do?
- What are your responsibilities as an Oppidan student?
- What transport is available to you living off-campus?
- What are the Oppidan facilities on campus?

What transport is available to you living off-campus?

FNB - SRC BUS AND DEAN OF STUDENTS OPPIDAN UNION BUS

The FNB - SRC and the DEAN OF STUDENTS **OPPIDAN UNION Buses** are a free service to all Oppidans. These buses act as a shuttle from **outside the Jacaranda Labs** on campus to your digs...**FREE OF CHARGE!** They operate from **Monday to Thursday between 5pm and 10pm and Friday between 5pm and 8pm during term time.** The hours are extended during the exams to correspond with the library closing times. The bus does not operate on public holidays.

The bus leaves **every hour** on the hour and all you need is your **Student Card** to gain entry on the bus.

Should a student be in dire need of this service, they may call the **GET HOME SAFE** number

084 869 9679

which will be in operation on stipulated nights from around 10pm to 3am. A driver will then take you back to your home free of charge. Please note that this is a last resort, **NOT** a taxi service.



Rhodetrip offers a transport service to students in and around Grahamstown. Membership for a nominal fee entitles you to phone for a lift during Rhodetrip's operating hours. All you need to do is contact Rhodetrip and they'll come and fetch you, wherever you are. Visit

www.rhodetrip.co.za

for more information.



Lunches are served on weekdays (including Public Holidays) from 12h00 - 14h00

Please note that suppers are not available in the Oppidan dining hall. Suppers during the week, will be served in the Residence dining halls, after written permission has been obtained from the relevant Hall Wardens. Space is limited. Regretably the Kimberley and Nelson Mandela dining halls are NOT available to Oppidan meal takers.

Which diets are offered?

All of the diets that are offered in the residence dining halls, are available in the Oppidan dining hall.

How do I make use of the facility?

NB: Meal bookings MUST be made 48 hours prior to receiving your first meal. (The meals application form is available on this page.)

Oppidan students are able to book their own week-day lunches and suppers online. However, this can only happen after having completed administrative registration at Eden Grove, and upon completion of the Oppidan Dining Hall Meals Application form.

Students may indicate on the form the amount of money they would like loaded onto their meals account, after which they can go to any personal computer on the Rhodes Network and book their own meals. Do remember that the 48 hour rule for booking meals online will apply.

Once the available balance on the student's meals account has been depleted and a student wishes to book further meals, another form needs to be completed and the funds will be placed on the students' meals account, provided sufficient funds are available on the student fees account.

OPPIDAN COMMON ROOM

Many Oppidan students might not be aware that we have a Common Room where they can go in between classes. Tea and coffee are served daily and there are also TV and DSTV and a pool table.

The Oppidan Common Room is situated outside the Bantu Stephen Biko building opposite the swimming pool.

This tea and coffee services are provided at the following times:

Monday - Friday 10:00 - 10:30 and 12:00 - 14:00

Please note that our staff work to specific time schedules and are required to set up up the facility only and not to serve tea and coffee to students.

What is an Oppidan?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'Oppidan' as "an inhabitant of a university town as distinguished from a member of the university itself" i.e. a student living off campus, in accommodation rented independently of Rhodes, is an *Oppidan* – or *Oppi*, for short. We also call ourselves 'Digs' students.

What is the Oppidan Union?

The Oppidan community is the single largest student body at Rhodes. Oppis enjoy the benefits of increased independence and freedom from some of the structures of life in residence, but off-campus living also provides its challenges. As the Oppi committee, we are here to assist Oppis, present and future, in overcoming these challenges.

In this booklet you will find information on the Oppidan Hall, its Hall Warden, sub-wardens and committee. This is a body of students who are here to help you, the Oppidan student, navigate the world of life outside campus successfully and easily. If you have any problems, they are your first port of call.

What is the Oppidan Committee?

The Oppidan Committee is comprised of Oppidans elected by fellow students. Their mandate is to look after the interests of all students living off-campus and they achieve this by maintaining channels of communication between Rhodes and Oppidans. They are also responsible for organising events and functions to get Oppidans together and interacting, thus facilitating the creation of a healthy, vibrant Oppi society, and making sure that the Oppidan community is adequately represented and catered for by the Student Representative Council (SRC).

This committee reports to the Oppidan Hall Warden who attends Oppidan Committee meetings and is responsible for Oppidan affairs at Rhodes. The Warden also ensures that Oppidan students receive support and advice if they experience any problems while living in digs.

The Warden is given substantial assistance from the Oppidan Hall Administrator who is based in the Oppidan Committee Room (lower level of Eden Grove). The Administrator is responsible for the effective and efficient administration of the Hall and provides organisational support to the Hall, which includes the Hall Warden, the students of the Hall and other individuals / groups who interact with the Hall. You can contact the administrator via e-mail on oppidan.secretary@ru.ac.za.

