



NATURE OF CREATIVITY, ACTION, SERVICE

CAS is the quality difference of the IBO – Maria Piaggio, member of CAS committee

The creativity, action, service (CAS) requirement takes seriously the importance of life outside the world of scholarship, providing a counterbalance to the academic self-absorption some students may feel within the demanding school curriculum. The creative, physical and social development of human beings can be shaped by their own experiences. Participation in CAS encourages students to share their energies and special talents while developing awareness, concern and the ability to work cooperatively with others. The IBO's goal of educating the whole person and fostering more caring and socially responsible attitudes comes alive in an immediate way when students reach beyond themselves and their books. The educational benefits of CAS apply in the school community, and in the local, national and international communities.

CAS should extend the students. It should challenge them to develop a value system by which they enhance their personal growth. It should develop a spirit of open-mindedness, lifelong learning, discovery and self-reliance. It should encourage the development of new skills on many levels: for example, creative skills, physical skills and social skills. It should inspire a sense of responsibility towards all members of the community. It should also encourage the development of attitudes and traits that will be respected by others, such as determination and commitment, initiative and empathy.

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. Together they enable a student to recognise that there are many opportunities in life, away from formal academic study, to grow in knowledge of life, self and others. Creative and physical activities are particularly important for adolescents (probably more so than for any other age group) because popular culture informs and shapes their desires and values. There are also pursuits, which offer much opportunity for fun and enjoyment at a time, which is, for many young people, full of stress and uncertainty.

The service element of CAS is, in itself, the most significant, but the other two elements are also very important as they provide access, balance and flexibility to meet the individual students' interests and preferences. However, even more important in the model is that it is not just a matter of three individual parts: uniquely in the Diploma Programme it is the interaction of them all that creates the richness of CAS. The whole of CAS is greater than the sum of its parts.

While it might be maintained that the Diploma Programme hexagon model is currently the best available to develop academic skills and talents, it is more difficult to determine what the formula should be to develop a student's "informed heart." The development of an "informed heart" should be an integral part of a student's international education. But how it can happen is obviously the crux of the matter, at the very least we need to take into account vast individual differences. The IBO recognizes that schools authorized to offer its programs worldwide operate in diverse geographical, cultural, economic and political environments. While acknowledging global diversity, each school's CAS activities must be central to the Diploma Programme and reflect the school's understanding of the philosophy and spirit that inform the CAS requirement. Although the IBO does not officially recognize CAS activities undertaken by candidates for an IB Certificate, because of the educational benefits, it is strongly recommended that all students participate.



WHAT IS CAS?

It is an inside vibration, it is how and not how much—María Piaggio

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 (from, for example, biology or environmental systems) to the environment, or applying technology (from, for example, design 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.

Service is not simply an emotional impulse, it is a demonstration of attitudes and values—María Piaggio

The most meaningful CAS experience comes from spending time with others to build relationships and develop the self-worth of both server and served. In the design and construction of their CAS schedules, coordinators are encouraged to emphasize these aspects as much as possible. Appropriate activities might include:

- Physical assistance to the elderly
- A structured series of visits to a home for orphans
- Helping with rehabilitation at the local hospital
- Teaching basic literacy
- Establishing and coaching a sports team for disadvantaged youth
- Establishing and leading a musical ensemble for visually impaired people
- Involvement in a theatrical production to which refugee children are invited
- Teaching the use of computers
- Environmental restoration and protection

The activities should be undertaken gradually, be appropriately adapted to the circumstances, and take into account the students' aptitudes and preferences. The experience should never be a shock for students; this would be counter to the educational aims of CAS; rather it should reward and enrich all involved. When well carried out, CAS should build self-esteem, self confidence, autonomy, and self-reliance.



CREATIVITY, ACTION, SERVICE

Timing

Students can begin work on CAS hours starting in the summer of their sophomore year. CAS hours must be completed before winter break of the senior year.

Creativity (50 hours required)

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 service projects. (See “Examples of Good Practice”.)

This could involve doing dance, theatre, music and art, for example. Students should be engaged in group activities, and especially in 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.

Action (50 hours required)

This aspect of CAS can include participation in expeditions, 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 participation in sport or other activities requiring physical exertion—such as expeditions and camping trips, or digging trenches to lay water pipes to bring fresh water to a village. Students should be 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.

Both creativity and action can be enhanced by incorporating the service element. Students involved in the arts and in physical activities might consider coaching young children, seniors in residential homes, street children and so on.

Service (50 hours required)

Service projects and activities are often the most transforming element of the Diploma Programme for the individual student; they have the potential to nurture and mould 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.



WHAT IS NOT CAS? GUIDING QUESTIONS

What is, or what is not, CAS is a question which coordinators are frequently asked. The asking of the question may show an inappropriate attitude. If CAS becomes a points-scoring exercise, rather than an interesting variety of activities that the student finds intrinsically worthwhile and rewarding, and which is mutually beneficial to the student and to his or her community, then its purpose is lost. It is important that the spirit of CAS be considered at all times.

Generally, CAS is not taking place when the student is in a passive rather than an active role. There should be interaction. If the student is passive, nothing of real value, either for the student or for other people, results from what the student is doing, and no real reflection is possible. In such circumstances the student will be able to meet the objectives of CAS only to a very limited extent. Examples of activities which at first sight would appear to be inappropriate are listed below.

- Any class, activity or project which is already part of the student's Diploma Programme.
- An activity for which a student is personally rewarded either financially or with some other benefit (unless this benefit is passed on in full to a worthy cause).
- Doing simple, tedious and repetitive work, like returning school library books to the shelves.
- Working in an old people's or children's home when the student:
 - Has no idea of how the home operates
 - Is just making sandwiches
 - Has no contact at all with the old people or children
 - Actually does no service for other people.
- (The above example can be applied to many other activities purporting to be CAS.)
- A passive pursuit, such as a visit to the museum, the theatre, art exhibition, concert or sports event, unless it clearly inspires work in a related activity in which a student is already engaged.
- All forms of duty within the family.
- Religious devotion and any activity which can be interpreted as proselytizing.
- Work experience which only benefits the student.
- Fund-raising with no clearly defined end in sight.
- An activity where there is no leader or responsible adult on site to evaluate and confirm student performance.
- Activities which cause division amongst different groups in the community.

The following questions may help students determine whether or not an intended activity qualifies as CAS.

- Is the activity a new role for me?
- Is it a real task that I am going to undertake?
- Does it have real consequences for other people and for me?
- What do I hope to learn from getting involved?
- How can this activity benefit other people?
- What can I reflect on during this activity?

Concluding Comment

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.

Final Note

*It is always better to speak with the CAS coordinator to determine the appropriateness of the CAS project **before** starting to work on it.*

