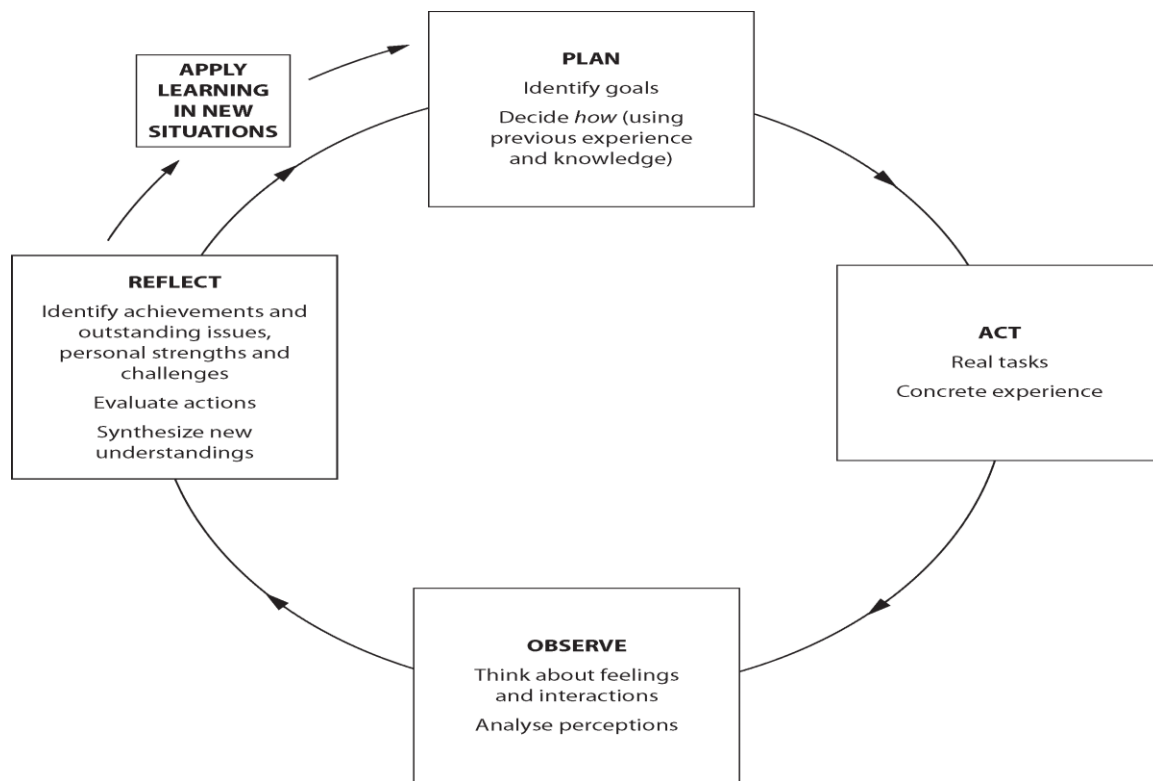


The CAS Cycle: Reflecting on Experiential Learning



CAS Reflections

A. Purpose of Reflection

As stated in the CAS student handbook, completion of CAS projects/experiences alone is not sufficient for earning a passing grade for CAS; reflections are a requirement for all IB students to earn a passing grade for the IB diploma. CAS reflections show engagement and learning in an important experiential process; second, they allow your advisor to discuss with you how you are reaching the Seven Learning Outcomes that show personal growth; and lastly, they validate whether your personal goals you set were actually met (or not) upon completion of your experiences and projects. **Students who simply complete experiences without quality reflections will lose their IB full diploma eligibility.**

B. Kinds of Reflection

CAS reflections can take many forms: public (you share with others) and private (growth you keep to yourself), written (managebac reflections) and verbal (TOK discussions/CAS advisor and supervisor meetings). While UAIS recognizes that students will naturally reflect on their CAS projects/activities, we must be able to provide a sample of at least 10-15 CAS reflections from managebac should the IBO request them during an audit of the UAIS CAS programme.

In addition to online reflections, other examples your CAS advisor may request at any time include scrapbooks, photo essays, videos/DVDs, weblogs, portfolios, or log of events—especially for solitary experiences where a supervisor is not present.

C. How Long Are CAS Reflections and How Often Should I Reflect?

There is not a one-size-fits-all every student has different writing preferences. In general, reflections should be a minimum of 150 words, but oftentimes, they will be much longer in length. Students who write shorter reflections are expected to write more of them, while students who prefer writing lengthier reflections will need fewer of them. Every six to seven weeks at UAIS, TOK classes will offer the opportunity to reflect on your current CAS experiences.

D. Writing and Recording Reflections

Managebac allows your coordinator and advisors to check in on your progress and see exactly when and how often you have been reflecting. It will be the virtual storage-place for your CAS portfolio and allow complete transparency for the UAIS staff. For these reasons, you are expected to utilize this tool—and only this tool—to complete your reflections. **Hand-written journals and note-books are not acceptable forms of reporting at UAIS, as we do not have access to them, and they can be lost or damaged, endangering your diploma eligibility.**

As previously mentioned, this documentation may take many forms, including photos, illustrated displays and YouTube videos, journals, emails, charts, and other attachments. Its extent should match the significance of the particular activity to the student. While it is important to make an early start on your CAS reflections, there is no point in writing lengthy accounts about relatively routine experiences. An example of this would be an exercise routine. Reflecting each time after exercising is as unnatural as it is unnecessary. Reflect on profound moments of pride, joy, revelation, surprise, confusion, and so on, as it pertains specifically to your CAS experiences and projects. Sometimes, the best opportunity for reflection is when you are feeling unmotivated or frustrated because something is not going according to plan. Often, these reflections will help turn you in the right direction.

CAS Learning Outcomes

As stated in the “Minimum Guidelines for Completion,” students must show evidence of each of the following seven learning outcomes in order to complete CAS. These learning outcomes will be documented in the reflections that students make during and after the experiences they complete:

- 1. Identify own strengths and develop areas of growth.** Students are able to see themselves as individuals with various abilities and skills, of which some are more developed than others.
- 2. Demonstrate that challenges have been undertaken, developing new skills in the process.** A new challenge may be an unfamiliar experience, or an extension to an existing one. The newly acquired or developed skills may be shown through experiences that the student has not previously undertaken or through increased expertise in an established area.
- 3. Demonstrate how to initiate and plan a CAS experience.** Students can articulate the stages from conceiving an idea to executing a plan for a CAS experience or series of CAS experiences. This may be accomplished in collaboration with other participants. Students may show their knowledge and awareness by building on a previous experience, or by launching a new idea or process.
- 4. Show commitment to and perseverance in CAS experiences.** Students demonstrate regular involvement and active engagement in CAS.
- 5. Demonstrate the skills and recognize the benefits of working collaboratively.** Students are able to identify, demonstrate and critically discuss the benefits and challenges of collaboration gained through CAS experiences.
- 6. Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance.** Students are able to identify and demonstrate their understanding of global issues, make responsible decisions, and take appropriate action in response to the issue either local, nationally, or internationally.
- 7. Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions.** Students show awareness of the consequences of choices in planning and carrying out CAS experiences. This pertains especially to the ethical principles stated in the IB mission statement and the IB learner profile. This involves exploring values, attitudes, and behaviours, as students undertake enterprises with significant outcomes.

UAIS Sample CAS Reflections

Directions: The following reflections were selected from students in the class of 2014 and used with permission. They vary in structure, length, and content; however, all of them address the 7 learning outcomes of CAS and stand as excellent examples of the deep reflection we encourage in our students. After reading each, consider the eight learning outcomes and write numbers next to the text that indicates where a learning outcome is clearly demonstrated.

