

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians, copied to UWC National Committees,

There have been many reports in the International Press regarding difficulties in several parts of Europe with a “3<sup>rd</sup> wave” of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This includes in Germany.

While we all wish that things were different, we also know that we will find the stamina to face this.

We face this “3<sup>rd</sup> wave” in several respects better placed than in the first two “waves” of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 85% of the RBC staff already have had their first Covid-19 vaccination, and most of the remaining staff will be vaccinated against Covid-19 in the coming weeks. (Not all members of staff are medically eligible to be vaccinated.)
- All the Mensa staff are Covid-19 vaccinated.

The vaccination of the staff with whom RBC students have daily contact significantly reduces the risk of cross-infection into the student body.

- So far, to the best of our knowledge, there has not been a Covid-19 infection on campus. If there were to be one and a student or member of staff became seriously ill, the German medical authorities now have a far better knowledge of Covid-19 infection compared with a year ago and are far better resourced to manage serious Covid-19 illness.
- RBC is well-supplied with masks, hand-sanitizers and rapid Covid-19 antigen tests. There is no background anxiety in respect of supplies.
- The RBC students have shown great responsibility so far in keeping each other and their teachers / RBC staff Covid-19 safer. (“Safer” is the language I learned in the HIV and AIDs pandemic.)
- RBC has what have become well-established safer Covid-19 practices. Because these internal practices have remained steady over an extended period, they have become like second nature (even though we look forward to when we can move away from them!)

*Our responsibility is to try and achieve that the Covid-19 virus does not enter Campus, while allowing freedom of intra-student association and (somewhat restricted) freedom of movement as much as possible, to help preserve the wellbeing of those on Campus.*

#### International Baccalaureate Final Examinations

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is much better placed this March than it was in March 2020 when the world and the IB faced a new pandemic. The IB has assured the IB schools in Germany that the May 2021 examinations will proceed as scheduled. Decisions regarding the writing of examinations are taken for all IB schools in a particular country. The IB has been in close communication with the German Conference of Education Ministers (KMK). The KMK is keen that the examinations be undertaken. Should (day) schools in Germany be required to close, it is likely (but we cannot guarantee) that RBC would be able to receive an

exemption from the IB (and the Education Authorities) to continue to write the May examinations. Such an exemption already has been granted to our sister UWC in Italy (although not to our sister UWC in the UK, where the UK Authorities have refused to consider this). My firm impression is that the German Education Authorities are strong believers in final examinations!

### Spring/Easter Break

A reminder, lessons end at 6pm on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. Those students who leave Campus should have returned by 7pm on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April. The Student Houses and Mensa will remain open throughout the Spring/Easter Break, and there will be a team of staff on duty to provide support and care to the majority of students who remain at RBC for this break. Normally around two thirds of students remain on Campus during Spring Break. This year, in current Covid-19 circumstances, we would be happy if all students were to do so!

For the protection of all who stay at RBC in what are safer Covid-19 circumstances, RBC requires any student who does leave overnight into whatever circumstances, to have a recent (not taken more than 48 hours earlier) negative PCR test result to return to Campus. RBC requires those who leave Germany to enter a five-day quarantine on their return, and a negative PCR test result after that, before returning to Campus. (If returning from some countries and regions, including in Europe, where the State and/or Land Baden-Württemberg Authorities require a 14-day quarantine without the option of an earlier exit on production of a negative test. Students will be updated on a regular basis until the Spring Break.) Why PCR, not the cheaper and quicker Antigen tests? PCR tests are regarded as the most reliable available for the detection of asymptomatic Covid-19 infection. In addition, depending on the Covid-19 infection rates in Germany, during the week after their return, RBC is considering conducting further on-campus “rapid” tests of students who left campus over the Spring Break.

### RBC Journal

Students and members of Staff continue to engage in a rich educational and lived experience, even if almost everything is Campus-centred. One new initiative is a student-initiated and produced RBC Journal, the first edition of which is attached for your possible interest and enjoyment.

### General

- The “mock” examinations for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students were concluded on the 8<sup>th</sup> March. Last week, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students undertook their (recorded) Language A Oral Examinations for onwards submission to the IB. This week many 2<sup>nd</sup> year students have their B language Oral Examinations.
- Students organized a week’s activities around the International Women’s Day starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> March.
- Last week’s Global Affairs session had its focus on Fast Fashion.
- The Host Family Weekend was scheduled for last Saturday and Sunday. Given the Covid-19 situation, the overnight leaving of campus was cancelled. Instead, a

possibility was created for (many) students to meet with their host families, in masked and largely outdoor contexts. Instead of spending the Saturday night with their Host Families, students organized a wonderful UWC Café – a great evening of music, dance and theatre performance by students.

- There is a planned virtual University Fair on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March for the 1<sup>st</sup> year students, with 25 Davis Partner Institutions in the US, designed as an introduction to US higher education. Davis Partner Institutions are so named for the incredible financial support they receive from UWC Patron Shelby Davis, currently up to US\$25.000 per UWC student admitted, per year. (Yes, for the typical four-year degree, Shelby Davis provides a total scholarship of up to \$100.000 spread over the four years and for over 3.000 students at any one time.) Most Partner Institutions provide the full level of financial aid the individual student needs to be admitted (assuming some Campus work for that student – in my view a healthy requirement). The reality is that most UWC graduates who need a full scholarship to continue their university studies and do not qualify for “free” tuition at a university elsewhere, apply for and take up an outstanding opportunity at a US university or college which is a Davis Partner Institution.
- Many 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who have applied to the most competitive Davis Partner Institutions will be hearing the results of their applications in the next weeks. This is an anxious time for several. Hubertus Zander has reminded them that *every* Davis Partner Institution is an outstanding university or college, and the best one for them is the one that admits them!

#### Conclusion – back to Covid-19

If the “3<sup>rd</sup> wave” of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to grow at a high rate, the German Authorities are likely to strengthen lockdown regulations from time to time. We cannot predict what new measures will be taken as the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave proceeds. Measures conceivably could include closing schools. Pandemic fears could affect travel especially international travel. This might affect RBC students’ ability to return home for Summer or after their graduation.

As always, the responsibility for a student / your child remaining at RBC is a shared one between your child/our student and you. RBC is willing to play a responsible role including during the Summer holiday. We provide clear undertakings:

- RBC will remain open as a School as long as the German Authorities allow this. At the beginning of 2021, schools were required to be closed but exemptions were made for examination years. If schools are required to be closed, RBC will seek an exemption for our students and teachers on grounds that both year groups technically are examination years.
- If schools are closed in Germany, RBC will seek an exemption to allow the May examinations to continue.

- If schools are closed, RBC will continue as a Boarding Establishment and lessons will revert to being online. So far, the German Authorities have permitted this. I cannot see any reason why this would not be permitted in the future.
- If in what I consider to be the most unlikely event that RBC is not permitted to remain open as a Boarding Establishment, then RBC will facilitate the return home of students. If a student cannot return home safely or would do so into adverse circumstances, RBC would work closely with the strong UWC Network in Germany and with Host Families to find a home for every student who needs one.
- For the Summer vacation, if students or graduates are not able to travel home, RBC either will remain open providing accommodation for these students and graduates or will work closely with the UWC Network in Germany and with Host Families to find a home for everyone who needs one.

Clearly, RBC is best resourced to provide education, care and support to those students who remain on campus. Should you wish to review your child's (our student's) continued in-person, on-campus presence, please feel free to contact me so that together we can discuss the challenges and a way forward.

As we say in UWC, *together we can*.

With best wishes,



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