

Corona-Update: March 19th

UWC Robert Bosch College and other boarding schools in Land Baden-Württemberg have received a letter from the Authorities in charge of boarding schools, indirectly acknowledging that we are open in our boarding capacities and instructing us in protocols in case any of the students in residence become ill with Covid-19. We will be studying these protocols overnight with a view to implementing them. This letter is very good news for the students who at this stage have decided to remain at RBC, as it means that the Authorities do not require them to move to host families if they continue to stay in Freiburg.

Most of you will have the means to stay in touch with your children – our 175 students – who remain on campus. I need to acknowledge that my attention has been drawn to a situation where my (lack of) communication with a family was unacceptable, and again I am looking to make sure that my protocols are improved in communication in situations where parents are rightly anxious in a specific set of circumstances. If a student is placed in isolation, precautionary or otherwise, the family needs to be informed including around the circumstances.

We have been extremely fortunate in the weather this week, which has allowed many to work and recreate outside, enjoying the sunshine, the spring breezes and sounds. The students (often supported by staff) have been highly creative in taking ownership of and adding to this “UWC” period: for instance, tonight and tomorrow night we have scheduled performances by the 1st year Theatre Arts students (also mindful of the restrictions on audience size. Mindful of the need to limit the size of gatherings, meals now are being eaten in four sittings.) If we were not aware at least through the media of the challenges beyond this campus and in different parts of the world, it really would be a very good week. Most students remain in high spirits. Within our self-imposed quarantine as a school community, most of us are enjoying the relative freedom of not being in the rhythm of the regular schedule and of a growing sense of community (even though we recognize that we need to re-create a daily structure to our communal lives – more on this later).

The next main “news” is that the IB has written today to all schools that are registered to write examinations this May:

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing disruption for many IB schools, students, educators and families. We have deep empathy for the impact this is having on over 200,000 IB students across the globe and are currently reviewing all available options.

We are gathering feedback from schools, students, universities and official bodies to determine the most judicious way forward. It is critical for us to ensure that the options we provide for our schools globally are done with compassion for our students and teachers, and fairness for the difficult circumstances our students and educators are experiencing.

Ultimately, we want to ensure that our students have every chance of success as they pursue university entry or future career plans. Our students are at the forefront of our thinking as we navigate this extraordinary global pandemic.

We are working through these options with the utmost urgency and will provide you with a decision on the May 2020 examination session no later than 27 March 2020. Further information on the options available to you and your students will be provided following the decision.

In the meantime, we have provided comprehensive [FAQs](#) which are regularly updated and available on our website. The FAQs include the deadline extensions, advice on completing eCoursework using video/voice calls, advice for online learning and much more.

The Academic Programme at RBC now that the College is closed as a school:

Dr. Christian Bock, RBC Director of Studies, writes:

As UWC Robert Bosch College is moving from in-person teaching to teaching remotely, we would like to take a moment to inform you about the arrangements we have made to ensure a continuity of teaching and learning for those students who have remained in boarding and those you have travelled home.

- *For this week, students have received independent work while we train first staff and subsequently students on Microsoft Teams, a communication platform that allows for real-time interaction, the streaming and saving of videos and presentations. The platform also includes an interactive whiteboard and screen sharing applications.*
- *We will also go ahead and have all second-year IB language learner oral exams and first-year Self-taught oral exams in the coming days.*
- *On Friday, we will open Teams up to students and help them explore this new environment.*
- *We will continue using email, OneNote, Class Notebooks and OneDrive to share materials and resources with the students. We have also enrolled with Kognity and InThinking, two well-established online IB leaning platforms. These will be made available to students both on and off campus.*
- *On Monday, we will move to a more regular block timetable with classes, some regular face-to-face interaction and remote teaching.*

The current situation requires creative and flexible thinking about how we as teachers can support students as self-motivated learners to progress towards meeting their learning goals and the requirements of the IB. While the process will no doubt feel unfamiliar and at times possibly frustrating, we would like to ask your help in supporting those students who have returned home:

- *Please check in with them and help them organize a daily and weekly study schedule. Ask them what they are working out and encourage them to remain engaged. Remote teaching requires good self-management skills and a level of self-motivation.*

Real-time teaching is always required or even desirable in order to support effective learning. Our goal right now is not to try to re-create face-to-face classrooms, which is impossible to do. Online and blended learning provide opportunities for learners to work more independently, expand their agency, and learn to use tools and strategies that they otherwise might not have.

In addition to the resources and support that we are providing our students with, the UWC Alumni community have offered to offer tutoring to those students who are not on campus anymore. This is a google doc that alumni prepared with their contact if students need help tutoring:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kP0vK92QJk7dehiqRwvDatpNaLy1c8i1BPE9urhil5w/edit?fbclid=IwAR1xzmIYLGyvm4pMFJjCTVleegVtXuk6QZH7MoltpAoZrxNdVQZ7PpslC5w#gid=0>

Naturally we all hope that students can return to RBC before the end of this academic year, and that 2nd year students can write their examinations here. But we live with great uncertainty in this regard. On Tuesday evening we thought it prudent to send all 2nd year students who have returned home a

letter that they can choose to present to another IB school, if they wish to plan to write their examinations at a different IB school to RBC. Wherever the examinations are written (if indeed the IB proceeds with these) – and even in the worst case where the IB runs May examinations and a student cannot write these examinations – our 2nd year students will graduate in person or in absentia from UWC Robert Bosch College, with all the attendant privileges and responsibilities.

On Tuesday evening I informed students that the bus service from Freiburg to Basel Airport had now stopped running. Also, I informed them that the Flixbus service (heavily used by students especially during Project Weeks!) was stopping its service from Tuesday midnight. At this stage the main train service to Frankfurt remains operational, although with a slightly amended schedule. Regional trains operate on a reduced timetable. However, we do know that things can change, with further restrictions, very quickly.

I acknowledge that many parents are placed in a dilemma: whether to bring your children – our students – home now if/while that possibility still exists, or whether to leave them in the boarding section at RBC. It was in light of this dilemma that I considered it responsible to share today's IB communication with you.

Please know that RBC is committed to looking after the welfare of your children – our students – who remain at the College or who, in the unlikely event that the College is required to close its boarding, are accommodated in homes here in Freiburg and in different parts of Germany. In case there is any doubt, what I need to clarify is that once a student moves beyond those areas permitted under the "lockdown", that student is unable to return to campus until the authorities re-open schools. I hope that you understand that RBC does not have the residential staff to monitor a 14-day isolation for people who have left campus. (We remain committed to looking after those placed in isolation for medical reasons.)

To repeat my general framing statements from earlier letters, updated in light of acknowledgements and directives:

- RBC continues to plan to be an examination centre for the May 2020 session. At this stage schools in Baden-Württemberg are due to re-open on Monday 20th April. If the opening is further delayed, RBC will apply to the Authorities to continue as an examination centre if the May examination session continues. In this eventuality it may be that returning students (if they are allowed by the Authorities to return to Freiburg / Germany) need to be accommodated separately from those who have stayed throughout on campus.
- With the unfolding situation and advice / directives from your different governments, the responsibility remains yours for deciding whether you wish your child to remain at RBC with the precautions already described, or whether they should return home. Should you or they take the view to return home now, I will respect the decision and the student will remain in good standing at the College and with UWC.

Laurence Nodder, Rektor