

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ABOUT STUDY VISAS AND MEDICAL AID

Please read carefully the following **essential** information for all international students to successfully acquire a study visa to register at Rhodes University.

1. VISA APPLICATION, ACQUISITION AND REGISTRATION

1.1 Visa processing takes time

Now that you have been accepted to study at Rhodes University, you need to apply for a study visa. Please allow sufficient time for this. The standard processing time can be **up to 8 weeks** but it can vary and take a longer or shorter time than this, depending on the situation within each country.

1.2 Collecting all supporting documentation takes time

Please allow sufficient time to collect all the supporting documentation that is required for the visa application. You are advised to start these processes as soon as possible and well in advance of the date of the visa application. Depending on your personal circumstances and where you are applying, there may be extra requirements.

It is your responsibility to confirm the specific supporting documents required for your application with your nearest South African Embassy or Visa Facilitation Services Office. Ultimately, a study visa is a matter between the individual student and the State.

1.3 Allow time between requesting a visa application appointment and the appointment

It may take four weeks or more between requesting and getting an appointment to submit a visa application.

1.4 Check the dates on the study visa when you collect it

Visas will be issued in accordance with the dates specified on your Letter of Confirmation of Acceptance from Rhodes University. The dates on your letter will reflect the duration of your intended period of study from registration up to and including graduation.

Please double check that the dates on the visa issued to you are those that you were expecting before leaving the premises, just in case a rectification is needed.

1.5 Immigration Compliance clearance

Once you have your study visa in hand, please email copies of your passport, visa and medical aid membership documents to internationaloffice@ru.ac.za to be cleared for Immigration Compliance. Once this has been cleared, you may proceed with Online Registration at Rhodes University.

1.6 Check the immigration stamp on your passport at the port of entry

When you travel and enter South Africa, please check that the immigration stamp on your passport reflects the correct details **at the point of entry**. Incorrect dates are difficult to rectify once you leave and may place you at risk of illegal status. If the immigration officer does not rectify the dates, please request to speak with the Port of Entry Manager.

1.7 Registration to be in attendance requires a study visa

Under **no** circumstances should you arrive at Rhodes without a study visa. Students who arrive with a tourist/visitor's visa will be required to **return home** immediately, as it is illegal for the university to accept you, without the correct study visa.

2. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR A STUDY VISA APPLICATION

Please refer to the immigration regulations, of 2 June 2014, for Study Visa requirements <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services>.

Please note that you will need to **pay a fee** for your visa application. The specific amount should be confirmed at your point of application.

You will be required to submit:

- 2.1 **The relevant study visa application form**, obtainable from your nearest South African Diplomatic Mission or, online via the Visa Facilitation Services (VFS), if this is in operation in your country.
- 2.2 **Passport:** Please ensure that your passport is valid for, at least, the same duration as your intended period of study and graduation. Visas will not be issued beyond the date of the passport expiry date. We strongly recommend that you avoid having to apply for a new passport and therefore a new visa, after you come into South Africa. The delays in either or both of these processes can lead to illegal status.
- 2.3 The attached **letter of acceptance** from the university, which must be an original signed by the Registrar and with a coloured university stamp.
- 2.4 **Proof of sufficient financial means** that you can support yourself adequately for the duration of your stay in South Africa. This is defined as: a) a three months bank statement; b) cash available to the applicant; c) traveller's cheques; d) an undertaking supported by a bank statement or salary advice, by a South African citizen or permanent resident that he or she will be hosting the applicant and accepting all costs related to the maintenance and removal of the applicant from the Republic or; e) in the case of learners or students, an undertaking to the learning institution for payment of all fees and accommodation from a bursary scheme or scholarship or parents, as the case may be (Government Gazette No 37679, 22 May 2014, p.8).

Please note that proof of sufficient financial means must be provided, on an annual basis, when registering.

2.5 PROOF OF MEDICAL AID

- 2.5.1 Medical aid cover is a legal requirement to obtain a study visa.
- 2.5.2 The immigration regulations stipulate that you must have medical aid cover for the **full duration** of your visa. i.e. the duration of cover is linked to the visa and not the academic year.
- 2.5.3 The University is required by law (Immigration Act 10 of 2004) to only register international students, if they can provide proof of appropriate South African medical aid cover from 1 January to December of the academic year.
- 2.5.4 The University will only accept South African medical aid schemes, which are registered in terms of the Medical Schemes Act 131 of 1998.
- 2.5.5 Medical aid schemes generally provide cover for a **12 month period**. Prices are reviewed annually, based on risk.

