

Creativity, Action, and Service Guide

Why CAS? Because you are more than just a grade point average. CAS is intended to move you out of the academic arena and help you learn through life experiences. Yes, as an IB student, we know you are involved in many interesting activities. What we are asking you to do is consider how these activities help you to become a better person. CAS is about:

- reflective thinkers – you understand your own strengths and limitations, identify goals and devise strategies for personal growth
- the willingness to accept new challenges and new roles
- awareness of yourself as a member of a community with responsibilities toward your fellow man and the environment
- being an active participant in sustained, collaborative projects
- balance – you enjoy and find significance in a range of activities involving intellectual, physical, creative, and emotional experiences.

“...if you believe in something, you must not just think or talk or write, but must act.” Peterson (2003)

The nature of creativity, action, service:

Creativity, action service (CAS) is at the heart of the Diploma Programme. It is one of the three essential elements in every student’s Diploma Programme experience. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Programme. The three strands of CAS, which are often interwoven with particular activities, are characterized as follows.

Creativity: arts, and other experiences that involve creative thinking.

Action: physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle, complementing academic work elsewhere in the Diploma Programme.

Service: an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student. The rights, dignity and autonomy of all those involved are respected.

CAS enables students to enhance their personal and interpersonal development through experiential learning. At the same time, it provides an important counterbalance to the academic pressures of the rest of the Diploma Programme. A good CAS programme should be both challenging and enjoyable, a personal journey of self-discovery. Each individual student has a different starting point, and therefore different goals and needs, but for many their CAS activities include experiences that are profound and life-changing.

For student development to occur, CAS should involve:

- real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes
- personal challenge – tasks must extend the student and be achievable in scope
- thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress, reporting
- reflection on outcomes and personal learning and growth

All proposed CAS activities need to meet these four criteria. It is also essential that they do not replicate other parts of the student’s Diploma Programme work.

Concurrency of learning is important in the Diploma Programme. Therefore, CAS activities should continue on a regular basis for as long as possible throughout the programme, and certainly for at least 18 months.

Successful completion of CAS is a requirement for the award of the IB Diploma. CAS is not formally assessed but students need to document their activities and provide evidence that they achieved the eight key learning outcomes.

CAS Learning Outcomes:

As a result of their CAS experience as a whole, including their reflections, there should be evidence that students have:

1. **Increased their awareness of their own strengths and areas for growth** – They are able to see themselves as individuals with various skills and abilities, some more developed than others, and understand that they can make choices about how they wish to move forward.
2. **Undertake new challenges** – A new challenge may be an unfamiliar activity, or an extension to an existing one.
3. **Planned and initiated activities** – Planning and initiation will often be in collaboration with others. It can be shown in activities that are part of larger projects, for example, ongoing school activities in the local community, as well as in small student-led activities.
4. **Worked collaboratively with others** – Collaboration can be shown in many different activities, such as team sports, playing music in a band, or helping in a kindergarten class. At least one project, involving collaboration and the integration of at least two of creativity, action and service, is required.
5. **Shown perseverance and commitment in their activities** – At a minimum, this implies attending regularly and accepting a share of the responsibility for dealing with problems that arise in the course of activities.
6. **Engaged with issues of global importance** – Students may be involved in international projects but there are many global issues that can be acted upon locally or nationally. (*Think globally, Act Locally*)
7. **Considered the ethical implications of their actions** – Ethical decisions arise in almost any CAS activity. Evidence of thinking about ethical issues can be shown in various ways, including journal entries and conversations with CAS supervisors.
8. **Developed new skills** – As with new challenges, new skills may be shown in activities that the student has not previously undertaken, or in increased expertise in an established area.

All eight outcomes must be present for a student to complete the CAS requirement. Some may be demonstrated many times, in a variety of activities, but completion requires only that there is some evidence for every outcome.

