

**August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Letter to parents and guardians of our second-year graduates** (see letter for second-year parents and guardians below)

Dear Parents and Guardians of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students,

UWC Robert Bosch College families no doubt have had very different summer (or winter) experiences, depending on our health, our financial and employment security, on government regulations in our different parts of the world. Many of our students were able to return home. Others needed to stay in Freiburg or with families in these parts, and they and their families have not had the opportunity of a reunion. Thank you again to families who welcomed and hosted RBC students over the summer, and to the staff who volunteered to care for the students who stayed on campus for (most of) the summer.

Whatever our experiences, RBC welcomes students back on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August (or back into a new semester if they have not left!) Students will be welcomed on campus from 10am onwards.

I need to remind you, now our “second-year” Parents, Guardians and students, that the risks inherent in experiential international education are heightened by the pandemic. So far it appears as if young people in their late teens are not generally at very high risk of serious illness or death if indeed they become infected with the coronavirus (the teachers, staff and Rektor are at significantly higher general risk), but the risks for students are not completely insignificant. Teenagers in general are not particularly inclined towards social distancing. Also, RBC is not of the nature of an institution where it can tightly control the behaviour of students and their every interaction. While we educate and trust all in our community to behave responsibly, in ways that lessen the risks of transmitting or catching this or other contagious diseases, RBC does not (and cannot) guarantee that no student will become ill. While the health facilities in Freiburg generally can be described as very strong, this does not *guarantee* that a student or member of staff who does fall ill will indeed recover. (In every case so far in RBC’s history, health matters have ended positively!)

If you, the individual Parents, Guardians and students are willing to accept the heightened risks of returning to RBC – a school and a boarding school - in these times, we as the College staff will continue to honour your courage by offering a UWC education including a residential experience so long as we continue to have the permission of the Authorities to do so. Last Semester we learnt that even when classroom teaching was not permitted, the Authorities continued to allow RBC to operate as a boarding establishment and with lessons being offered online. I am confident that if the Authorities again close schools this coming academic year, the Authorities again will allow RBC to remain open as a boarding establishment. If we are not allowed to do so, we will either find host families for the students or, where it still is possible, help students to return home (with RBC financial support if the family / NC cannot afford this.)

While RBC has had months of experience of maintaining academic and broader UWC momentum during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in May some students who had gone home

returned to RBC when classroom lessons were allowed to resume, this is our first attempt to re-convene as a community in Covid-19 times. It is worth outlining our approach to this.

### **Arrival on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August**

- So far twenty 2<sup>nd</sup> year students have indicated that they will arrive at Frankfurt International Airport on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, where they will be met by RBC staff and brought back to campus by bus or in a college van. Of these twenty, nine come from countries / regions currently defined by the German Authorities as “high risk”. As things stand, these students will be allowed to have a PCR test for Covid 19 at the airport at no cost to the student or to RBC. They are asked to do so (each will receive a separate email). We will confirm closer to the 22<sup>nd</sup> August whether other students can be tested at the Airport.
- Several students will be arriving in Freiburg by train or by bus. All people taking public transport (and the buses hired by RBC) will be required to wear masks. This is a legal requirement.
- Some students will be brought to campus by parents, guardians or friends. *Please accept and understand that this year our welcome of accompanying adults will need to be a socially-distanced one, and accompanying adults will not be allowed up to the student houses or shown around the campus. Everyone will need to wear a mask.*

### **Initial assignment to student houses**

There will be a welcome desk in the usual place, at the entrance to the student (and staff) village.

- If a student is well and has arrived from a country / region that is not considered high risk (in Covid-19 terms) by the Authorities, the student will be assigned as one of four people to a four-person room.
- If a student has arrived from a country / region that is considered high risk, they will be assigned as one of two people in a four-person room.

Depending on how many people need two-people rooms and how many 1<sup>st</sup> year students are allowed to travel to Germany on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, students who have spent the holidays at RBC may be assigned a tent for the first nights.

### **Testing for Covid-19 on arrival to Germany and UWC Robert Bosch College**

- As mentioned above, several students arriving at Frankfurt International Airport will be tested for Covid-19 infection at the Airport, and the results forwarded through them to RBC. They will not have a further PCR test on arrival at RBC.
- Within hours of their arrival at RBC, all other students who were not tested at the Airport will undergo a PCR test, on campus, administered under the supervision of a medical doctor. (Staff will have been tested in the days before the reopening.)
- All students and staff also will undergo an antibody test under the same supervision.

