

19th February 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians, copied to National Committees,

Project Week (PW) worked out better than I had hoped. Naturally, this PW lacked some of the sense of adventure for many students, most who under normal circumstances would have ventured off by bus or train or van to different parts of Germany and Europe for their PW. But every student had a project to accomplish in a group comprising a new constellation of students. This is one of the ways in which we form the deliberately diverse *community* that is at the heart of UWC's educational approach. Importantly, 1st year students learnt the planning, budgeting and reporting approaches which they now can take forward as 2nd year students for future PWs. And it was a good change of pace!

The Special Focus Day on Inequality and Racism was held last Friday. I think it succeeded in challenging many of us in thinking about our own relative privilege, and it stimulated critical thinking in these areas. As Rektor, again I was forced to think through my approaches for instance to staffing. There are many constraints; how should I think and act beyond the constraints?

Today was the RBC Model United Nations (MUN) Special Focus Day. Sylla Cousineau, the RBC MUN Director, writes: Entirely student run and organized, the day is an opportunity to give all students a taste of diplomacy and international negotiations in action. It started with a special guest online live from East Jerusalem, Robin Wettlaufer, Canada's representative to the Palestinian Authority, and a 1994 graduate from Pearson College. Robin shared with the students some of her experience as a diplomat and an international negotiator who worked on the Darfur agreement and the Syrian Peace talks, among others. The students then spent the rest of the day having been assigned to various UN committees and bodies, discussing, and negotiating on a range of issues from Net Neutrality, preserving the Amazon to the Iranian Nuclear Deal. The day ended with a General Assembly which passed a Universal Charter for the Earth, meant to complement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by focusing on the Ecosphere and enshrining biodiversity as a universal value.

Yesterday evening students performed *All in the Timing: Six One-Act Comedies* by David Ives – produced as their PW. These are performed again on Saturday evening. And as previously reported in detail, next week is Black Culture Week.

Mock Examinations for the 2nd year students start on Monday 1st March, as does the Group 4 project for 1st year students.

Tobi Kellner, the RBC Sustainability Coordinator writes: The Group 4 (G4) project is a mandatory component of the IB programme. It brings together students from all the different natural science (G4) subjects to work together on an interdisciplinary science project. At RBC, we combine the G4 project with our global perspective and special focus on sustainability: Students will be working in small groups on designing sustainable energy strategies for cities all around the world. In normal years we use this opportunity to visit examples for sustainable technology in and around Freiburg, this year members of staff will run workshops on topics such as solar energy, wind power or sustainable transport. After

four days of workshops and group work, our students will present their proposals for their sustainable cities.

RBC IB May 2021 Examinations to proceed as planned

After conferring with IB World Schools and national educational authorities, the International Baccalaureate has announced that this year's IB examinations will proceed as planned in Germany. It appears that the IB has taken a decision, country by country, rather than leaving the choice to individual schools. In my view this is a positive decision for RBC's students – and if given a choice, this is what I would have chosen. For those countries where the IB May 2021 examinations will not take place, final grades will be generated by an algorithm based primarily on externally-assessed "Internal Assessments" (IAs) - together with predicted grades that this year must conform to the individual school's range of grades, subject by subject and level by level, in the previous years up to 2019. This seems less satisfactory to me. My view is that this leads to grades that overall are in line with a school's history, but which do not honour individual achievement that is outside of the specific classes' historic norms. Also, the reality is that most RBC students have studied the Diploma in what was their 2nd or 3rd or 4th language – inevitably their English is at its most confident at the end of the two years, not at the time of earlier deadlines for IAs. For those students who came with gaps in content between their previous school's and the IB's subject syllabuses also generally are best served by having as long as possible to "mind the gap". Our observation over the years is that several students in this position have managed to achieve a few extra marks in their final examinations, carrying them over the threshold for gaining a full Diploma. Several students devote themselves in an extraordinary way to giving life to the many different facets of their UWC experience, and count on a late push for their final examinations to achieve their best grades.

Easter/Spring Break

As previously advertised, the formal school programme closes at 6pm on Wednesday 31st March for the Easter/Spring break. Students who leave campus must return by 7pm Sunday 11th April, in time for their House Meeting. The campus remains open for students over the Easter/Spring break. Staff will remain on duty and catering services will continue.

In essence, the RBC expectations for this Break are the same as for students returning after the Winter Break.

Please note: the German Authorities continue to urge people to avoid unnecessary travel.

Additionally, I continue to advise students to be cautious about leaving Germany during the Easter/Spring Break, not being sure whether national borders including within the EU will remain open. RBC cannot be held responsible if students find themselves unable to return to Freiburg. RBC is not resourced to have most students on campus and in class, and at the same time to support online classes for students unable to return to campus. Priority will be given to those on campus. RBC requires that if students leave campus overnight, they are required to produce a PCR test result demonstrating that they are Covid-19 negative before being allowed back on campus. This test must be undertaken less than 48 hours before their return to campus. If their test result is delayed, they will need to remain off-campus, and not with a RBC host family. (When there is a delay in receiving the test results resulting in the 48

hour period being breached, RBC is willing to consider administering a further antigen test to support a slightly-older-than 48-hours negative PCR test result.)

If students do leave Germany over the Easter/Spring break and if they are able to return, at this stage it is most likely that they will be required to enter an off-campus quarantine on their return to Germany, with the current regulatory provision being that they can be released from quarantine if they receive a negative Covid-19 test taken after completing 5 days' quarantine. RBC requires this to be a PCR test. Returning students and their families are responsible for arranging and funding any necessary quarantine accommodation, catering and PCR tests. Current State requirements / further details are available at: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/einreiseundaufenthalt/coronavirus>

...

Finally, I am pleased to be able to write that in Covid-19 terms there is very little new to report from an RBC perspective! To the best of our knowledge RBC still has not had a Covid-19 case on campus. The broad "lockdown" measures in Germany have been extended up to 7th March, yet we have been able to continue with formal classes under the understanding that these are examination year-groups. The marginal change to daily arrangements has come due to the falling away of the 8pm to 5am curfew in Land Baden-Württemberg. In a formal sense, our students now need to return to campus by 9:45pm – if they have chosen to take for instance an off-campus walk or to visit to the local supermarket. In Covid-19 terms, currently Land Baden-Württemberg has the lowest rate of infections in the last week of all the Länder in Germany. According to the authoritative Robert Koch Institut, this morning Freiburg has an infection rate of 26,8 new infections per 100.000 people in the last 7 days. This is down from a peak of 155/100.000 people/7 days in late December.

Of course, we must remain Covid-19 careful. Currently there are two types of virus circulating between students on campus (but not staff): one affecting the gastrointestinal tract and the other causing strong cold symptoms. That these viruses have entered our campus shows that we cannot be complacent about Covid-19. We know that with current campus arrangements there are few barriers to on-campus student-to-student virus transmission – that is why, if Covid-19 does enter RBC, we will need to take much more stringent measures - measures that I do not think could be sustained in the medium to long term. I am relieved that our measures to prevent transmission between students and staff seem to be sufficient. Students have been called to exercise even greater care when off-campus.

Thank you again for your continued support and confidence!

With best wishes,



Laurence Nodder
Rektor

laurence.nodder@uwcrobertboschcollege.de