

Robert Bosch College UWC GmbH · Kartäuserstr. 119 · 79104 Freiburg

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Freiburg, 20 December 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Fall Semester has drawn to a close. Lessons finished at 2pm this afternoon (Tuesday 19th). As I write students are cleaning their houses (it never ceases to amaze me how much waste accumulates during a Semester!). This evening we enjoy a community 'Christmas' Dinner. Students will be departing through the night and tomorrow (depending on the departure times for their buses / trains / flights).

Thank you to Parents, Guardians and Host families who have opened their hearts and homes to students from further away, during this Winter Break. Your support is greatly appreciated. Many of our students live too far away to be able to return home for Winter Break, and for them to be able to have a home to stay in is a precious gift.

Each Semester has its highlights and challenges. For 1st Year students, the Fall Semester is a time of major and often exciting transitions: for most, a transition away from home to a boarding school, a transition to a different country, making new friends, learning subjects (sometimes new subjects) in a new way and for most in a new language, engaging in the "creativity, action, service" (CAS) programme, grappling with what it means to be a global citizen. Physics teacher and Personal Tutor Richard Burt commented that most students find that their third Semester "is the most stressful in the two years at a UWC. There is the excitement of a new generation of students arriving at the college and a shift in the dynamics of all the different roles that students take on. 2nd year students are expected to show more leadership, take on more responsibility and be better role models; while academic pressures become increasingly alarming and the monster assignments start rolling in. It is a term of multiple internal assessment deadlines, the Theory of Knowledge essay, and steadily increasing pressure from their teachers. If this were not enough, it is also the term when two of the toughest challenges faced by our 2nd year students need to be tackled: the extended essay and what to do when they leave the college."

In relation to the last point - what to do after UWC – sometimes just the expanded range of options is an exhausting challenge. More and more students seek opportunities for a Gap year, travelling and working independently or volunteering with an organization. Others seek to move straight to university (and several do

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not have the “luxury” of being able to take a year off). If to university, then in which country? – a question often partially determined by the financial costs and scholarship opportunities, and for some the uncertainties in and changes to visa possibilities especially in the USA. To give an idea of the opportunities for direct engagement with universities: this Semester UWC Robert Bosch College has welcomed international admissions staff from over 40 universities and 11 university presidents. In the face of so much information and initial choice as to where to apply, it is easy to be overwhelmed. Fortunately, the College has a skilled university advisor, Hubertus Zander, to help students in their explorations.

Many students will say that the “real” UWC experience starts after consideration of the academic programme and options for further study. This is not true – learning in a deliberately diverse classroom is part of the richness of a UWC experience – but of course it is in the breadth and emphasis of the co-curricular programme and the rich social interaction that a very special part of UWC is experienced. Ask your children about their engagement in the Special Focus Days (sustainability, and interfaith dialogue). Ask them about their Project Week. Ask them about the discussions late into the night. Ask them what stretched them, what they are proud in terms of their engagement and the insights they gained. Also ask them what was difficult, disappointing and maybe even disillusioning. These too are part of the UWC experience, where we hope growth comes through reflection and thinking hard about possible ways forward. Sometimes our disappointments come through not being able to persuade our fellow students to act in a way that we think is responsible and in line with our convictions and aspirations. Easy examples in this regard include noise at night, cleanliness in student houses (how many cleaning rosters have been only partially successful!), even more serious issues such as some students breaking the UWC Common Code of Conduct regarding alcohol (in our German context, students are allowed to drink alcohol in moderation, off campus, if this is served in a restaurant or bar, but there are 200 perceptions of what “in moderation” might mean and alcohol purchased in a supermarket always is cheaper). A totalitarian, “disciplinary” approach to these issues might partially “solve” the immediate problems, but such an approach also would most likely destroy the nature of the trusting relationship between students and staff that is vital in so many other areas. A primarily disciplinary approach would teach students nothing about the messiness of democratic society. It would teach them little about taking responsibility for solving real problems, little about the reality that the world’s biggest problems can only be addressed if there is buy-in from all players (and approaches that might increase buy-in). Learning to be a better global citizen includes learning how to approach harder challenges. To use current language: UWC educates its students to be *changemakers*. Please understand that the college does not seek to abandon students who feel challenged in different areas. The adults of the College walk closely alongside the students. Our approach is to work in partnership, not as overlords, to build in our students a sense of agency rather than a sense that the moving forward including in difficult areas primarily is the responsibility of someone in authority. Yes, the college does exercise formal discipline in extreme situations, but only (in our view) as a last resort and then with a sense of failure.

Reports

Student reports are being completed as I write, and these should be forwarded electronically to you and to your child by the end of this week. Reports for 1st year

students do not include grades. The reasoning behind this is that students come from such a range of educational and linguistic backgrounds that grades even at the close of the 1st Semester can often be discouraging and misleading. The teacher, supervisor, house and personal tutor comments provide we think a better insight. If circumstances allow you to talk with your child, please use the report as a starting point for a detailed conversation regarding their semester at the College.

Key Dates:

Tuesday 9 th January	Students return by 7pm for the beginning of the Spring Semester
Sunday 20 th May	2nd year Graduation, 11am, to which each student is allowed to invite two family members. The limitation is due to the size of the Auditorium. There are many reasons why parents might not be able to attend, including cost, visa difficulties and climate change considerations. The College will broadcast the ceremony on the internet.
Tuesday 12 th June	Last day of lessons for 1st year students
Wednesday 13 th June	Campus closes
Friday 24 th August	Campus reopens at 8am, all students arrive for Orientation

Further dates for the 2018/18 academic year will be published in mid-January.

Thank you again for your support, for allowing your child to come to UWC Robert Bosch College.

Season's Greetings!

With best wishes,



Laurence Nodder
Rektor