

The UAIS CAS Advisor Guide

I. The Nature of Creativity, Action, Service

A. How is CAS Defined?

Creativity: *arts, and other experiences that involve creative thinking or production in some measureable sense* (event planning, formulation of a club, stage crew, scrap booking, debate performance)

Action: *physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle, complementing academic work elsewhere in the Diploma Programme* (sports, an exercise program, karate, planting a garden, weight loss)

Service: *an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student but for which the rights, dignity, and the autonomy of all those involved are respected* (hospital volunteering, participating in a cancer walk, planning/setting up a school dance). Service must be unpaid and voluntary (to the greater community—not to family, nor directly to a house of worship as part of personal religious devotion). The general principle is that the “rights, dignity, and autonomy of all those involved [in service activities] are respected” (Creativity, Action, Service Guide 2009).

B. Politics and Religion in the CAS Environment

Political activism is acceptable for the CAS project provided that the student works carefully to meet the following criteria. Students must:

- Engage in activities that unify rather than cause or worsen social divisions
- Work to create change with a tone of harmony, not disharmony
- Specifically plan out the learning opportunities for personal growth and acknowledge in a discussion with their advisor any personal limitations and biases based on personal background
- Promote a project that can assure school administrators that activities will maintain a safe, secure environment for the student
- Recognize that the goal is to provide a service for others, not superimpose one’s values on others

CAS work within a religious community is acceptable as a project provided that the student meets the following criteria. The student must:

- Refrain from proselytizing as any part of service to others
- Avoid serving exclusively his/her religious community and instead reach out to people of different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds in the spirit of the IBO mission statement

Count only hours that are clearly secular in nature for activities associated with his/her place of worship (Catechism classes, for example, are considered an extension of religious worship, but a soup kitchen put on by a church would be secular)

C. What May Count for CAS Hours:

- Extracurricular activities (sports, arts, music, dance, volunteer work) outside the school day
- All Key Club and NHS hours that do not count for each other
- Any club service hours in which you are currently involved, in or out of school
- Leadership conferences that involve active planning, networking, and participation
- Volunteer hours for which you are not paid
- Speeches or presentations you prepare and give
- Coaching, tutoring, or teaching
- Painting, composing, drawing, sketching, and related activities
- Meetings that you direct and run for clubs that you represent
- Any planning, strategizing, or brainstorming for an event

D. What CANNOT Count for CAS Hours:

- Any project or activity that exclusively benefits a teacher within UAIS
- Work completed on Extended Essay, TOK, an academic component of the natural school day or your DYP programme, or any class taken outside UAIS for college credit
- Activities of an isolated/non-social or tedious nature (letter-stuffing, for example)
- A simple increase in already established hours of work that comes as a natural, normal part of school—more practice, more concerts with the school band, and so on. However, an increase in the number of hours in an extracurricular activity outside the school day can count for CAS hours, provided that it is goal-oriented. An example of this might include extra time spent in Key Club related activities to make sure that one's project goals are attained.
- A paid job or hired position
- A volunteer position that is a family or extended family duty
- Listening to a lecturer/speaker and other passive activities
- Attending regular meetings for clubs simply as a participant
- Activities of a religious/political context that do not embrace the IBO mission statement
- Key Club activities you plan to count as NHS activities or vice versa (no triple dipping!)
- CAS-eligible activities/projects completed prior to the approval of your CAS proposal
- Driver's training
- Tweeting
- Meetings with your CAS advisor or coordinator
- Writing reflections or maintaining your managebac.com account

In general, any approved activity by the advisor means that it is challenging, goal-oriented, meaningful to the student, and does not constitute "more of the same."

II. CAS Requirements

“Successful completion of CAS is a requirement for the award of the IB diploma.”
–Creativity, action, service guide 2009

A. Minimum Requirements for Completion of CAS

CAS does not contribute direct points to the 24 required points to earn the IB diploma; it is a pass/fail grade. However, failure to meet CAS requirements will automatically result in the forfeiture of the IB diploma, regardless of number of points earned in a student’s IB classes. UAIS students will only receive a passing grade for CAS in March of senior year if they are able to complete all of the following:

1. a minimum of 150 completed hours¹
2. a balance² of at least 50 hours in each category: creativity, action, service
3. a reasonably sustained, uninterrupted CAS programme lasting eighteen months
4. at least one extended project, spanning four months or thirty total hours (see letter “B”)
5. evidence of meeting each of the eight learning outcomes at least once each (see letter “C”)
6. sufficient reflections, documentation and completed evaluation forms for all CAS activities

B. The CAS Extended Project

During either their first interview in September or second interview in December of their junior year, UAIS students are required to propose at least one CAS extended project to their advisors. Dozens of examples of these are located on the uaiscas.com website, or students can create their own. The CAS extended project must:

1. be of significant duration (stretching 4 months or at least thirty hours in length)
2. be collaborative (either with UAIS students or people in the community)
3. involve two of the three CAS components (creativity, action, and/or service)
4. culminate in a significant event, presentation, performance, or product

Through conversation, advisors should make sure that before approval of the extended project, all students have set reasonable expectations, establish meeting dates and times for planning, scaffold smaller steps of the process, allow the proper amount of time for completion, and can anticipate potential issues. This is key for success and may need to be the focus of the interview.

