



UWC Red Cross Nordic English Summer Course

By Peter Wilson
Programme Coordinator
Summer 2015



INTRODUCTION

Once students have been selected to attend UWC Red Cross Nordic, we identify those who would benefit from a 3-week Summer Course which aims to introduce them to many aspects of College life. It gives the new students an opportunity to adjust to using English as the language of daily life before the arrival of the hundred second-years and the remaining new first-years. The course gives those students with less experience of English an opportunity to practise using the working language of the College in academic situations as well as in the social and residential situations which make up such a significant part of College life.

The Course is run by two teachers with assistance from 3-4 recently-graduated UWC students and a group of Norwegian Peace Corps volunteers. The Course is structured with classes in the mornings and activities in the afternoons and evenings. The Norwegian Peace Corps volunteers work as classroom assistants, so a focus on Norwegian life and attitudes is a natural part of the teaching. Students share and challenge assumptions, discuss the unfamiliar food and northern European weather, and work closely together in the classroom.

The UWC graduates are able to share their experiences and explain aspects of student life at the College and help the new students develop a supportive network of friends during the course. The UWC graduates also run the extracurricular activities, guiding activities as the new students learn about each other's cultures and helping students to develop their communication skills.

This period of orientation is often referred to as an invaluable start to the UWC journey by those who have participated in it.

RATIONALE

- To pre-select students from EFL backgrounds as well as from 'challenging' social and/or personal backgrounds who should benefit from arriving at UWC RCN three weeks early.
- To provide an intensive 25-hours per week English language course focusing particularly on: study skills; identification of individual students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses; baseline testing for value-added and tracking purposes using the CAT4 online testing system.
- To provide detailed and effective orientation to UWC RCN including: residential life; the academic systems; the IB Diploma programme; student support systems; western Norway and aspects of Norwegian culture; and outdoor living (Norwegian 'friluftsliv' – a key concept in experiential learning at UWC RCN).
- To provide a smaller scale and safer introduction to the multicultural aspects of UWC RCN living through: residing in rooms with new co-years; extra-curricular activities designed and supervised by volunteers; external excursions; and a myriad of casual social opportunities for interaction and 'settling-in'.
- To gather useful data on these new students to assist the Deputy Rektor, IB Diploma Programme Coordinator, Learning Support Coordinator, subject teachers, advisors and other staff in advising on, for example: subject selection, levels, extra-curricular activities, dietary needs, social issues and so on.
- To assess the physical and emotional needs of students selected to attend the course on that basis (UWC RCN statutes require that a large portion of its students should be selected by organizations such as SOS Children's Villages and the Red Cross – for example, survivors of landmines, other war injuries, and of civil unrest).

STAFFING

- Course Director
- Assistant Course Director
- 4-6 volunteers
- Kantine staff

Positions to work on the Summer Course are initially advertised 'in-house' around January to March each year.

If there is insufficient uptake, the positions are advertised externally through, for example, the UWC RCN Volunteer Programme's Facebook page.

The 4-6 volunteers are often, though not necessarily, UWC RCN alumni. Graduates of that year are not allowed to volunteer (i.e. 2014 alumni could not volunteer on the 2014 Summer Course). Alumni from other UWCs as well as non-UWC alumni have been employed equally successfully. Most important to consider are the skills sets needed for the positions (see below).

At UWC RCN other groups also use the school in the summer 'recess' - for example, Lions Club International Camps for Families and Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross summer camps. Thus, kantina and other support staff are on campus in support in this period.