

## A Parent's Guide to CAS

CAS is a required portion of the IB Diploma program. It has several significant differences from the community service portion of MYP. The following information is taken from the student handbook. Your child should print this handbook from my wikipage and have it with them on the second day of class. This is to help you better understand what is required of your child. If they have questions, they should contact me for guidance (if they are not able to find the answer in the handbook).

### What is CAS?

CAS is great because it is individualized. In every case when you ask me, "Does this count?" I will respond with, "Prove that it does." You must explain HOW it is creative (et.al), and how you can make it meet the outcomes and other expectations of CAS. The goal is not to "disqualify" all the things you already do, but rather to encourage you to reach a greater depth within those activities to promote growth and understanding. **So, yes, that means the same activity can be an appropriate CAS activity for one student and NOT for another, depending on how it is approached.**

#### Creativity:

This includes "traditional" creative work such as dance and music, as well as non-traditional creativity such as creative thinking. Kids have engaged in science and engineering projects that are creative, cooking, knitting, building, teaching, gaming etc. CAS should have a definite goal or outcome, and must be personally challenging. This is NOT merely "more of the same" that you have been doing your whole life.

#### Action:

This means physical exertion with a goal in mind to improve your body. You have to sweat! This will of course be individual depending on your own fitness and does not have to be a team sport (but can be). As with creativity, this is not "merely more of the same." Setting goals and reflecting on growth is critical. An advanced athlete is not expected to divert from their training, but rather add an additional challenge such as teaching skills to others or becoming reflective about training and educating yourself on the body of knowledge for your sport and implementing it within your current training. Coaches can and should be used as a resource here.

#### Service:

It is essential that service, in addition to being purposeful with significant outcomes, must positively impact others; *it must also have learning benefits for the student*. "Mundane, repetitive activities" such as data entry or envelope stuffing, while beneficial for the external group, is not a CAS activity if there is no growth or learning for you. Please note the "fine print" below on religious and political activities.

#### What is not CAS, and other fine print:

- ✓ You cannot use classes or activities required to get your IB or regular diploma. *Electives* are okay.
- ✓ CAS service work cannot be paid.
- ✓ You CAN use activities you are already doing for other groups, such as NHS, but you MUST have evidence that it meets CAS requirements. Be honest with outside groups, as they may have expectations in this area.
- ✓ From the guide: "the general rule is that religious devotion, and any activity that can be interpreted as proselytizing...does not count as CAS... Service even of a secular nature that takes place entirely within a religious community can at best only *partially* meet the aims of and learning outcomes of CAS". If the activity is secular in nature and reaches beyond the boundaries of the church, then there is no problem with using it.
- ✓ Political action – see me. The most important part in deciding acceptability is whether or not the activity is divisive.

## CAS Requirements

- ✓ Document your plan and progress (“plan, do, reflect”)
- ✓ Have an approximate balance between creativity, action and service.
- ✓ Meet with your advisor or coordinator at least three times. (2x junior year, 1x senior year)
- ✓ Meet all 8 learning outcomes. (description on next page)
- ✓ Have continuous involvement and documentation for your time in the diploma program.
- ✓ Have one “project”
  - an activity defined by IB as sustained (at least one month)
  - an activity that addresses at least two of the three CAS areas
  - an activity that requires collaboration with others
  - an activity that shows perseverance and commitment.
  - an activity that is initiated by the student

## Learning Outcomes

This is not about logging hours; it is about personal growth. 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:

### **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.

### **Undertaken new challenges**

A new challenge may be an unfamiliar activity or an extension to a preexisting activity.

### **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.

### **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, must involve collaboration and the integration of at least two of the following: creativity, action, and service.

### **Shown perseverance and commitment in their activities**

At a minimum, this implies attending your chosen activity regularly and accepting a share of the responsibility for dealing with problems that arise in the course of activities.

### **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 or caring for the elderly).

### **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 advisors.

### **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