Peer Based Mentoring for Oppidans

First year students can request that they are assigned a mentor who will assist them with emotional & psychological support, practical help, and role modelling. Contact sessions will be setup during orientation week, with further sessions taking place as and when needed. All Mentors undergo training and are required to be good role models. Please do not hesitate in making use this programme.

What are Oppidan sub-wardens and what do they do?

Oppidan sub-wardens help the Hall Warden to effectively run the Oppidan Union, and to provide a high-quality support service to students. They are proactively involved with Oppidan students and interested in all aspects of their lives – academic, athletic, social and personal. In particular, sub-wardens are there to offer support and advice to new and current Oppidans who are settling into digs life, and to offer guidance and direction during times of crises.

They are not counsellors – the Rhodes Counselling Centre exists to professionally counsel you through difficult situations – but Oppi sub-wardens can facilitate your connection with the Counselling Centre, or offer you advice as an older student who has 'been there, done that'.

What are your responsibilities as an Oppidan student?

The biggest responsibility for you as an Oppi student is to **be considerate** and promote healthy relations between the local community 'town' and the student community 'gown'. This involves putting in the effort to meet your neighbours at the beginning of your year in digs and making sure that you minimise noise and other inconveniences that they may experience. A simple note dropped in your neighbours' post-boxes informing them of an upcoming digs dinner / party and offering them your contact details can go a long way in ensuring that you have a positive, happy digs experience.

The Rhodes Student Disciplinary Code applies throughout Grahamstown – just because you live off campus does not mean you're exempt from this Code. Your neighbours work; have young children; and have moved into Grahamstown's suburbs to create a home for themselves and it is not fair to assume that, just because you are a student and are comparatively free of responsibilities, you can behave in an anti-social and disrespectful manner. Please be considerate of your neighbours and their needs.

You should also ask your neighbours for their telephone numbers - you may want to telephone a neighbour about a barking dog that is depriving you of sleep. If your neighbour does have a problem about your conduct you would probably prefer to hear from them directly, rather than have them complain to the Oppidan Hall Warden. Remember that neighbours include those living a stone's throw away that you may have never seen and whose house entrances are in other streets.

Here are a few suggestions to promote a good relationship with your 'town' neighbours

- Introduce yourself to your neighbours and give them your cell number so that they may contact you directly if there is a problem.
- Keep doors and windows closed to ensure that noise is contained.
- Be aware that if your music can be heard when you are outside your house, your neighbours can hear it too.
- Inform your neighbours of your intention to have a party at least two days in advance and give them a definite noise cut-off time.
- Do not have loud conversations outside your house, especially in the early hours of the morning.
- Watch your language as there may be children living close by.
- When spending time in your garden, either braaing or working on a project, ensure that the noise is not disturbing your neighbours.
- When braaing, position your fire well away from the wall or fence of your property so that the smoke does not blow directly into the window of the neighbouring house. See to it that the fire is not under any electrical or telephone lines or trees. Choose a place in your garden where the smoke blows upwards and away.



The Oppidan Committee

is selected annually based on an interview process and consists

Subwardens
 Chairperson
 SRC Representative
 Treasurer & Fundraising Representative
 Marketing & IT Representative
 Entertainment Representative
 Sports Representative - Men
 Sports Representative - Women
 Community Engagement Representative
 Environment & Welfare Representative

Environmental Tips for a Greener Digs

- Use water sparingly: Grahamstown has water restrictions currently!
- Use clear or orange bin bags for recycled paper, glass, tin cans and plastics, and put these outside your digs along with the normal municipal black bags (for wet waste) on your area's municipal collection days.
- Walk or cycle wherever you go.
- Use your printer wisely, e.g. double sided printing, only use high quality printing for those documents which need to look professional, for all printing use the low quality. Only print what is needed.
- Limit the use of disposal plates, cups and serviettes.
- Use environmental friendly light bulbs. Environmental Tips for a Greener Digs

If you are new to the area find out from your neighbours when the refuse pick up days are as putting it out for days will result in dogs messing in the refuse.

Emergency Contact Details

Dean of Students Dr Vivian De Klerk	Tel: 046 603 8181 Fax: 046 622 9514 Home: 046 688 6075 Cell: 082 866 4755 Email: dean.students@ru.ac.za
Counselling Centre Dr Colleen Vasiliou	Tel: 046 603 7070 Email: c.vasiliou@ru.ac.za
Rhodes Psychological Emergency Harassment Officer: Dean of Students	Cell: 082 803 0177 Tel: 046 603 8181 Email: dean.students@ru.ac.za
Police	Tel: 046 9111 / 10111
Ambulance	Tel: 046 10177
Private Ambulance	Tel: 046 622 7976 Cell: 082 708 2928
Fire Brigade	Tel: 046 622 4444
Rhodes Health Care Centre: Ms Heather Ferreira	Tel: 046 603 8523
Campus Protection Unit	Tel: 046 603 8146/7
Settlers Hospital	Tel: 046 622 2215
Fort England Hospital, York Street	Tel: 046 622 7003

Noise & your neighbours

The Oppidan office regularly receives phone calls from irate Grahamstown residents concerning their noisy student neighbours. It is important to note that neither the Oppidan sub-wardens nor the Oppidan Hall Warden are "noise police". Their role is primarily to support, advice and guidance to students who are experiencing personal crises, and only occasionally to mediate and to resolve disputes between students and their neighbours. They have absolutely no power to stop parties or demand that students stop making a noise - the South African Police perform this function.

