

10th December 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The “Fall” Semester draws to a close next week. My sense is that we all are ready for a break, to retreat from the RBC community and to regain perspective.

This is my final substantive letter of 2021. I plan to write only a short cover note with the Semester reports.

The first Semester for 1st year students generally is one initially of excitement (and trepidation) of leaving home, meeting a huge range of new people and in a new setting, and establishing new friendships. The teaching and learning normally is different to and often more engaging (I am told) than what we arrive used to, teachers generally more approachable. The range of things in the CAS (creative, active, service) is new, fresh and often exciting. Yet as I often need to remind at least myself, being on holiday in a new and “experience-rich” environment is different to living in that new environment. The novelty and glamour wear off. The accommodations that one easily makes for a couple of days or weeks now need to endure for months at a time – and for many students without the opportunity to return home, for almost two years. Friendships are being made, but in most instances these are not yet so deep and strong or with sufficient shared experience, to fully offset the shortening days, the wetter and darker weather. It is time for a break!

The third Semester – which is the semester drawing to a close for the 2nd year students – traditionally is experienced as the toughest in the two-year IBDP programme. Coursework deadlines are spread out as best as possible, but they still come thick and fast. For students applying especially to universities in N America, this also is the pressure semester. Big decisions need to be made as to where to apply, and for which programmes. There might be discrepancies between one’s university aspirations and achieved grades - a source of pressure, frustration and disappointment. For several 2nd year students there is the sense of loss of their “2nd years” who graduated last May, and every 3rd semester I hear comments about how the relationships on campus are “more superficial” than they were last year. Of course, there is the compensating responsibility of being the senior students at RBC, the sense of familiarity, and the mixed blessing of being in charge of so many things, the holders of the ethos.

So, in the best of times, this is an “interesting” and often challenging Semester. Covid-19-times are hardly the best of times. I am proud of how open (in relative terms) RBC has been able to be. I am proud that, apart from a few days when a student received a false positive PCR test, during this Semester students have always been able to get off campus – not to the full range of shops or indoors at coffee shops, restaurants, pubs and clubs – but far more than most of their peers in boarding schools elsewhere! I am proud of our students, staff and service partners that we managed over 20 regular off-campus service projects. I am proud that students were able to experience an off-campus Project Week – restricted to Land Baden-Württemberg, but still for most a worthwhile Project Week. I perceive that inter-disciplinary learning has taken some steps forward: for both Special Focus Days and for the more regular Global Affairs we have learnt that we can draw on the remote contributions of many experts who even in “normal” times would not be able to travel to Freiburg to participate in these events. I am delighted that most students were able to have contact with their Host Families this Semester, including being able to stay overnight with them.

Even though we wish the circumstances had been different, under the circumstances I think RBC’s students have had a tough yet authentic UWC Semester.

Semester Reports

The Semester Reports, as usual, will be sent electronically and after the close of the Semester. An innovation is that Personal Tutors have individual meetings with their Tutees on Friday 17th December, for the students to digest their individual subject reports together with their Personal Tutors, to set their goals for the next Semester, and to write a short reflection that will become part of the Semester

Report. Only after this will Christian Bock (Director of Studies), Helen White (Director of Student Life) and I be able to read and proof the different sections of each report. We plan for reports to be sent before Christmas.

Parents and Guardians of 1st year students, please note that RBC does not publish semester grades for the 1st Semester. Instead, the reports are comment-based. The reasons for this are simple: most students are learning in English for the first time and arrived with greatly varying abilities in English. Most students have not previously followed an International Baccalaureate curriculum, and still are growing accustomed to those approaches that the IB values in its approach to grading. While we acknowledge that there might be a very few students who at this stage are scoring grades lower than their / their Parents' aspirations and where parental intervention at this stage might make a difference, there are many more students who simply need more time to align to IB expectations, to continue to fill in gaps between what they were taught back home and what the IB assumes as pre-knowledge in the different subjects, and for whom further parental pressure could well be counterproductive to the student's fullest learning from their time at UWC.

Key Dates for the Spring Semester 2022

Sun 9th January	Campus opens at 10:00. Students to return to campus by 19:00.
Wed 13th April	Last day of classes before Spring/Easter Break, last day of classes for 2nd year students. Students who leave may do so after 18:00, or on Thursday 14th. <i>Campus remains open for Spring Break.</i>
Sun 24th April	Students to have returned to campus by 19:00.
Thur 28th April	IB Final Examinations start (2nd years).
Sun 22nd May	Closure Ceremony for 2nd year students (closed event due to Covid-19)
Mon 23rd May	2nd year students depart Campus by 12:00.
Sat 11th June	Campus closes at 12:00. Students may leave the campus on Friday 10 th after 18:00 but will miss the final dinner.)

Key Dates for the 2022/2023 Academic Year

Fall Semester 2022

Thur 25 th August	Students arrive
Sat 17 th September	Open Day (Covid-19 context permitting)
Fri 28 th October	Last day of classes before Fall Break. Students who leave may do so after 18:00, or on Saturday 29 th . <i>Campus remains open for Fall Break.</i>
Sun 6 th November	Students to have returned to campus by 19:00.
Fri 16 th December	Last day of classes, House cleaning. Christmas Dinner.
Sat 17 th December	Campus closes at 12:00. Students may leave the campus on Friday 16 th after 18:00 but will miss the Christmas dinner.)

Spring Semester 2023

Sun 8 th January '23	Campus opens at 10:00. Students to return to campus by 19:00.
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Wed 5 th April '23	Last day of classes before Spring/Easter Break. Students who leave may do so after 18:00, or on Thursday 6 th April. <i>Campus remains open for Spring Break.</i>
Sun 16 th April '23	Students to have returned to campus by 19:00.
Sun 21 st May '23	Closure Ceremony for 2 nd year students.
Mon 22 nd May '23	2 nd year students depart campus by 12:00.
Sat 10th June '23	Campus closes at 12:00. Students may leave the campus on Friday 9 th after 18:00 but will miss the final dinner.)

Semester dates also are published on the college website www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de

RBC has endeavored to stick to the published dates including throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. If you wish your child, our student, to travel during a break, please make your bookings sufficiently in advance so that the cost-effective travel plans coincide accurately with these published dates. If your child, our student, departs early or arrives late, this creates further work for the RBC staff. In Covid-19 times, late arrivals are particularly challenging in that they disrupt internal "quarantine" arrangements. Simply put, when students are being "quarantined" in house groups, "quarantine" can only begin once the last student for that house has arrived.

With best wishes,

Laurence Nodder

Rektor