Sample Reflection 1:

I have now been volunteering in the in-patient pharmacy for about 5 months. Working in a professional environment where many things must be taken with precaution has revealed to me that it is okay to take your time to ensure that things are being done properly. At first I was self-conscious that it took me a while to do simple math because of how anxious I was, and I would feel embarrassed if I pulled an ointment from the shelves instead of cream. I was assured that it was okay that I made a few mistakes, as I am learning as I go along. That was also the reason that all pulled medications went through two checks, one by a technician and one by a pharmacist, before it is sent to patients. I also saw the importance of handling medications properly. Narcotics had to be securely transferred, hazardous drugs had to be handled with multiple protocols involving safeguards like gloves, and labeling the fast-movers also had to be specific. Although it seems obvious and tedious, all of these steps are important to make sure that patients are receiving the right medications and the right dosage. One small mistake could result in death.

In my time at the pharmacy, I've also learned about important societal issues. I was encouraged to ask questions about anything in the pharmacy, and I mainly asked why certain medications were used or what they did. One I vividly remember was a prescription for morphine for a baby. Anyone would ask why a newborn would need a narcotic, but it was prescribed to wean him off of Opioids, as the mother abused it while she was pregnant. Volunteering in the pharmacy has not only taught me of what medications are used for what symptoms, but it has also revealed to me how serious and important our drug crisis is. When you read about it, it's one thing. When you handle the medication for a newborn, it becomes really personal—it hits home.

CAS Learning Outcomes:

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|---|---|
| 1. increase aware of areas of strength and growth | 5. showing perseverance and commitment |
| 2. undertaking new challenges to develop skills | 6. engage with issues of global importance |
| 3. plan and initiate new activities | 7. consider ethical implications of one's actions |
| 4. work collaboratively with others | |

Sample Reflection 2:

This past week was a learning experience for both Karen and I and the kids. This is because on Wednesday, things did not go as smoothly as we had wished. Karen and I made the plan to teach them how to crochet, developing flexibility in the fingers and hands, concentration skills, and memorizing patterns. This idea was brought up because Karen had prior crochet experience and knew how to make small hearts. We thought it was a grand idea for Valentines Day. Since I had actually never done crochet, this was an artistic learning experience for myself, because Karen and I got together beforehand so that she could teach me how it was done. I actually enjoy crochet now because it is very calming, just like painting.

We initially planned the heart project to be a one day lesson, but we ended up spending the full hour and a half trying to teach them the first two steps of the process. Looking back, I feel like Karen and I could have started everyone's hearts because the first two steps were the most difficult, that way we would have finished in one day, but on the contrary I feel like this day was also a day of learning patience and perseverance because the kids kept at it even though it was hard. On Thursday, everything ran a lot smoother and was very successful. There was an obstacle of having no SACC supervisor, which led to the possibility of having to cancel the meeting, but we overcame it

because we shared the art room with Mrs. Borbolla and her Academically Talented and Gifted student group, so that she could supervise. The actual Crochet heart process went by a lot better because the kids had gotten some experience on Wednesday, and the rest of the steps were simpler and repetitive patterns. Most of them got the hang of it, and by the end of the meeting, which we extended by 20 minutes or so, everyone's hearts were completed, except for two which Karen took home to finish, and I will deliver them on Monday. The kids were very proud of themselves and happy with the results, which made me very happy. Both Karen and I improved and worked on our teaching and explaining skills by going through a step by step process, and I realized that we have to put more thought into what is too difficult for elementary kids. At the end of the club on Thursday, as I was dropping the kids back off at the SACC room, many of them came to give me a big hug to say goodbye, and that put such a big smile on my face, I almost started crying. I didn't know if I had allowed them to be comfortable around me yet, but as of Thursday I now know that they look up to Karen and I and appreciate what we are doing for them.

