

Corona-Update: April 1st

The good news is that there is very little to report in terms of major developments.

The IB clearly had not fully prepared itself internally for the cancellation of the May 2020 examinations. The IB's instructions to the schools and their answers within the published [FAQs](#) have needed updating from time to time. Importantly, the great majority of 2nd year students who had kept to RBC's internal deadlines are now well-placed. The 2nd year Visual Arts students continue to work on their individual exhibitions and the Theatre Arts students on their individual performances - scheduled for this Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings.

First year students have re-established something of a routine for their now-online classes. As reported in a previous letter, RBC experienced severe IT challenges last week with the internet crashing for extended periods of time. I am thankful for the support of Julien Tallec (RBC IT leader) and our service provider who were able to arrange for a doubling of the capacity of RBC's on-campus systems and bandwidth, completed last Friday. My experience and understanding are that the IT provision now is stable. RBC teachers (both on- and off-campus) are mostly new to online teaching and I am grateful for the progress that is being made. Not every online class is a great success (yet!), but work is being set and a rhythm of work is being restored.

In most subject areas the 2nd year students had completed their syllabuses. Last week, when the RBC internet was crashing almost every hour, 2nd year students were polled which classes they wished to continue in formal online classes. Arising from this, only some 2nd year online classes continue. 2nd year students continue to have access to online resources in all areas. All 2nd year students have been completing their CAS portfolios and are in the process of completing their individual CAS interviews. Most of the remaining 2nd year students also are keeping engaged: for instance leading activities for their peers, giving academic support, helping with the garden, with the cleaning and with monitoring the Mensa, and staffing Reception.

Parents and Guardians know that RBC is officially closed as a "school" – it seems strange to see teachers working online, with students sometimes even in the same building responding online. RBC respects the State's decision to close all schools (currently scheduled to re-open on Monday 20th April), while still providing care and support to students. Clearly, more institutional care is possible for the on-campus students compared to their peers off-campus, and I appreciate the many ways that people - students and staff - are structuring their engagement and support while still respecting that the school is closed. My perspective increasingly is bound by what I observe on-campus: often I see students working in small groups, sometimes 2nd year students assisting 1st year students, and teachers and students in individual meetings. I understand and appreciate that off-campus teachers also offer individual, supportive, online meetings.

I think it is important to mention that there is growing speculation whether the Covid-19 pandemic will be sufficiently tamed in these parts for the Authorities to allow schools to re-

open on the 20th April. If schools are not re-opened on the 20th April, RBC will continue to operate its boarding section and with online tuition as currently is the case.

Parents and Guardians who follow RBC on Social Media may be surprised and even disappointed in the lack of busy images being posted. This is a deliberate decision: in a formal sense RBC is allowed by the Authorities to continue as a boarding establishment, and in a formal sense the boarding establishment is regarded (at this stage) as a single Household (rather than 8 households corresponding to the 8 student houses). Because of the on-campus quarantine from the wider world, and now that more than 14 days of quarantine have passed and no-one on-campus has experienced any Covid-19 symptoms, in theory students should be “safe” from each other. But some members of the public have taken offence that on-campus RBC students behave in a more care-free way than would apply elsewhere. So, increasingly, RBC is careful how we present to the wider world.

I have said that in theory and from a Covid-19 point of view, on-campus students (and staff) should be “safe” from each other now that the internal quarantine from Freiburg has passed 14 days. I am mindful of the ongoing need for high precaution in those areas where we rely on “outside” staff: especially for medical services, catering, cleaning and parcel delivery. I keep stressing to students the need for especially social distancing and handwashing.

Thank you to 2nd year students and their Parents and Guardians who have accepted and understood RBC’s need, now that IB examinations are cancelled, for 2nd year students to leave on or before the 7th April – the advertised start to what would have been the Easter/Spring break - so long as travel remains possible and a student is not returning to a situation of significantly greater risk to them or their families. Today there are 88 1st year students and 59 2nd year students on campus. Several 2nd year students are scheduled to return home between now and the 7th April.

To the Parents and Guardians of RBC’s 1st year students (and 2nd year student for whom travel is problematic/impossible or national/home circumstances difficult): with the unfolding situation and changing advice from Embassies and 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. While students for whom travel home is ill-advised or impossible remain at school, RBC undertakes to provide a “home” for them: either here on campus or with a “host” family or family associated with UWC.

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