Copies of the rubric for the CAS Extended Project can be found at the uaiscas.com website.

¹ Hour counting, however, is discouraged. It is expected that students will exceed the minimum number of hours because they truly enjoy their activities. Students should plan activities in a way that would never allow an advisor to feel it necessary to question the commitment of the student. Hours should be conservatively estimated and projects and activities planned in a way that affords for some personal failure to reach them.

² Should a student heavily involved in action, for example, complete 200 hours of action over eighteen months, that student is not expected to complete 200 hours of creativity and service to “balance” hours.

C. The CAS Learning Outcomes

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

- 1. increased their awareness of their own strengths and areas of 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. This requires that students make changes to pre-CAS work in this area.
- 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 class.
- 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 interpersonal projects but there are many global issues that can be acted upon locally or nationally (for example, environmental concerns, caring for the elderly, UNICEF, cancer research).
- 7. considered the ethical implications of their actions.** Ethical decisions arise in almost any CAS activity, such as on the sports field, in musical composition, in relationships with others involved in service activities, and so on. Evidence of thinking about ethical issues can be shown in various ways, including journal entries, conversations with advisors, and in TOK.
- 8. developed new skills.** As with new challenges, new skills must 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 programme. **Failure to meet all eight will result in a fail grade for the CAS programme.** Some objectives may be demonstrated many times, in a variety of activities, but completion of each requires only that there is **some** evidence for every outcome.

The focus on these eight learning outcomes emphasizes that it is the quality of a CAS activity—its contribution to the student’s development—that is of most importance.

III. Role Responsibilities in the CAS Community

A. The CAS Coordinator is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining policy statements and documentation
- building and providing activity and project ideas for students
- publicizing achievements
- providing leadership for staff involved in CAS
- ensuring that students are prepared for the challenges they will face
- training activity supervisors
- ensuring that staff, parents and other students are kept informed about CAS
- conducting all school community meetings and presentations
- reporting student achievement to the IB, including external audits by the IBO

B. CAS Advisors are expected to:

- helping students to identify personal and social goals, if necessary
- monitoring the range and balance of activities undertaken by individual students
- developing students' powers of reflection through individual consultation
- supporting students in their consideration of ethical concerns
- reading/responding to diaries/journals either through managebac or in conversation, or both
- helping students to make connections (for example, CAS activity to subject learning, local activity to global concerns) and to look for generalizable understandings
- meeting with students at least five times during the two year program to update and discuss progress
- making sure that activities involve an adult supervisor to ensure adult supervision for proper monitoring, safety, and training of UAIS students
- reporting major student issues or concerns to the CAS coordinator and/or parents

C. CAS Students are required to:

- explore various options for possible CAS projects through self-reflection, personal investigation, and discussions with teachers, parents, and—if necessary—the CAS coordinator
- meet with an advisor for self-review at the beginning of their CAS experience and set personal goals for what they hope to achieve through their CAS programme
- plan, do and reflect (plan activities, carry them out and reflect on what they have learned)
- lead five meetings with their CAS advisor at designated times throughout the 2 years of the programme
- keep up-to-date records of their activities and achievements through reflections
- provide the CAS advisor with updated information on all CAS supervisors
- take part in a range of activities, including at least one project, some of which they initiated themselves
- show evidence of achievement of the eight CAS learning outcomes

D. CAS Supervisors are expected to:

- sign off on a supervisor agreement form for each student and adhere to the guidelines within
- train the student, if necessary, for any task new to the student
- monitor the student's attendance, commitment, professionalism, and safety
- provide mentorship and help in situations that require adult supervision and intervention
- report on the student's progress at the completion of the activity

IV. Reflections/Monitoring Progress

A. Purpose of Reflection

As stated in the IBO handbook, creation and completion of CAS activities alone is not sufficient for earning a passing grade in CAS. Reflections are a requirement for all IB students and serve multiple purposes:

- As proof of commitment to and completion of active CAS activities
- As evidence reaching the Eight Learning Outcomes showing personal growth
- As measurement of reaching personal goals that students fall short of, meet, or exceed

Students who simply complete activities without adequate reflections will not receive the IB diploma.

B. Kinds of Reflection

Writing is often the best tool for reflection for advisors. It allows students to more thoroughly document their achievement of the outcomes, and it provides advisors with confirmation that students are completing and reflecting consciously about their activities. Students can also present their activities in different ways to show attainment of goals and the learning outcomes. Examples include scrapbooks, photos, videos/DVDs, weblogs, portfolios, or personal logs of events.