Noise is a neighbour relations issue, not a disciplinary issue: jointly, you and your neighbours need to negotiate reasonable limits, and agree to be both considerate (on the part of students) and tolerant (on part of neighbours). Sub-wardens can help you here.

Also, try the following suggestions to promote good neighbourliness:

- Keep doors and windows closed to ensure the noise is contained.
- Be aware that if the music can be heard when you are outside your house, your neighbours can hear it too.
- Inform your neighbours of your intention to have a party at least two days in advance and give them a definite noise cut-off time. And make sure the party ends when you said it would!
- Do not have loud conversations outside your house, especially in the early hours of the morning.
- Watch your language as there may be children living close by.

Lease Agreements

The most important aspect of any lease agreement is that you should carefully read it before signing. In essence, you are the author of your rights and duties.

If you don't like something in the agreement propose changes.

Remember, the landlord may not agree to the proposed changes. In which case it becomes a matter of negotiation.

If you don't understand the agreement then get advice. Speak to a sub-warden, senior law student, the Law Clinic* or the Oppidan Hall Wardens, Janine and Raymond Harris, are available to assist in all digs matters, including those concerning lease agreements.

The Law Clinic services are not available to you if you earn more than a certain amount per month.

Lease Agreements continued further

- Digs are sold form time to time. Fortunately the law protects you from being evicted by the new owner for the full period of the lease - unless you have agreed to the contrary - so be careful what you agree to.
- Make sure that the premises that you will be renting has been properly defined.

Note: It is possible to conclude a lease agreement verbally but it is advisable that you commit the agreement to writing to avoid possible disputes.

OVERALL

- A lease is an agreement that both you and your landlord must agree to. If one of you is unhappy with the terms of the agreement then you may have to look for another digs.
- It is your responsibility to know what you are getting yourself into so read your contract carefully. Don't be afraid to ask what sections of the contract mean or for help with understanding it.
- Ultimately you are trying yourself into a relationship with your landlord that you should be mutually beneficial. Make sure that it remains this way because you are stuck with it until the end of the lease.

A few pitfalls

- If you sign as the principal tenant you must remain liable even if your sub-tenant leaves. To protect yourself to some extent you should request at least a month's deposit from your sub-tenant even if this person is your best friend.
- Inspect the premises carefully before you move in. Make an inventory of the cracked windows, dirty walls, torn carpets etc. and have the landlord sign and date a copy. Check what damages you will be liable for. Usually the landlord will be responsible for exterior damages.
- What does the lease say about festival? Some landlords want the right to lease out the digs to festival guests for ten days in July. That's fine provided that you know about this upfront and presumably build this into the rental.

Points Worth Considering in Advance:

- Who pays for the security service, the garden service and other utilities?
- Most digs have pre-paid electricity meters but who pays for the water?
- The premises are likely to be insured, but insuring the contents - your property is up to you.
- What does the lease say about keeping pets?
- What does the lease say about noise?

How to be a responsible employer

Do you employ someone to clean up your dig? You have to comply with the labour law if you do, which means that you must treat your domestic worker fairly and respectfully at all times. Here are a few basic tips to ensure good practice:

- Pay the minimum wage: in 2011 this is R1506.34 per month (for an 8-hour working day) which is R347 per week or R7.72 per hour
- After working for you for 6 months, you must give your domestic worker 4 weeks notice if you decide that you no longer need them to work for you
- It is unacceptable to go on holiday at the end of the year without making clear arrangements about payment of salary during the vacation. How would you like to get no income for 2 months over Christmas?
- Money cannot be deducted from wages for breakages, damage, meals taken during working hours, uniforms or equipment used for work.
- If a domestic worker works less than four hours on a particular day, they must be paid for a minimum of four hours.
- Give your domestic worker an hour meal break after 5 hours continuously.
- Your domestic worker is entitled to three weeks leave a year, paid at their normal rate, plus 5 days family responsibility leave per year for, a child is sick on a family member death.
- A domestic worker is entitled to four months unpaid maternity leave.
- A standard working week is 45 hours; any hours worked over and above the 45 hours must be paid as overtime.

Keeping Green: Electricity Saving Tips

- Switch off all lights and appliances when leaving a room.
- When in a room use only those lights and appliances you need.
- Use an electric blanket instead of a heater (or, better yet, a hot water bottle)
- Use energy saving bulbs.
- Turn the temperature on your geyser down to 60 degrees. Your water will still be warm.
- Be aware that appliances with elements, e.g. kettles, toasters, stoves, hairdryers etc. use the most electricity and be wise on how you use them.
- When re-heating food use a microwave instead of a stove.