

CAS Information Pack for Parents

18 May 2010



Dear Parents,

CAS is part of the core of the IB Diploma programme. We hope that these sheets help answer questions you may have about the programme at St John's but also feel free to contact the CAS coordinator with further questions at any time by email.

WHAT IS C. A. S.?

CAS challenges the student to personal development through experiential learning in the context of activities and projects chosen with the Guidance of the CAS Coordinator and other teachers such that the student will have:

- **increased awareness of strengths and areas for growth** and will have learned to make choices that enable him/her to move forward using strengths and developing in other areas.

- **undertaken new challenges**

A new challenge may be an unfamiliar activity, or an extension to an existing one.

- **planned and initiated activities**

Planning and initiation will often be in collaboration with others

- **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 (The Extended Project).

- **shown perseverance and commitment in 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.

- **engaged with issues of global importance**

This could be international projects but there are many global issues that can be acted upon locally or nationally (for example, environmental concerns, caring for the elderly).

- **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).

- **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.

These eight outcomes are the goals of the CAS programme and there must be evidence that a student has addressed them all at some point for a student to complete the IB CAS requirement.

Some may be demonstrated many times, in a variety of activities, but completion only requires that there is **some** evidence for every outcome.

HOW DOES A STUDENT ADDRESS THE GOALS?

THROUGH A SERIES OF **CREATIVITY**, **ACTION** and **SERVICE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS** WHICH

- INVOLVE STUDENTS IN NEW ROLES AND NEW CHALLENGES IN THEIR CAS ACTIVITIES
- ARE PLANNED WITH GUIDED GOAL SETTING AND REFLECTION
- LEAD TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH GUIDED SELF-EVALUATION AND ONGOING REFLECTION

All good CAS Activities will meet these 3 criteria but also

It is essential that they do not replicate other parts of the student's Diploma Programme.

AND

A balance between Creativity, Action and Service has to be maintained. A good activity often includes more than one of these.

Here are a few definitions to help recognise them:

1. **CREATIVITY** is interpreted as imaginatively as possible to include a wide range of art and other experiences outside your curriculum that involve creative thinking. There must be **personal challenge** to terms of new skills or new roles and responsibilities.
2. **ACTION** is "physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle". It can include participation in expeditions, individual and team sports and physical activities.
3. **SERVICE** is a "voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit" for the student and that benefits someone expressing a need. This can be a person, a group of people, the general local or larger community; it can also be an intermediate association or organisation providing help for socially, physically or mentally disadvantaged persons, abandoned animals, or the environment. **Service involves interaction**, building links with individuals and groups in our community, local district, etc.

Having a "learning benefit" rules out mundane, repetitive activities, as well as "service" without real responsibility.

Activities do vary

- some are more directed, (such as being a member of a sports team or the choir) working towards a performance or tournament or exam
- some are one off activities (such as service rendered at a school Bazaar or concert or an event in the wider community)
- some require more initiative and organisation from the student such as organising a programme of fundraising events or coordinating visits to a retirement home.
- some involve groups of students and others can be individual.

At some point each student must engage in an Extended Project

An extended project must be of significant duration spread over 2 or 3 months and tie together at least two areas: Creativity & Service or Action & service but often involves all 3. It must involve the student in planning and initiating aspects of the project for themselves. It can take place at any time during the programme. (For some it may be a continuous element throughout their CAS).

TIME COMMITMENT

CAS activities must take place during at least 18 months of the IB Diploma Programme from September of year 1 to about February of year 2.

Students are expected to maintain an average 3 or 4 hours of CAS each week balanced between Creativity, Action and Service but there is no strict rule as to how many hours of each. Students do not have to spread this out evenly but should avoid letting any one of the 3 areas drop for months at a time.

Many students actually do more than this and, where it does not compromise other areas of the student's Diploma studies, we are happy to encourage them *BUT the focus is on learning outcomes the quality of a CAS activity (its contribution to personal development) is more important than accumulating lots of extra quantity.*

CAS MATERIALS

Provided by the school:

- Welcome to CAS Survey
- CAS Handbook
- Guidelines for writing CAS Diary reflections
- CAS Activity proposal forms, Contract forms, Summary Reflection Sheet

Supplied by the student

- **A5 size notebook** or alternative for a CAS Diary
- **A4 ring binder** in which to keep the guide, survey and other CAS materials and forms.

TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES:

At the beginning of the CAS programme:

- “WELCOME TO CAS SURVEY”. This is a Self review to introduce students to the goals of the programme and identify personal development aims;
- Identify, with the help of the CAS coordinator or a CAS advisor, the activities that can help most in achieving these aims;

Throughout the CAS programme: choosing and planning Activities

- An adult expert is identified who is willing to act as the activity leader or supervisor. This person *CANNOT BE A CLOSE RELATIVE OR FAMILY FRIEND*.
- A **CAS ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FORM** is submitted to the CAS coordinator in which the student
 - sets activity goals: what are you going to do, why, what do you want to achieve?
 - sets personal development aims: how is this activity going to challenge mind, body and/or emotions? Will it help you develop into a “better” person? How?
- CAS coordinator’s responds in terms of approval or justified objection.
- When approved, **CAS CONTRACT is submitted**, signed by student and other relevant people

This process must be observed to avoid the risk that a student commits to an Activity that is not helpful or not permissible for CAS.

During and at the end of an activity or Project:

- Engage: be punctual, reliable, committed, and respectful to all those involved.
- Set up a page in a CAS Diary as a *CAS Activity Log*. Add a line in the CAS log every time you are doing a CAS activity. State place, time, duration, focus of the day
- Record thoughts and reflections in the **CAS DIARY**. Use the hints on the **DIARY GUIDELINES SHEET** to help.
- The activity leader (supervisor) will also help with CAS reflection
- For Activities OUTSIDE ST JOHN’S the supervisor must write a report to the CAS coordinator on the student’s regularity & quality of attendance, achievements and attitude.

Periodically meet with CAS Coordinator and Activity Supervisor to Review CAS

At the end of the CAS programme (mid-March of year 2):

- The student writes a concluding reflection on their personal development in relation to the Learning Outcomes and comments on their Extended Project using the **CAS SUMMARY REFLECTION SHEET**

WHY IS CAS IMPORTANT?

It takes learning to the real world outside the safe ground of the school.

It challenges mind, body and heart and is a counterbalance to academic self-absorption.

It focuses on Service, the only non self-indulgent part of your education.

It provides chances of recognition and success in real life situations.

Practical, creative, emotional skills are tested and the student learns to be balanced and in control of challenging situations.

It trains in reliability and focuses on real needs, organisation and efficiency; skills which will be very useful in a student's future life and career.

CAS "c. v." will make a difference in University applications.