- 2.5.6 Maintaining medical aid annually is a requirement to continue to meet the conditions of your study visa.
- 2.5.7 The Department of Home Affairs has delegated the responsibility of ensuring that this happens to the university, at which students are registered.
- 2.5.8 Since 1 September 2009, Rhodes University appointed Health Consultants, to assist all international students with any queries relating to appropriate medical cover and membership renewal. This service comes at no additional cost either to you the student, or to the University.
- 2.5.9 Please contact the **Simeka Health Consultants** before applying for your study visa so that you so that they can advise on covering your specific needs and specific medical aid schemes with service providers located in Makhanda.
- 2.5.10 You can then purchase acceptable medical aid cover and submit your proof of medical aid cover, with your study visa application.
- 2.5.11 Simeka Health Consultants can be reached via the helpdesk@simekahealth.co.za or by telephone 0860 100 380, if you are calling from within South Africa, or +27 41 509 8901, if you are calling from outside of South Africa.
- 2.5.12 Occasionally, a SA Embassies may mistakenly issue a study visa, without proof of adequate South African medical cover for the duration of the year, or accept an international insurance schemes. It is **only** the South African medical schemes, recognised by the South African Medical Aid Act that meet the visa requirements.
- 2.6 **Police Clearance Certificates (PCCs)** are required from every country in which you have stayed for more than a year, since you turned 18 years of age. PCCs must be valid on the date of submission of your application.
- 2.7 Please apply **immediately** as the issuing of PCCs can take longer than the officially stated times. Each police clearance needs to be valid and in date at the time of submission with the visa application.
- 2.8 **Medical and radiological reports** *(Not older than six (6) months)*
- 2.9 You may be requested to supply **proof of accommodation**, which consists of the address of your accommodation and the name of the landlord or the administrator at your residence.
- University and off-campus private accommodation is available. Please refer to the Oppidan website at <http://www.ru.ac.za/oppidan/> for further information. The onus is on each student to arrange either University or private accommodation timeously. You may be asked for a written undertaking to leave the country on completion of your degree.
- 2.10 You may be asked for a copy of a return ticket.
- 2.11 A repatriation deposit is no longer a requirement. *'The Department is, in terms of the new requirements under the Immigration Amendment Act, 2011 **no longer** requiring repatriation deposits as a term or condition for issuing temporary residence visas. (Government Gazette No 38098, 13 October May 2014, p.3).'*

3. VISA INFORMATION FOR PART-TIME AND POSTGRADUATES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

- 3.1 A visa is required for every international student physically present in South Africa, while you are registered to study at Rhodes University.
- 3.2 The nature of the visa depends on how long and how often you will be physically present in the country. This should be reflected in the admission letter from the university.
- 3.3 If you are a registered student but **not in attendance**, you will not require a study visa and you may come into South Africa on a visitors visa, if you need to meet with your supervisor very occasionally.
- 3.4 If you come in regularly to do several block courses or field trips a year then, you will need to apply for a study visa.
- 3.5 Please consult with the International Office if you have any queries at internationaloffice@ru.ac.za

4. APPLYING FOR A STUDY VISA, ACCORDING TO YOUR CURRENT VISA STATUS IN SOUTH AFRICA:

- 4.1 If you are working in South Africa and have a valid work visa, you may apply for part-time study, without further endorsement of your visa, as long as it is valid for the duration of the intended study period.
- 4.2 If you are changing from working to fulltime study, you need to apply for a study visa. You may do this from within South Africa, if you are already here.
- 4.3 If you are on a spousal visa, you may apply to have this endorsed for study, from within South Africa, if you are already here.
- 4.4 All international students are automatically permitted to work for 20 hours a week while studying.
- 4.5 The DHA recognises that internships that are an integral part of attaining a degree are implicitly covered in the letter of offer from the university, and are therefore covered by the study visa.
- 4.6 You may **never** change from a visitor's visa to any other type of visa, from within South Africa.
- 4.7 You will not be permitted to register at the university on a visitor's visa.
- 4.8 The study visa will stipulate the university and the degree for which you have been accepted. You may extend your existing visa and change conditions from within South Africa, if you meet the required criteria.
- 4.9 If you have refugee status, you will be treated in the same manner as a South African for the purpose of registration.
- 4.10 Please note the welcome development that South Africa Police Clearance Certificates (PCCs) may be acquired at the VFS office when you apply for visa renewals from within South Africa. This service is not currently available when applying for a new visa from outside the country.
- 4.11 Under no circumstances, should you let your visa expire and remain in the country, as you will

be declared undesirable on your departure have to go through a protracted appeal process to get back into the country, with a strong possibility of an outright refusal.

5. NEAREST IMMIGRATION SERVICES TO RHODES UNIVERSITY

- 5.1 Please note that there are no full-time immigration services in the local Department of Home Affairs Office in Makhanda.
- 5.2 All visa matters are dealt with by Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth).
- 5.3 VFS has introduced a Mobile Biometric Service that will come to the Rhodes University campus and allow students to apply for their visa on site. This service incurs costs but no more than the cost of travelling from Makhanda to and from Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth).