

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-56034-5 – Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) for the IB Diploma

John Cannings Maria Ines Piaggio Peter Muir Tom Brodie

Excerpt

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The nature of CAS

Chapter

1

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The nature of CAS

Alec Peterson, the first director of the IB, summarised the aims of the IB succinctly when he said:

The Educational aims of the IB programme: to develop to their fullest potential the powers of each individual to understand, to modify and to enjoy his or her environment, both inner and outer, in its physical, social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual aspects. *(Alec Peterson, 2003)*

From the very start, the IB Diploma Programme has been concerned with developing you as a whole person.

The key features of CAS from the IB's viewpoint are:

- a focus not just on what you have done, but how you have developed as an individual as a result of your involvement in CAS
- a move away from service being something you do for others, to doing something with others for mutual benefits
- a conscientious approach from you as a CAS participant to learn more about the communities with whom you work. More than this, to also contribute to the various communities in which you live.

For these reasons and more, CAS is considered one of the central pillars of the IB Diploma Programme. In many ways it is the IB Mission Statement in action, a factor that clearly distinguishes it from other university entrance courses. CAS really is the experiential part of the IB Diploma Programme that supports its claim to educate the whole person.

As American psychologist David Kolb said, 'Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.' John Dewey was the first person to write about experiential education, and he simply said 'Experience plus reflection equals learning.'

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1.01 The purpose of this book

- 1 To help students understand the new CAS guidelines by explaining the language and ideas behind the guide in a student-friendly way (Chapter 1).
- 2 To present CAS as a blueprint for personal development in the IB Diploma Programme (Chapter 1).
- 3 To provide you, the student, with criteria and models to help you decide what is a valid CAS experience – in the authors' experience, this has always been something that has challenged students and IB teachers (Chapter 1).
- 4 To introduce you to the CAS stages model that will help you to plan and carry out CAS experiences and projects (Chapters 2 and 6).
- 5 To provide you with ideas about how to reflect on your CAS experiences and make this a more rewarding and richer experience (Chapter 3).
- 6 To demonstrate the links between CAS and the other parts of the core and provide you with a strategy for preparing a TOK presentation based on a valid and authentic CAS experience (Chapter 5).
- 7 To provide you with some thoughts of experienced CAS Coordinators about the programme (you will find this throughout the book).
- 8 To provide case studies and snapshots of good CAS practice from each of the three regions of the IB (IB in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, IB of the Americas and IB Asia/Pacific) (you will find this throughout the book).
- 9 To provide you with some ideas on how to develop your CAS portfolio and demonstrate your achievements in CAS (Chapter 7).
- 10 To show you the approaches to learning skills and how you might develop these through CAS (Chapter 9).
- 11 To show you how CAS relates to learner profile and how you can further develop these qualities.

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Key point: This is a book that you can consult as you work through the Diploma Programme, and it will help to make your CAS a more meaningful and fun experience.

1.02 What do the C, A and S stand for?

C – Creativity: ‘exploring and extending ideas leading to an original or interpretive product or performance’.

CAS Guide (2015), page 8, IBO

This is a great opportunity to do something that you have always wanted to do, or take things to a new level of accomplishment. It could be to finally put a band together.

CAS SNAPSHOT

Creativity could also be getting up on stage. At Discovery College in Hong Kong, a group of students wrote a play, set in Germany during the Second World War, which became the school production for that year. The students developed the script, designed the set and costumes, and collaborated with their peers to develop the score and visual effects.

Creativity could also mean to learn how to salsa or tango, create your own app or website, write poetry, or develop a plan to reduce your family’s greenhouse gas emissions. It could be to take something you are already doing to a new level, or to try something you have never done before. The list of possibilities is endless – what is important is that you are engaged in the creative thought process.

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Figure 1.1 Students working creatively, painting a mural at an InterCAS (a conference for CAS students held annually in South America).

A – Activity: ‘physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle’.

CAS Guide (2015), page 8, IBO

The inclusion of this strand of CAS is to encourage you to do something physical that will benefit your wellbeing, to participate in something that you will enjoy and, hopefully, continue for the rest of your life. You might take up yoga or Pilates, go to the gym, or learn to dance salsa, or you might choose an outdoor activity like climbing, continue with a sport you already like or try a new sport.

CAS SNAPSHOT

Students at Skagerak International School in Norway had the opportunity to learn the basics of climbing, and after this they ventured into ice climbing. This is an activity that they want to continue after they leave school.

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Figure 1.2 A student ice climbing in Norway.

S – Service: ‘collaborative and reciprocal engagement with the community in response to an authentic need’.

CAS Guide (2015), page 8, IBO

In CAS, service is meant to be a social act, working with people outside of the family and not for profit. The aim is for you to contribute in your own way to making the world a better place and it will require some research to identify a specific need in the community. The next step requires collaboration with the community to see what you can do to service this particular need.

