

UNDERSTANDING CAS

IB diploma students from all over the world are actively engaged in creative activities that serve their local or global communities. IB challenges its student academically but also recognizes the value of experiential learning. Let CAS be an opportunity for you to expand your interests, work in groups, serve your community, and to ultimately learn something new about yourself.

CAS Aims

The CAS program aims to develop students who are:

- Reflective thinkers – they understand their own strengths and limitations, identify goals and devise strategies for personal growth.
- Willing to accept new challenges and new roles.
- Aware of themselves as members of communities with responsibilities toward each other and the environment.
- Active participants in sustained, collaborative projects.
- Balanced – they enjoy and find significance in a range of activities involving intellectual, physical, creative and emotional experiences.



Know thyself

What You Need to Know about CAS

Creativity, action, service (CAS) is one of the three essential elements in every student's Diploma Program experience. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies. 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 Program.

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 Program. A good CAS program 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, the following CAS criteria should be met:

- 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.

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 Program work. Concurrency of learning is important in the Diploma Program. Therefore, CAS activities should continue on a regular basis for as long as possible throughout the program, 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 have achieved eight key learning outcomes. A school's CAS program is regularly monitored by the relevant regional office.

CAS Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are differentiated from assessment objectives because they are not rated on a scale. The completion decision for the school in relation to each student is, simply, "Have these outcomes been achieved?" 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. Undertaken 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. 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 (for example, environmental concerns, caring for the elderly).

7. Considered the ethical implications of their actions

Ethical decisions arise in almost any CAS activity (for example, on the sports field, in musical composition, in relationships with others involved in service activities). Evidence of thinking about ethical issues can be shown in various ways, including journal entries and conversations with CAS advisers.

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. This focus on learning outcomes emphasizes that it is the quality of a CAS activity (its contribution to the student's development) that is of most importance. The guideline for the minimum amount of CAS activity is

approximately the equivalent of half a day per school week (three to four hours per week), or approximately **150 hours** in total, with a reasonable balance between creativity, action and service. “Hour counting”, however, is not encouraged.

Responsibilities of the Student

The relevant section of the IB *Program 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 program. With guidance from their mentors/advisers, 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 program
- 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 adviser
- 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 principal activities undertaken
- Show evidence of achievement of the eight CAS learning outcomes.

Reflection, Recording, and Reporting

Reflection needs 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. Of any activity, it is appropriate to ask the following questions.

- 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.

Range and Diversity of Activities

All students should be involved in CAS activities that they have initiated themselves. Other CAS activities may be initiated by the school. Activities should vary in length and in the amount of commitment required from the student, but none should be trivial.

In line with the aim of CAS to broaden students’ experience during their Diploma Program years, work that is part of a student’s study of a Diploma Program subject, theory of knowledge or extended essay may not be counted towards CAS. This excludes, for example, routine practice performed by IB music or dance students. However, where students undertake activities that follow CAS guidelines (for example, by meeting CAS learning outcomes and including student initiative or choice), the fact that these activities also satisfy the requirements of a state qualification or of another award scheme does not prevent them from being counted towards CAS. The idea of CAS is to ensure that students have a balanced, fulfilling overall experience; it is not to overload students who are already participating in a very demanding academic schedule.

Projects, themes, concepts

Students should be involved in **at least one** project involving teamwork that integrates **two or more** of creativity, action and service, and is of significant duration. Larger scale activities of this sort may provide excellent opportunities for students to engage “with issues of global importance”. Such themes may provide a context that will enable students to generalize further in their reflections, following the maxim “Think globally, act locally”. Other possible sources of organizing themes or concepts, which schools may wish to consult, include the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) and various websites dealing with global issues (enter “global issues” in a search engine). As with any Internet sources, some of these websites are more reputable and/or credible than others. .

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 (as noted earlier), but does **not** exclude music, dance or art activities that these students are involved with outside the Diploma Program subject coursework.

Action

Similar considerations apply here. An outstanding athlete will not stop training and practising 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 the different pleasures and rewards on offer. Some excellent “action” activities are not sporting or competitive but involve physical challenge by demanding endurance (such as long-distance trekking) or the conquest of personal fears (for example, rock climbing). It is important that schools carefully assess the risks involved in such activities. Alternatively, a student’s “action” may be physical exertion as part of a service activity. CAS action relates specifically to **physical activity**.

Service

It is essential that service activities have learning benefits for the student. Otherwise, they are not experiential learning (hence not CAS) 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. The general principle, sketched out in the section “The nature of creativity, action, service”, that the “rights, dignity and autonomy of all those involved [in service activities] are respected”, means, among other things, that the identification of needs, towards which a service activity will be directed, has to involve prior communication and full consultation with the community or individual concerned. This approach, based on a collaborative exchange, maximizes both the

potential benefits to the recipients and the learning opportunities for the students. Ideally, such prior communication and consultation will be face-to-face and will involve the students themselves.

Political activity

The IB has no view on whether or not it is appropriate for students to be involved in political activities as part of their educational experience. Views on this vary considerably in different cultural contexts, so it is a matter for decision at local or school level. However, where such activity is locally sanctioned, there is a question about whether or not it may qualify as CAS. It may be relevant to consider the following factors.

- Is the activity safe and secure, given the local circumstances?
- Is it an activity that will cause, or worsen, social divisions?
- Where are the learning opportunities for the students involved?

Religious activity

Some of the same concerns apply here as with political activity. For example, in some parts of the world religious observance is illegal in the school curriculum; in others it is compulsory. 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 these criteria, work done by a religious group in the wider community, provided that the objectives are clearly secular, may qualify as CAS. Another key issue is whether students are able to make choices and use their initiative. In contrast, service (even of a secular nature) that takes place entirely within a religious community can at best only partially meet the aims and learning outcomes of CAS, so there would need to be evidence from students' other activities that all the required outcomes had been met. CAS advisers who are faced with difficult questions in this area may find it helpful to ask students which of the CAS learning outcomes their proposed activity would meet, and how it might be possible to strengthen it in terms of CAS requirements. Activities may be very valuable to students as members of a religious community but nevertheless contribute little in terms of experiential learning

Records

Your CAS records must give evidence for each of the following:

- Grade 11 Self Review (to be shared with coordinator)
- Pre Activity Planning and Doing Review (prior to each activity)
- Post Activity Reflection (following each activity)
- Grade 12 Self Review (to be shared with coordinator)
- Doing (for every activity)
- Completion of CAS Program Wrap Up
- Meeting with CAS advisor (twice yearly)

Sample record forms have been created for your use. Extra copies can be found on the school website.