



# Creativity, Action and Service

## Frequently Asked Questions

April 2008

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.

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 have achieved eight key learning outcomes (listed below). A school's CAS programme is regularly monitored by the relevant regional office.

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."

**-taken from the *International Baccalaureate Creativity, Action and Service Guide* published March 2008 by the International Baccalaureate Organization for students graduating in 2010 and thereafter.**

## **Creativity**

This aspect of CAS is interpreted as imaginatively as possible to cover a wide range of arts and other activities outside the normal curriculum which include creative thinking in the design and carrying out of a variety of different projects.

Traditionally, this involves activities like dance, theatre, music and art, but could incorporate such creative pursuits as designing a web page, taking cake decorating classes or filming a documentary. Students should be engaged in group activities, and should take on new roles, wherever possible. Nevertheless, individual commitment to learning an art form is allowed, where it respects the requirements for all CAS activities: that goals are set and the student reflects on progress.

**Q:** I taught myself to play the guitar (or sew or paint, etc.) Does that count toward CAS and who can sign my hours?

**A:** It can count as long as you start by setting a goal for yourself, and monitor your progress. You should also collect things like pictures or examples of your work at each stage. If it culminates in something like a recital or art show, include the program. Work with someone other than a family member for the verifying signature (such as the school art or music teacher.)

**Q:** What about going to museum or art shows? Isn't that Creativity?

**A:** A passive pursuit, such as a visit to a museum, the theater, art exhibition, concert or sports event does not count toward the CAS requirement unless it clearly inspires work in a related activity in which a student is already engaged. In fact, generally CAS is not taking place when the student is in a passive rather than an active role. There should be interaction with other people.

**Q:** I'm on the school newspaper. I heard somewhere I can't count that because it is a class I am already taking. Is that true?

**A:** Classes that are required for the IB Diploma may not be used for CAS hours (writing creative essays during English.) However, projects completed for electives count.

**Q:** I'm taking a trip abroad. Does that count for CAS?

**A:** Generally, if you immerse yourself in a culture, such as living with a host family, learning a new language, partaking in cultural activities, it will count. A family vacation to a foreign country will not generally count.

## **Action**

This aspect of CAS can include participation in individual and team sports, and physical activities outside the normal curriculum; it also includes physical activity involved in carrying out creative and service projects. Action may involve expeditions and camping trips, or digging trenches to lay water pipes to bring fresh water to a village. Students are encouraged towards group and team activities, and undertaking new roles, but an individual commitment is acceptable where the general requirements of CAS are met: goals are set and the student reflects on progress.

**Q:** I snowboard on the weekends with my friends and family. Does that count toward CAS and who can sign my hours?

**A:** It can count as long as you set a goal for yourself and monitor your progress. You should also collect things like pictures or examples of your progress at each stage. Work with someone other than a family member for verifying signature (such as the PE teacher or one of the school coaches.) Generally, the activity will NOT count when there is no leader or responsible adult on site to evaluate and confirm your performance.

**Q:** I have an after school job raking leaves, shoveling snow, etc. That's a lot of physical activity. Does that count?

**A:** An activity for which a student is personally rewarded either financially or with some other benefit does not count, unless this benefit is passed on in full to a worthy cause. Verification of the hours, remuneration and donation are required.

## **Service**

Service projects and activities are often the most transforming element of the CAS experience in the Diploma Programme for students as they have the potential to nurture and mold the global citizen. Service involves interaction, such as the building of links with individuals or groups in the community. The community may be the school, the local district, or it may exist on national and international levels (such as undertaking projects of assistance in a developing country.) Service activities should not only involve doing things **for** others but also doing things **with** others and developing a real commitment with them. The relationship should therefore show respect for the dignity and self-respect of others.

**Q:** I sold hot dogs when my mom's company was doing something for some group. Does that count?

**A:** Service requirements are designed to help students become involved in things they understand and feel passion for. Therefore, fund-raising with no clearly defined end in sight does not count.

**Q:** I'm already required to do service in the community for another group (scouts, NHS, etc.) Can those hours count toward both?

**A:** Absolutely! We know you are busy, and it is acceptable to use hours for more than one requirement. Make sure, however, that you have an adult sponsor sign your CAS sheet, not a fellow student.

**Q:** What's wrong with making sandwiches at a shelter or shelving books at the library? I'm still volunteering.

**A:** The IBO believes that the most meaningful CAS experience comes from spending time with others to build relationships and the self-worth of both the server and served. Therefore, you must be able to answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Does it have real consequences for other people and for me?
- Does this activity benefit other people?
- Am I going to interact with others during this activity?

## **CAS Essays**

"CAS is a framework for experiential learning, designed to involve students in new roles. The emphasis is on learning by doing real tasks that have real consequences and then reflecting on these experiences over time.

This process of doing and reflecting on the doing provides an excellent opportunity to extend what is learned in the classroom to a form of service, such as applying science to the environment, or applying technology to the design of devices to help people who are disabled or to improve living conditions in a home or town or refugee camp.

