

## Corona-Update: May 7<sup>th</sup>

This week has seen two milestones: classes resumed on Monday 4<sup>th</sup>, and yesterday the tests returned for those 1<sup>st</sup> year students in quarantine who had returned from within Germany – all tests came back negative.

Having “student-aligned” staff back in our midst and first year students back in class with (most of) their teachers has been a joy and relief to us all. To quote RBC English teacher Lydia White when asked in an interview what she had missed most while teaching online from home: “Teaching is also about dialogue, the back and forth between us all, the private conversations before and after class, the joy of 10 out of 13 hands raised in response to a question. And of course, improvisation, the moment a student articulates something that takes you completely by surprise and it seems much wiser to follow that line of inquiry and leave the lesson plan for now. Most of all it’s much harder to laugh together, to be funny, to enjoy a joke! I miss(ed) laughing with my students and colleagues.”

In these new circumstances naturally there are aspects that feel strange: the staff who live off-campus teaching behind face shields or wearing masks when on campus, the regulatory requirement for social-distancing measures in classrooms and also in the Mensa during the school day, the prohibition during the school day of group work or even any teacher standing close to a student to help guide them in their work. There are some almost comic situations: where a class at this stage is a little more than 15 students – this sometimes happens with students largely being given the freedom to choose their subjects even beyond the beginning of semester – Covid-19-informed regulations require the class to be split into different rooms; sometimes the teacher is found teaching both groups from an interleading doorway. There are new challenges too: teaching and learning with most students in class but still 8 students at home or in RBC quarantine trying to follow lessons online.

The 36 second-year students who remain on campus all have transport / entry challenges returning home or would return home into adverse circumstances. This week the parents of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student wrote how if they had known how things would have turned out (with transport links being cancelled, the borders of their country having closed and the IB examinations having been cancelled), they probably would have brought their child home while travel still was possible. They remain grateful for the “home” RBC continues to offer their child. We recognize the challenge, even sadness, around the uncertainty when children can return to their families. And RBC remains firm in our commitment of welcome and our commitment to keep some student houses open during summer, with the possibility of first and second- year students who remain here over summer spending a shorter period with host families. But this is not the same as returning home.

Currently RBC is working with its Travel Agent to secure the earliest listed (pragmatic) alternative flights for those students whose financial circumstances require RBC to fund these (as part of their scholarship agreement). In Covid-19 circumstances, RBC will not recommend a journey home that involves transit through several airports (the risks of flight cancellations or transit restrictions somewhere along the chain are, in our view, too great). Nor, pragmatically, can RBC sponsor changes that simply *shorten the delay* to return home by a few weeks but at significant extra expense.

Parents and Guardians of all first-year students: please be aware that under **current** regulations all students returning to Germany after the summer break would be required to undergo a two-week quarantine in a RBC Student House. To comply with the current strong recommendation of the Freiburg Health Authorities, even those returning from within Germany would be required to undergo a week-long quarantine at RBC, followed by a test from the College Doctor. We cannot know if these

requirements and strong recommendations will be relaxed. Already one Parent has approached RBC for their child to remain at the College over summer, which we have agreed to. If under these most challenging circumstances you would prefer your (1<sup>st</sup> year) student to remain here over Summer, please do inform us as soon as possible and preferably within one week, and we will discuss this with you and them. This will allow us to make appropriate arrangements.

If news from Germany gets mentioned in your Press, you might have read or heard that Germany continues to relax some Covid-19 restrictions. RBC has decided to proceed with caution. Yes, we have welcomed back to campus those staff who are student-aligned, under careful arrangements. But apart from limited and controlled access to the Black Forest behind the campus, we continue to keep students on-campus. This allows us to continue together more naturally in our boarding establishment existence. Also, please be assured that I continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation in Freiburg daily. If infection rates climb even to half of what they were during the peak of infections in Freiburg, we will consider putting the college again into full lockdown and reverting to online lessons.

If you do not “follow” UWC Robert Bosch College on social media, you might wish to do so. We report several times a week about life at the College on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. Several times a year, we also publish a College newsletter – if you’re not on the list yet, you can [subscribe](#) here.

With best wishes also for your and your family’s health,

Laurence Nodder, Rektor