CAS Learning Outcomes:

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|---|---|
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Sample Reflection 3:

I have no regrets. But I have dissatisfactions.
I am happy I joined the District Board of Key Club. But I miss my own club.
I am happy to be part of a global organization. But I want to help my community.
I have grown and developed as a leader. But I but it's been so long since I've gotten my hands dirty.
I have planned and organized statewide event. But I have yet to orchestrate my own hometown event.
I have made underclassmen friends across Michigan. But I can't name three freshmen in my own club.
I have fostered friendships with adult advisors with a variety of experience. But I miss my club advisor.
I have designed resources describing ways for clubs to get involved with projects. But I have yet to participate in one of my clubs working with these projects.
I wear suit and tie attire for Key Club 6 times a year. But I put on a hairnet & gloves to package food twice.
I love this organization. But it is getting hard to keep the fire lit.
I am fulfilled with the opportunities I have been offered. But I wish I had more next door.
I am proud of what I have accomplished. But I wish I could have done more.
I have no regrets, but one: having a greater part in the journey of my home club, UAIS Key Club.

CAS Learning Outcomes:

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F. CAS Culmination Essays

For students who do not meet the responsibilities of reflecting for a particular activity or project, they will be required to write and turn in an essay for at the completion of said activity/project demonstrating the student's engagement of the learning outcomes. Solitary activity (running, knitting, etc.) essays must be at least two pages in length. All other essays must be at least three-typed pages typed in length, double-spaced, addressing the questions below in paragraph form. All CAS reflection essays are due by upload to your managebac CAS page for your advisor during the first week of school. Any senior CAS reflection essays are due on managebac by your final interview.

Failure to meet the minimum length and demonstrate through your answer the Eight Learning Outcomes will result in forfeiture of the IB diploma.

Type a paragraph for each of the following categorical questions:

1. *Summarize what you did to initiate the experience, and how you interacted with others.* – This question is always important to answer because it will help your advisor get a clear picture of what occurred and how you made this experience your own. Basically, provide narrative details answering the following: who, what, when, where, why. How did you “initiate yourself” in a way that allowed the experience or project to be a new rather than “more of the same” of what you have previously done as 9th or 10th grader?

2. *Explain what you accomplished through this experience/project.* – Explain what your original goal was and whether or not you achieved it. Which organization did you help? Why help this organization? What were you looking at improving, learning, or developing? How did your work benefit the community/school/organization you worked with? Who helped you and in what ways (feedback, training/mentoring, help in numbers)? Was this an issue of global importance—how do you know?

3. *What difficulties did you encounter and how did you overcome them?* - If you experienced no difficulties, speculate as to why things went so smoothly. What piece of your preparation contributed the most to the experience's “smooth sailing”? Was this, perhaps, not a challenging activity to begin with? If so, will this experience inform future choices you make for CAS experiences? If difficulties did occur, what were they? Why did they occur? Were they self-inflicted (organization, planning, execution), situational (weather-related, technical difficulties), or arose from working with others (other students, a supervisor, another person)? Explain.

4. *What did you learn about yourself and what did you learn about others through this experience? What abilities, attitudes, and values have you developed?* - This is an important opportunity to reflect and give insight into any learning that you earned from this experience. If you did not learn anything, what stood in your way? What would you need to do next time to gain more from this experience? What abilities, attitudes and values have you developed about yourself or about others around you through this experience? You must be thoughtful of this while you do the activity so that you can appreciate others or yourself for what you have accomplished.

5. *What ethical implications arose as a result of this activity?* If a problem arose between individuals, explain how you resolved it. How did you know that provided proper closure to the service that you were providing? If necessary, did you strive to pass on your project/experience to someone else, and if so, how did you achieve this? What issues of confidentiality arose during this process? Did you have to lie or withhold the truth at any time for any reason, and was this justified? Did you unknowingly cause harm at any time to someone associated with your experience/project, and if so, what did you learn, or how did you resolve it? Did you disagree with anyone during this process, and if so, how did you know you were in the right? What would you have done differently the second time around if you had the chance, and why?