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It is important to stress the idea of reciprocity and exchange (to avoid paternalism) and this, in our opinion, is the most challenging and yet rewarding of the CAS areas. It demands from you important social skills and a positive attitude. It requires you to develop a relationship with people in order to carry out a task. People with whom you are working will soon pick up from your body language and enthusiasm how keen you are to be involved.

Because Service has a direct impact on others, it is very important for it to be well-planned to ensure that this impact is positive. Chapter 6 on working with others, outlines what some negative impacts may be, and includes some guidance on how to avoid them.

CAS SNAPSHOT

Margrit and Anna realised the need for people to go and read for blind people, so they signed up with the Red Cross to do this on a weekly basis. First they had to do a preparatory training course, which included being blindfolded for half a day in the home to get an understanding of what it is like to be blind.



Figure 1.3 IB Diploma Programme Mexican students working with Habitat for Humanity in Mexico.

1.03 Changes to CAS

The *CAS Guide* published in 2015 has made a number of important changes to this central part of the Diploma Programme:

- 1 There is no reference to an hour requirement, rather a continuous commitment to CAS over a duration of 18 months.
- 2 The three strands of CAS are now named Creativity, Activity and Service.
- 3 We now refer to CAS events as CAS experiences.
- 4 CAS experience guidelines have been introduced to help clarify what is, and what is not CAS.
- 5 You have to show evidence of having met seven learning outcomes at least once during the IB Diploma Programme. The evidence for this should be included in a CAS portfolio.
- 6 You are expected to use the CAS stages model in planning and carrying out CAS experiences (the five stages are: investigation, preparation, action, reflection and demonstration).
- 7 You are expected to collaborate with other students, to plan, initiate and carry out a CAS project in one or more of the CAS strands. This project should have a duration of at least one month.
- 8 There is a heavy emphasis on your reflection. However, this reflection can be in a variety of different media, NOT just in a written form.
- 9 CAS should involve enjoyment, choice and engagement. The CAS experiences chosen by you should be fun and beneficial.
- 10 You are expected to keep a portfolio of your CAS engagement. It can be in electronic form and is expected to include reflections in various formats, and other evidence of CAS experiences. Vital to the CAS portfolio is evidence of achievement in the learning outcomes.

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1.04 Why are there no points for CAS in the IB Diploma Programme?

One of the main purposes of having CAS in the IB Diploma Programme is to encourage personal growth and development. It is impossible to objectively quantify this, and it has been argued that it is not something that we should attempt to do. Each student has a unique starting and finishing point in CAS, and trying to make a judgement about the distance they have come, and the benefits they have received from it, is difficult to judge even after students have left school.

1.05 What CAS can do for you

The value of CAS:

- your chance for personal development
- an opportunity to learn new skills
- a chance for taking action and making a difference to improve life conditions in different communities
- a chance to develop your language skills
- a chance to meet and interact with different cultures
- a chance to work in a team to problem solve.

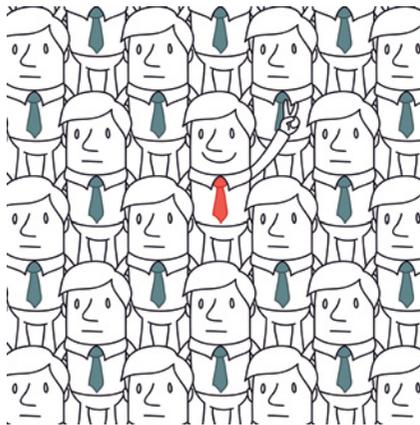


Figure 1.4 CAS can help you to develop into a special individual.

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Creativity, Activity and Service has been described as being the heart of the IB Diploma Programme. It provides Diploma students with an opportunity to develop skills and talents, as well as areas for growth, and also to work to make the world a better place through active involvement in the community. You will be expected to have a range of different experiences, be able to keep a record of them and indicate what you learnt from them. Above all, CAS presents a chance for you to develop as a whole person, according to the IB learner profile.

This is a rare opportunity to challenge yourself and develop. It is an aspect of the IB Diploma Programme that sets it apart from many systems and makes it attractive to universities and employers. Your 18-month CAS programme gives you the opportunity of doing things that you have always wanted to do, but never had the opportunity to do so.

It is important to remember the words of William George Plunkett:

Three things that never come back: the harsh word, the spent arrow, the lost opportunity.

The IB Diploma Programme is a unique time in your life that will make a difference to you and those around you, so don't miss out on this special opportunity!

The challenge of developing as a whole person

When you have a wide range of challenging pursuits for CAS – things that take you out of your comfort zone – it will help you to clarify and develop your own set of values, contributing to your ethical identity.

- a Work out what is really important to you in life and how to use your talents to make a better world. To do this you must be able to reflect on the things that you do (this means much more than writing endlessly about your every move) and consider 'is this what I really think is right for me?'