

21st September 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Our very good news is that all incoming non-EU 1st year students now have received their visas, and we wait for the arrival of only one student. The large 1st year group, the largest in RBC's history, "compensates" for a smaller 2nd year group – deliberately kept smaller due to the need to keep a student house vacant for quarantine purposes over the last two Covid-pandemic years. The imbalance between 1st and 2nd year student numbers is felt particularly in the classes, with many 1st year classes full to capacity.

Other very good news: currently there are no known Covid cases on campus. The nine 1st year students who have not yet received a Covid-19 vaccination are due to receive their first "jab" of the updated "Omicron" vaccine Thursday this week.

RBC starts the 1st/3rd Semester with a period of Orientation. Orientation is followed by a transition to the regular programme. This year, classes started on the 5th September. Partly because the IB and RBC's academic calendar are out of synchronization with local school holidays, this gave us a further two weeks for students to be informed about and then to select their desired CAS (Creative, Active, Service) programme. This week the formal CAS programme has begun. Not everyone got their first CAS choices; we hope that every student feels engaged by their overall programme.

For 2nd year students, the internal RBC deadline for Extended Essays (EE) was Sunday 11th September, and most students were able to make a final submission. These students should find that the notorious academic deadline pressures of the 3rd Semester a bit more manageable than those experienced by previous RBC generations, when the EE deadline was much later and for most students the research and writing did not make as good progress over the summer break.

1st year students now have spent almost three weeks in class. I hear many favorable comments from students on how they are enjoying their classes and teachers! RBC encourages its students to select their subjects as carefully as possible after a subject fair during Orientation, but does allow students to request a change from their initial subject offering, first on the 13th September and then again on the 27th September. With this being the largest-ever year group, several subject classes are at the fullest that RBC can allow. One consequence is that not all late requests for subject changes can be accommodated. Also, we caution students that changing subjects always leaves work to be caught up, which is the responsibility of the student who has changed classes.

Open Day (Saturday 17th September) proved to be a good success, with roughly 500 members of the public visiting the College. Several parents, guardians and family members travelled to Freiburg to join in the Day. We enjoyed the engagement!

After a long Covid pandemic-induced pause, RBC has welcomed several university and college representatives this Semester. This (Wednesday) evening twelve US university/college international admissions officers are giving a presentation on studying in the USA, and tomorrow the officers are conducting interviews with prospective applicants from the 2nd year group. I spoke briefly to this at this week's Assembly. I think it also is important that Parents and Guardians have an opportunity to read a brief summary of this Rektor's views on study after UWC:

Firstly, while most students who attend UWC do go on to university/college, there is no expectation from UWC that they do go on to study at university/college. There are many non-university routes open to UWC graduates who wish to make a strong impact in the world!

Secondly, because of the incredible support of UWC Patron Shelby Davis, if students wish to proceed to university / college and need financial aid to do so, my experience is that this is most reliably achieved by applying (also) to universities/colleges in the USA. Shelby Davis has identified roughly 100 universities and colleges, all of good reputation, where he provides major financial support for every UWC graduate that is admitted for their undergraduate programmes. Of course, most good universities should want to admit UWC graduates! UWC graduates have received an excellent academic schooling and already have transitioned from living at home, often having learnt to live in another society and culture. These roughly 100 US universities and colleges have the added incentive that Shelby Davis covers a substantial part of the fees (in most cases, with the balance largely or fully funded by the university/college). Two words of caution: the USA increasingly is a polarized society, and the universities/colleges are not completely separate from society; and, in a practical sense, studying to be a medical doctor in the US generally is done after the bachelor's degree. Medical studies in the US are very expensive and it is almost impossible for a non-US citizen to receive financial aid to train to be a doctor in the US. Prospective medical students should discuss their options very carefully with RBC's Career Counselor and Admissions Officer Hubertus Zander.

Hubertus Zander also is willing to support students exploring options in Germany, in wider Europe, also in the US, Canada and other parts of the world, as well as for "gap" years.

Thirdly, I am more and more convinced that for most students, studying for a bachelor's degree at the most prestigious and selective universities especially in the US and UK, while carrying high status, generally is not a good idea. I am more and more convinced that one wants to be studying at a university or college where, when working hard, one can be at or near the top of one's class, in the positive regard of one's professors. I have known many highly able students who, even when working hard, despairingly find themselves in the bottom third of the class at the most prestigious and selective universities. US colleges concentrate on teaching undergraduate students, the teachers mostly are the professors. At the most prestigious universities, celebrity professors typically are much more engaged in research and public life, and seldom teach undergraduate students. In my view, for those who choose a university/college path, the most important "career" consideration is where one does one's post-graduate studies – and here one's undergraduate professors can play a vital role in opening doors.

Fourthly, I observe that only a miniscule percentage of the world's happy and productive population, a miniscule percentage of those who are making deep and important impacts, studied at the most prestigious and selective universities in the USA and UK.

Project Week

I am delighted that this Semester's Project Week (PW), starting on the weekend 1st/2nd October, can proceed broadly along pre-Covid lines. Most students will be participating in Projects well out of Freiburg (one group is travelling as far as Croatia). Most of the Projects are student-led, with a member of staff as a support in the initial organization - and from a distance during the week. I view the RBC version of PWs as a vital component in students' moving towards being able to look after themselves as autonomous, responsible adults. A staff team is on standby to give support in a crisis.

It strikes me that some of the institutional PW "memory", typically handed down by 2nd year to 1st year students, needs re-building after the disruption of the last 2 ½ years. I am confident that students will propose a fuller and wider range of exciting Projects next Semester. In the meanwhile, staff are supervising a camp this coming weekend, where 1st year students will be trained in basic outdoors skills in preparation for their 1st PW.

With best wishes,

Laurence Nodder

Rektor