C. How Often Should I Reflect?

The frequency of reflections can be a tricky one and depends on the activity in question. Activities and projects usually fall into one of these three categories, so follow the general rules listed below:

Single-event Activity: This is an activity that begins and ends in the same day or weekend...it is "one and done." An example would be participating in a fundraiser over a weekend or volunteering at a soup kitchen for a few hours. Write one reflection upon conclusion of the event and provide one piece of evidence that you participated (supervisor evaluation form).

Repetitive Activity: This is an activity that spans a longer period of time, accumulating a number of hours over weeks or months. Examples include volunteering at a hospital or training for a half-marathon. Do NOT write a reflection for every time you engage in these types of activities; however, every two to four weeks, you should update your gradual progress on uais.managebac.com. If the activity lasts only a couple of weeks, perhaps only 1-2 reflections are warranted. However, if the activity is a year long, we would expect somewhere between 10-12 reflections in order to justify earning the hours you are counting. When the activity is concluded, you will need to provide one piece of evidence that you participated (supervisor evaluation form or log of completion of events, or both).

Extended Project: Extended Projects require a significant amount of planning, preparation, and goal-setting and require multiple reflections, even if the project is a single event taking place on a weekend or day that you plan for well in advance. Examples include coordinating a Relay for Life for a group of students, running a UAIS club for an entire year, or collecting hundreds of pairs of shoes across schools in the district

to donate to a war-ravaged country. Note that these are not repetitive activities that you perform over and over, but one carefully planned project that involves a series of smaller activities and steps that take lots of thought and require a great deal of effort. A series of thoughtful reflections and multiple pieces of evidence (proof of your product, essentially) are required to justify the hours you are logging.

No matter what the activity, each must have reflections and a supervisor completion form on managebac to be officially completed in order to count toward your general 150 hours. Given that your CAS program must carry “a variety of activities” during its 18-month duration, we expect activity on the CAS page of your managebac site at least every two weeks.

D. Developing Reflections

Reflection can occur before, during, or after an activity. Often, students can write prior to an activity and revisit it later to assess whether or not their instincts or expectations were correct. More often than not, students will simply reflect following an experience they’ve had. Answering any of the following questions constitutes reflection, though students will want to vary their means of answering with some degree of frequency to avoid monotony:

1. *Summarize what you did in this activity, 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.
2. *Explain what you wish to accomplish through this activity/project*
3. *What difficulties did you encounter and how did you overcome them?*
4. *What did you learn about yourself and what did you learn about others through this activity? What abilities, attitudes, and values have you developed?*
5. *Did anyone help you, guide you, or motivate you during this activity/project? How did this person/these people guide you?*
6. *How did this activity help others?*
7. *Will you continue this activity?*
8. *What would be the character skill that you most developed in this activity/project?*

Guiding Questions/Concerns for CAS Interviews

1. For activities outside UAIS, does the student have a supervisor for the activity and produced a supervisor documentation form before beginning that activity or project? If not, the activity or project cannot commence without the expressed written signature of the CAS coordinator and a justification for why a supervisor is not practical.
2. Highly creative students may not be active students, and vice versa. As you glance through each student's PSR before their interview, see if you can identify these students, and help provide ways they can turn their passions for creativity and action into one another.
3. During interviews, ask students how their activities are not simply "more of the same" from previous years. If they are allowed to get away with repeating the same activities without getting out of their comfort zones, it will show in bland, ineffective, or even absent reflections. Students should develop goals that are measurable and tangible, something that they did or did not achieve that is clear to both you and the student at the next interview.
4. Know your student's background before the interview begins. In terms of activities, for example, playing an instrument is only creativity if that student has never played the instrument before. In terms of the student him/herself, the more rigid the student's personality, the more conservative and safe his/her CAS proposal will be. Feel free to discuss the IB Learner Profile or comment, "For your next proposal, I'd like to see..."
5. Have handy or be familiar with the list of what does and does not count as CAS hours, located in the CAS student handbook, in case questionable activities or projects surface.
6. Students will tend to underestimate the enormity of their projects and/or leave the important details out of their proposals. They are expected to fill these in as they present their proposal to you. If they don't, prompt them. Vague, grandiose ideas only result in personal failure and a 180 degree turn on their proposal during the next interview. The basic rule: trust your intuition. If it doesn't feel right, don't approve it until you feel the student is prepared to make it successful.
7. The focus of the proposal should be quality, not quantity. Too many smaller activities and not enough projects allow for little to no reflection.
8. If the student is proposing an extended project, fill out the rubric to evaluate it.
9. At some point, the issue of ethics should arise naturally. If it does not, you must raise it. This can come by gently playing devil's advocate regarding a project or activity.
10. Remember, the burden of these interviews is on the students. They must present the CAS proposal to you intelligently, clearly, articulately. For the other interviews, they should be prepared to discuss highlights and important revelations over the prior five to six months. The interview portion gradually comes as they provide information to you. Let the student lead, and provide support as needed.