The guideline for the minimum amount of CAS activity is approximately 4-5 hours per week, or 150 hours in total, with a reasonable balance between creativity, action, and service. “Hour counting”, however, is not encouraged.

Responsibilities of the IB Student

The relevant section of the IB Programme standards and practices document states that students should have opportunities to choose their own CAS activities and to undertake activities in a local and international context as appropriate. This means that, as far as possible, students should “own” their personal CAS programs. With guidance from their advisors, students should choose activities for themselves, initiating new ones where appropriate.

Students are **required** to:

- self-review at the beginning of their CAS experience and set personal goals for what they hope to achieve through their CAS programme
- plan, do and reflect (plan activities, carry them out and reflect on what they have learned)
- undertake at least one interim review and a final review with their CAS advisor
- take part in a range of activities, including at least one project, some of which they have initiated themselves
- keep records of their activities and achievements, including a list of the principle activities undertaken
- show evidence of achievement of the eight CAS learning outcomes.

Evidence of the Eight CAS Learning Outcomes

To successfully fulfill the CAS requirement of “showing evidence of the achievement of the eight CAS learning outcomes”, students have at a minimum to complete the *CAS Individual Student Completion Form* and provide evidence for each of the eight entries. It is strongly suggested that students also attach a reflection for each of these as well. **Ideally, students would discuss the activity and set goals with their CAS supervisor before engaging in the activity.** (e-mail requests are acceptable)

Evaluation

The most important aspect of evaluation is self-evaluation by the student. The school should provide students with formative feedback on progress and offer guidance on future activities. The school also makes the final decision on completion, which is reported to the IB regional office. There is no other assessment of student performance in CAS.

Reflection, recording and reporting

Reflection need to be developed. It should not be assumed that it comes naturally. Just as the kind of reflection that a critic applies to a work of art or literature is something that develops with time and experience, so the kind of reflection appropriate in CAS is something that requires guidance and practice.

The fundamentals are simple:

- What did I plan to do?
- What did I do?
- What were the outcomes, for me, the team I was working with, and others?

*The difficulty lies in the complexity of the possible answers.

Kinds of Reflection:

Different kinds of reflection work for different people. Reflection can be:

- public or private
- individual or shared
- objective or subjective

For some students and some kinds of reflection (such as private, individual, subjective), writing is the best tool for reflection. However, for many, reflective writing does not come naturally. It can, to some extent, be “modeled” in oral discussion of more public, less sensitive matters, either as end in itself or as a prelude to writing.

But writing is by no means the only possible outcome of reflection. Students can present their activities orally to peers, parents or outsiders. They can make scrapbooks, photo essays, videos/DVDs or weblogs. They can use journals or make up varied portfolios. Or they may sometimes simply reflect privately: some of the most important lessons can be very personal ones that students should be allowed to keep to themselves.

Developing reflection:

Moving from the “What...?” questions outlined earlier, experiential learners might consider, where appropriate, for themselves and others, and for each stage of an activity (before, during and after):

- how they felt
- what they perceived
- what they thought about the activity
- what the activity meant to them
- what the value of the activity was
- what they learned from the activity and how this learning (for example, a change of perspective) might apply more widely.

Recording and reporting:

Students should document their CAS activities, noting in particular their reflections upon their experiences. As previously indicated, this documentation may take many forms, including weblogs, illustrated displays and videos, and written notes. Its extent should match the significance of the particular activity the student. While it is important to encourage students to make an early start on their CAS log, there is no point in writing lengthy accounts about relatively routine experiences.

Some of the most valuable recording and reporting happens when there is a real audience and purpose, for example, when students inform other students, parents or the wider community about what is planned or what has been achieved.

There should be consultations between each student and a CAS supervisor as needed, at least twice in year 1 and once in year 2, where the student’s progress is discussed and appropriate encouragement and advice is given. These consultations should be briefly documented on a simple CAS progress form.

What’s the bottom line on reflections?