- There is no charge to families for these tests (where applicable, students' medical insurance will cover costs for the PCR tests and a donor kindly is covering the balance of the costs.)

### **The wearing of masks and isolation / “pod” arrangements, quarantine arrangements**

- Students (and staff) will be required to wear masks throughout Arrival and Orientation except when eating, washing, sleeping, or leading a formal Orientation activity - where face shields may be worn to ease understanding by the listeners.
- Students will be kept in relative isolation (two to a large room) or in a “pod” arrangement (for each student house for students from those countries and areas not considered at high risk) until a student's Covid-19 (PCR) test results become available. In a “pod” arrangement, students are kept together as a House unit, not permitted to engage directly (even when wearing masks) with students in other houses. When a student's result is negative, the student may be moved to another house with others who are confirmed Covid-negative and given more opportunities for interaction and movement on campus.
- At the time of writing, there is no requirement for quarantine of any person once they receive a negative Covid-19 test.
- In the (unlikely) event that a student is diagnosed as having contracted Covid-19, that student will be moved to an isolation house (or to hospital if their symptoms become more serious).
- RBC has a good supply of disposable masks, as well as re-usable masks for those sufficiently responsible to wash and iron their mask on a daily basis. There is no charge to students and staff for these.

### **Orientation**

Once the bulk of the test results have been received by RBC, the Orientation programme will begin.

For the whole of the Orientation, as many activities as possible will be held outdoors. Students and staff will be required to wear masks (or a face shield if leading a group – to aid understanding by listeners). It will not be the same as previous Orientations; rather it will be a programme constructed also keeping in mind the need to keep appropriate social distance and to lessen the risks of widespread Covid-19 transmission in case of a false-negative finding in any of the PCR tests.

For the Covid-19 safety of the community around RBC and for general reassurance, students will not be allowed to leave campus during Orientation.

### **Assignment to Student Houses for the academic year**

Only once the great majority of test results have been released will students be assigned to their student house for 2020/2021. No student will be sent to their regular student house until they have received a negative PCR test result.

## An Isolation House

With several incoming 1st year students sadly unlikely to be able to join RBC because of visa restrictions, it is likely that a complete student house can be kept aside as the isolation house, as was the case from early April 2020 until the end of last Semester. Students who arrive after the 22<sup>nd</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> August may be assigned to the isolation house until they can be tested, and the results released (and negative).

## Start of classes

- The current plan is for classroom lessons to start on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>
- Currently there are no regulatory requirements for social-distancing requirements in classrooms, nor for students to wear masks while in class.
- However, our intention is that students will wear masks while in class and at least until RBC can be confident that the risk of Covid-19 infection in the school community is negligible.
- Thereafter, decisions will be made considering the infection rates in and around Freiburg, the views of the education and health authorities (including the Gesundheitsamt in Freiburg) and the degree to which we decide, in light of prevailing circumstances, to keep strictly to ourselves and on campus. *Please understand that this is not a “static” pandemic; as the situation changes RBC also will adapt with responsibility and creativity.*
- Director of Studies Dr. Christian Bock will write a separate academic note to parents, guardians and students including regarding RBC’s basic online provision.

## Conclusion

Fortunately, the Covid-19 situation in Freiburg and Germany is much, much less alarming than it was from mid-March through April. Yet there is no room for complacency: there is again an increasing infection rate in Germany – though off a relatively low base. I hope that you have confidence that RBC will take cautious yet appropriate measures – including when the health situation might warrant letting students more widely off-campus.

This is unlikely to be a business-as-usual UWC year. But with good understanding and support from the students, it will be a remarkable and profound opportunity to grow further as a community of people drawn from so many different parts of the world and from so many different backgrounds. I am confident that opportunities will arise, day by day, to give life to the UWC values. The UWC values that resonate most in my thinking about this coming academic year are: “personal responsibility and integrity”, and “mutual responsibility and respect”. These values need to inform our thinking, also in Covid-19 times, around sustainability.

I look forward again to being a partner, with you, in the education of these remarkable, courageous young people: your children, our students.