

Corona-Update: FAQs for parents / guardians of incoming students

How has RBC responded so far to the novel coronavirus pandemic?

RBC has kept open the college for the students who have chosen to remain here as the choice of their parents and guardians. We have achieved a successful and voluntary self-isolation of the Campus community from the rest of Freiburg. We did not anticipate the announcement from the International Baccalaureate that the May 2020 Examinations would be cancelled. After the examinations were cancelled, we asked the 2nd year students to leave campus by the beginning of the advertised Easter/Spring break, if indeed they could still travel home and not into adverse circumstances. Currently 92/99 1st year students and 42/101 2nd year students remain on campus, supported by 18 on-campus members of staff.

The link to my letters to parents and guardians since the onset of the pandemic is:
<https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/news/how-the-college-deals-with-corona-situation/>

Also, you may wish to follow developments on social media: we report several times a week on our school's [Facebook page](#) as well as our school's [Instagram account](#). In addition, a newsletter is distributed several times a year, feel free to subscribe [here](#).

Can RBC guarantee that students and staff will not be infected with Covid-19?

So far, no member of the on-campus community has been tested as being infected with Covid-19. However, RBC cannot guarantee this for the future, even with the good-faith and careful efforts that are made to minimize the risks of infection. Included in these efforts, careful consideration is given how to implement the relevant directives from Health and Education authorities who also are consulted on a regular basis.

This week, daily new confirmed infections in Freiburg are a handful or less. Freiburg has 220.000 inhabitants.

During the pandemic, students who are ill for anything suspected possibly to be infectious are kept in isolation rooms. In addition, parents and guardians can be assured that there are excellent health facilities in Freiburg: there is a major university hospital supplemented by three general hospitals. Freiburg is the referral health centre for this region. Even during the current Covid-19 lockdown, two members of the on-campus community have received successful emergency surgery (ophthalmic and orthopedic) and one student was attended to by an emergency doctor, on campus, in an urgent but non-Covid situation. The Freiburg medical infrastructure remains strong.

Will lessons and other activities continue as normal from August 2020?

This depends on the situation with Covid-19 infections in Germany and Freiburg and the directives of the Authorities. When German schools including RBC re-open on Monday 4th May (i.e. classroom teaching re-commences for the 1st year students currently on-campus, and continues online for those who have not yet returned or are in quarantine), classrooms will look significantly different: under current directives, teachers are not allowed close-quarter individual work with students, nor is group work allowed. Currently the authorities do not allow off-campus co-curricular activities, neither are assemblies allowed. This might change for August. However, in the late afternoons, when RBC reverts to its role as a boarding establishment, students and on-campus staff manage more of what might be considered “typical” UWC interaction.

What will happen if the German Authorities again close schools because of Covid-19 infections?

In these circumstances, RBC almost certainly will have permission to continue as a boarding establishment and to continue lessons online. This is what happened this March when all schools were ordered to close. Students continue to receive online lessons from all their teachers, and on-campus students are further supported by the on-campus presence of 18 members of staff. Since the “lockdown” on the 13th March, the staff who live on campus and the on-campus students have agreed not leave campus (currently a RBC, not a regulatory provision), and careful measures have been taken to minimize the risk of contact and hence possible infection between people with wider contact and those who live on-campus.

As the novel coronavirus pandemic unfolded in this part of the world, parents and guardians were given the choice repeatedly whether to have their children travel home, to remain on-campus, or to stay off-campus with relatives or friends.

What will happen if RBC students cannot return home safely, or would return home into adverse circumstances, during school breaks including summer?

So far students have been accommodated on Campus, including for the Easter/Spring Break. It is our intention to keep open a Student House for the summer break. During the summer break, it is likely that students also will stay for two or three weeks with Host Families. We accept our responsibility to provide a home for our students who for good reason cannot travel home, including during the summer break.

Is it still worth travelling to RBC for a UWC experience (an experience that includes studying for the International Baccalaureate Diploma), probably even having to start that UWC experience in quarantine?

This depends on you and your child. RBC will not force your child to enroll. The risks of travel, the small but not negligible risks of Covid-19 infection even if your child exercises due caution, the risks of there being strict regulations regarding interaction with others, the risks of a disrupted two years, these are all higher than they were even four months ago. Your child’s UWC experience is unlikely to mirror all aspects of the “usual” UWC experience.

Yesterday the Chairs of the UWC International Board and Council together with the Executive Director of UWC International wrote: “One thing is certain: in a world that has changed fundamentally, our UWC education is more important than ever in shaping

independent, critical and compassionate thinkers, selfless leaders and agents for change and social progress.”

These are pivotal times in human history. Most of us are experiencing highly challenging times because of the novel coronavirus pandemic. We also observe the different national and regional responses and the consequences that follow these different responses. We have witnessed many governments making available huge financial resources to try to counter the economic effects of the novel coronavirus pandemic (without these necessarily reaching those families who need short-term assistance the most). Societies and governments have been much slower to respond to climate change: a long-wave event that in the end is most likely to have much more challenging consequences than the novel coronavirus pandemic. All of us are caught up one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, in a jostling for a new world order that might supplant the position of the US as the sole global superpower. Some of us are caught up conflicts, some in wars that, if not entirely a consequence of these forces, at least are made much more calamitous by the engagement of outside powers. With all the attendant challenges and uncertainties, this is a remarkable and important time to live and learn together with students from around the world and from a wide range of backgrounds, to share ideas and experiences from a multitude of perspectives, to be a UWC student!