- However you decide to reflect, you have to have some documentation.
- You don’t have to reflect on every CAS related activity you do. As stated above, some activities are more conducive to reflection than others.
- When you do document your reflections, share them with your CAS supervisor! How you ask? E-mail, sharing of digital photos/videos, links to blogs, hand written notes, or a recounting of the reflection in person.
- Reflections are about the experience. (Did you grow as a person? Are you more aware of a strength and/or weakness than before? Did you face a challenge? If so, how did you overcome this challenge? What role did you play in a group activity? Was it a new role for you? How did you help someone? How did that make you feel? Did you become more aware of something than before? Did you collaborate with others? How did it work out? Did you have to persevere to accomplish your goal? Did your activity have global importance/connections? Did you face an ethical choice/dilemma during your activity? How was it resolved? Did you develop a new skill during the course of the activity?)

A closer look at creativity, action, and service

Creativity

Creative activities should have a definite goal or outcome. They should be planned and evaluated like all CAS activities. This can present something of a challenge where, for example, a student is a dedicated instrumental musician. It would be artificial to rule that something that is both a pleasure and a passion for the student could not be considered part of their CAS experience. How, though, can it help to fulfill CAS learning outcomes? It may be useful to refer back to the section “The nature of creativity, action, service”, particularly to the second principle: personal challenge – tasks must extend the student and be achievable in scope.

Perhaps the instrumental musician can learn a particularly difficult piece, or a different style of playing, in order to perform for an audience. The context might be a fund-raising activity, or the student might give a talk to younger children about the instrument, with musical illustrations. Appropriate CAS activities are not merely more of the same – more practice, more concerts with the school band, and so on. This excludes, for example, routine practice performed by IB music or dance students, but does not exclude music, dance or art activities that students are involved with outside the Diploma Programme coursework.

Action

Similar considerations apply here. An outstanding athlete will not stop training and practicing in order to engage in some arbitrary, invented CAS physical activity. However, modern approaches to sports coaching emphasize the notion of the reflective practitioner, so it is possible for the athletics coach to incorporate relevant CAS principles and practice into training schedules for the benefit of the student. Setting goals, and planning and reflecting on their achievement, is vital. “Extending” the student may go further, for example, to asking them to pass on some of their skills and knowledge to others. If their chosen sport is entirely individual, perhaps they should try a team game, in order to experience different pleasures and rewards on offer.

Some excellent action activities are not sporting or competitive but involve physical challenge by demanding endurance or conquest of personal fears. Alternatively, a student’s action may be physical exertion as part of a service activity.

Service

It is essential that service activities have learning benefits for the student. Otherwise, they are not experiential learning and have no particular claim on students’ time. This rules out mundane, repetitive activities, as well as service without real responsibility. A learning benefit that enriches the student personally is in no way inconsistent with the requirement that service be unpaid and voluntary. Service to a student’s family (*i.e. chores*) does not constitute a CAS activity.

Political Activity

While IB provides great latitude with regard to student participation with political entities, it will be the policy of Stony Point High School that no CAS credit will be granted to a student that engages in indirect or direct campaigning for a specific political candidate, political party, or political organization. The SPHS IB Programme recognizes the right of students to be politically active – and encourages them to do so – however, it will not sanction any action that could possibly create, nurture, and/or exacerbate social divisions on campus or in the community.

Religious Activity

Some of the same concerns apply here as with political activity. It is recognized that this is a sensitive and difficult area. Nevertheless, the general rule is that religious devotion, and any activity that can be interpreted as proselytizing, does not count as CAS.

Some relevant guiding principles are that CAS activities should enlarge students' experience, encourage them towards greater understanding of people from different social or cultural backgrounds and include specific goals. By this criteria, work done by a religious group in the wider community, provided that the objectives are clearly secular, may qualify as CAS. **The CAS supervisor reserves the right to make the final determination as to whether religiously affiliated service proposals qualify for CAS credit.**