

## Corona-Update: June 16<sup>th</sup>

Dear Parents and Guardians of the new Graduates,

As we re-gathered on the 9<sup>th</sup> January for the final Semester, very few of us would have imagined the nature of the months that would lie ahead. It was only on the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> January that the World Health Organization's Director General convened an Emergency Committee to assess whether the coronavirus outbreak constituted a public health emergency of international concern. The WHO website records that the independent members of this Committee could not reach a consensus based on the evidence at that time. How quickly things change.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> March RBC had entered lockdown, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March the IB formally cancelled the May examination session and I asked that 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who could return home and not into adverse circumstances to do so by the 7<sup>th</sup> April. That remains the most difficult decision I had to take during these Covid-19 times: balancing the worthy desire of most 2<sup>nd</sup> year students to continue their UWC experience against the pressures on the staff managing stretching and uncertain circumstances, together with the need for the 1<sup>st</sup> year students to retain good pace in their academic studies. And yes, there were some strong voices within UWC saying that RBC, in responsibility, should send all students home while (most) borders remained open.

Now your children are UWC Robert Bosch College graduates and will be receiving their IB results and Diplomas on the 6<sup>th</sup> July.

As RBC graduates, our new graduates are part of the 60.000 UWC Alumni network. In a real way, each UWC graduate has experienced an almost-two-year education that inclines them towards uniting people for peace and a sustainable future. This might not be immediately obvious in the daily thick of things but was affirmed again at least for me when speaking to our graduates at 8 US universities and colleges this February and speaking to the steady stream of graduate visitors back to RBC. This also is a network of people who have experienced the same type of crazy two years' UWC (mostly) residential life with all its ups and downs, its idealism and all-so-human disappointments, its stimulation / over-stimulation and, sometimes, drudgery, its self-inflicted sleep deprivation often for the sake of social engagement but also at times in service of the grinding sequence of IB deadlines. Almost every graduate I speak to speaks of the friendships that have been forged, of the unguarded and frank (often late-night) conversations that are so formative. Almost every graduate I speak to acknowledges how it is almost impossible to internally-disown what one has experienced and viscerally learnt at a UWC: of course people need to move on, the next steps in life present new, often exciting and different opportunities and challenges. But what we create of and how we engage with our UWC experience (which includes the people even more than the IB) is etched into our beings in a way that appears, at least to me, at a different type of level to that of most other schools.

Having acknowledged my regret that circumstances led me to asking many of our 2<sup>nd</sup> year students to return home too early for many of them, also I want to acknowledge that twenty

2<sup>nd</sup>-year students – now graduates - remain on Campus for the summer break because they cannot find a way home or would return into adverse circumstances. Some of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students/graduates still on-campus and their parents have expressed that if they had known back in mid-March what they know now, they should have travelled home while flights remained possible and borders still open. Still others remain here because it is at least a home, and they need to wait at least in Germany until they can travel on to university. Most of these remaining students and their parents and guardians wish that circumstances did not prevent them from being re-united. There is quiet heartache.

Some 2<sup>nd</sup> year students/graduates currently are staying in Germany with the families of their friends made while at RBC – thank you to these families for providing a warm and enduring welcome!

The formal affirmation of what was achieved academically arrives on the 6<sup>th</sup> July: subject grades and Diplomas. As we already know, for the first time the IB will not be basing the major weight of formal assessment on final examinations. We do not yet know exactly how final grades are going to be awarded; we do know that each piece of formal Internal Assessment has had to be uploaded and is being marked by examiners. Those students who still wish to write a final examination are allowed to register for the November examinations. They have received an email with further details, also with details on how to have reviewed any unanticipatedly poor grade.

Unlike in my generation as a school student, RBC does not write general letters of reference for all students. Instead, RBC prepares references to support applications to specific places of higher education and for entry to specific programmes. This year the Personal Tutors (PTs) decided to write fuller PT reports for each graduated student: not as a “reference” but more as a summation of the Semester and the almost-two years that each student spent here. Please find this attached.

### Appeal – RBC remains open!

With all the provisos that have already been mentioned, we can celebrate that RBC was able to stay open till the advertised Semester closing for its first year students (over 90 remaining on campus throughout the lockdown and subsequent return to classes). RBC is the only UWC to have done so. I think also we can celebrate that those students who needed to stay and continue to need to stay, can do so. I want to thank and celebrate the staff for having volunteered, without further financial recognition, to provide the necessary level of supervision and care for the remaining students throughout the holiday. We do not take this level of support for granted!

The direct costs of keeping RBC open over summer are likely to be in the order of €60.000. The unanticipated “holiday” costs include catering, cleaning (both are contracted and include staffing costs), energy and pocket money for the students. We have decided that our welcome of students staying on campus should not be tied to their Parents’ ability to cover costs (and especially for catering, given the staffing costs these are much, much higher per month than would be the case at home).

So, we invite those Parents, Guardians and Friends who have the ability to do so, to contribute financially towards covering these direct costs. (I understand that for many RBC families financial support at this time simply is not possible, however much you would want to support.)

For those able to support financially, the donation link is:

<https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/support/donate/>

For those able to support financially, you will receive a German donation tax certificate. Tax-efficient donations through some other jurisdictions also are possible – please contact me if you would like to explore this possibility.

### Refund of Caution Money

Caution money of €300 was required of many parents (determined according to the agreed financial assessments). RBC has decided not to withhold any caution money. We will refund the caution money into your accounts by the end of July, according to the banking details we have on record. You might wish to re-send your banking details, for confirmation, to Frau Viola Bartsch ([viola.bartsch@uwcrobertboschcollege.de](mailto:viola.bartsch@uwcrobertboschcollege.de)). Naturally, we would be delighted and grateful if you could donate some of your Caution Money to help RBC stay open this Summer.

### Conclusion

We all wish that the totality of circumstances had been different this Semester, the concluding Semester for your child – our student and now graduate. But we still managed several highlights before the response to Covid-19 deeply impinged on our lives. We managed to complete the final Project Week – as one of only a few UWCs that still undertake four Project Weeks over the two-year period. We also participated in some rites of passage including a candle ceremony at the outset of the lockdown and “saying goodbye” in early April, though not everyone was in a position to participate (and for reasons of prudence we cannot yet circulate the recording). I look forward to the first reunion of the Class of 2020 – we have some unfinished business!

We at RBC are grateful for and in many ways in admiration of our newest graduates: for all they contributed, for how they grew, and for the resilience and good grace they have shown especially in these most challenging times. Thank you, dear Parents and Guardians, for having allowed them these almost two years at UWC Robert Bosch College.

With best wishes also for your and your family's health,  
Laurence Nodder, Rektor