

Corona-Update: March 23rd

Most parents of 2nd year students will know from earlier communications yesterday and today that the IB has cancelled the May 2020 Examination session. This is because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the disruption it is causing and is anticipated to cause to schooling around the world, including IB schools. We currently understand that an IB Diploma (or Course Certificates for those not achieving a full Diploma) will be issued on the basis of a wide range of submitted coursework, tested against a careful review of predicted grades and the history of predicted grades/achieved grades in the different subjects in each IB school. The IB says it will publish a response to “Frequently Asked Questions” on the 27th March.

The Leadership Team at RBC did not expect and is not in full support of this decision by the International Baccalaureate (IB), but it is a decision that cannot be reversed. Because we did not anticipate the IB cancelling the May examination session for all schools, and certainly not at this early stage, we had not talked through this scenario. Yesterday afternoon I thought that several 2nd year students would travel home almost immediately; this has not been the case and shifts some of our thinking.

The 2nd year students have had an opportunity to meet and discuss, and I have had a meeting to discuss matters through with the on-campus staff together with student representatives.

I recognize that most 2nd year students wish to stay in this on-campus community which has had some beautiful and meaningful UWC moments including in the last 10 days. It also is important that the 1st year students now make good academic progress, because they will have to write final examinations in May 2021 and cannot afford to miss weeks of tuition. It does not often work well to have a mix of 1st year students required to be strongly engaged in academic work and 2nd year students having a much more open-ended agenda.

I also recognize the growing fatigue of the on-campus staff, who have not yet been able to take a day’s break since the closure of schools was announced. Part of this is because the teaching staff also has worked very hard to set students work and in preparation for the launch of online teaching today (which was badly disrupted because of internet challenges – I hope these now have been resolved) – often having to develop skills in the process. We have had to respond to further requirements: such as the transfer of students out of one Student House distributed to now-vacant beds in other Student Houses in order to free up a facility for the isolation of sick students (currently there are none!) I am mindful of the need to have an on-campus staff with the stamina to keep students cared for and the boarding section open, possibly for several months – we simply do not know.

Several 2nd year students study subjects where the coursework and syllabus has been completed. Some 2nd year Theatre Students and most 2nd year Visual Arts students still need to complete part of their formal IB assessment (performances and an exhibition) that are more easily accomplished whilst on campus. Christian Bock (Director of Studies) is now preparing a survey to ascertain which students wish to continue receiving (hopefully) online tuition in the different subjects. To keep morale for both students and teachers, 2nd year

students who participate in any further (online) classes need to be committed to regular and active engagement.

Balancing all these factors, and noting that the Spring / Easter break is scheduled to start after classes on Tuesday 7th April (at which time the 2nd year students would have completed the subject syllabuses) I have decided as follows:

- Those 2nd year students who still are able to return home are encouraged to do so as soon as transportation permits. All 2nd year students who are able to return home to a situation where especially the health system is not very weak or not in a state of collapse need to depart Campus by or on Tuesday 7th April.
- Those 2nd year students who cannot return home at this stage may continue to stay on Campus, as previously stated. RBC has now completed 10 days of a self-imposed quarantine for students (and 7 days for on-campus staff) from people beyond campus. RBC always has acted faster than the requirements of the Authorities in isolating the on-campus community from contact with those living off-campus. I am relieved by the general health of those on-campus, also that we (who mostly are young and healthy!) do not pose a health risk to our neighbours and the general public.

Finally for today: while many RBC 2nd year students are pleased that they will not have to write final examinations (with a high percentage of their final grades depending on these examinations), there are several students who are of the view that they are disadvantaged by the cancellation. Furthermore, recognition of the May 2020 IB Diploma by the German Authorities is not yet clarified by the IB or the German recognition Authorities. We are working closely with partners to clarify the situation as soon as possible. RBC undertakes to provide an opportunity for students who need this, to write their examinations in the November 2020 session.

For consistency, to repeat relevant sections of general statements from previous letters:

- Please know that RBC is committed to looking after the welfare of your children – our students – who remain at the College. In case there is any doubt, 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, and until then would need to be accommodated at home or by a host family. I hope that you recognize 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.)
- 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