It is not too much to suggest (indeed many students have confirmed it) that CAS can assist in discovering the true meaning of life, and in finding one's own place in the world by transcending cultural and socio-economic barriers. This 'own place in the world' has a number of dimensions including:

- within oneself
- through interaction with others
- within a community
- within a period of history

CAS is a privileged way to build one's own place. It has transformed the lives of those who undertake a commitment to it. We trust that students will find deep rewards through their participation in CAS." (IB Diploma Programme Guide: Creativity, Action, Service, August 2001)

Your essays should reflect awareness of self-discovery, growth and application of this knowledge to other areas of your life. Essays should answer questions such as, 'How are you different as a result of these experiences?', 'What have you learned about yourself?', and, 'How did participation in these activities change how you think or behave?'

**Q:** Besides personal reflection, what are the essay requirements?

**A:** Your essays should be typed, and clearly marked whether they are for Creativity, Action or Service. Your name and IB Candidate number should also be at the top of each essay. Each essay should be a minimum of 400 words, but most are between 1-2 pages.

**Q:** If I write an essay for an activity, do I also have to fill out the activity form?

**A:** You should still fill out the top portion of the form, with your name, hours, etc, and the form should also be completed by the adult sponsor. However, the guiding questions, if answered within the body of the essay, do not need to be completed. Simply mark, "See Essay."

**Q:** Do spelling and grammar count?

**A:** Yes. Your essays will be returned to you for revision if the quality is not up to standard.

**Q:** When are the essays due?

**A:** One essay is due in May of your junior year. It will be read and returned with comments when school resumes in the fall. The next one is due by November of your senior year, and the last one is due the first week of March of your senior year. Required senior interviews will not be scheduled without receipt of all three essays.

## CAS Activity Sheets

CAS Activity Sheets are used to detail hours and activities in each of the three areas. Each sheet must be completed and signed by an adult responsible for the activity. Be sure all sheets have your name, your IB Candidate number, and indicate where you would like the hours counted (e.g., creativity, action or service.) Unsigned and incomplete sheets will not count toward the requirement. Sheets are on the IB website.

**Q:** How many hours do I need for each area?

**A:** You must have at least 50 hours in each area from activities beginning the summer before your junior year through the spring of your senior year. If you participated in the activity prior to that time (e.g., sports team your sophomore year or a trip during spring break of your freshman year), it will not count.

**Q:** Can I complete my hours at any time before I graduate?

**A:** No. You must complete at least 75 hours by the end of your junior year. Activity sheets reflecting those hours must be submitted with your first essay. They, too, will be reviewed over the summer and returned in the fall. By November when the second essay is due, you must have a total of 125 hours, and all hours are due before you may sign up for required senior interviews in March. Please turn in copies of these sheets, and reserve the originals for your portfolio due in March (see below.)

**Q:** The person who was in charge of that activity isn't there anymore. Who can sign it?

**A:** You will have to find someone OTHER THAN a family member who can verify your time and your level of participation. The best way to make sure it is signed is to take the form with you when you go to each activity. Keep a copy in your car, backpack, etc., and think ahead before you go to an activity. If you think you may use it for CAS, take it along and ask the adult sponsor to sign off right then and there.

**Q:** Can I count something I do in more than one area?

**A:** Absolutely! Although there are three elements to CAS, it is important not to consider them as mutually exclusive. CAS is about the education of the whole person, and the three elements are therefore interwoven. However, hours counted in one area may not be double counted in another. In addition, you cannot count more than 75 hours total for a single activity. For example, if you spend 100 hours volunteering at a camp where you teach handicapped children to ski, you might apply 50 hours to Activity and 25 hours to Service or 40 hours to Service and 35 hours to Activity, but you cannot apply the remaining 30 hours.

## **CAS Portfolio**

The CAS portfolio is a way to chronicle your experiences, and put them into an organized, readable format. Portfolios should include all essays and all activity sheets. More than that, however, portfolios can be thought of as your CAS scrapbook. As such, you may want to collect souvenirs and keepsakes/remembrances of each of your activities to reflect upon them later. The best portfolios are those that contain programs, samples, pictures, etc. Do not put things in a loose envelope or binder, as they are easily lost. Organize your portfolio into the three sections of C, A and S. We hope you will take pride in your activities and accomplishments, and this will be reflected in your portfolios.

**Q:** Do you want all my stuff throughout the year?

**A:** Because things may get lost, we will only be checking your essays and activity sheets as outlined above. Your portfolios are not due until March of your senior year when you sign up for your senior interview.

**Q:** I included a bunch of keepsakes. How do I get my portfolio back?

**A:** We will hold onto your portfolios throughout the spring, in case we are audited by the IBO and need to show your work. You may retrieve yours from the IB office after the school year has ended. Please ask Mrs. Geimer for the exact date you may come and get it.