

International School of Tallinn
CAS Handbook 2021/22



IST CAS HANDBOOK

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IB MISSION STATEMENT

The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

IST MISSION

IST mission is to support the holistic development of every individual to become responsible global citizens and independent life-long learners by providing a rigorous inquiry and multicultural learning environment.

Our Promise:

IST promises to foster a culture of innovation and desire for life-long learning through academic rigor and a network of global citizens.

IST VISION

IST mission is to support the holistic development of every individual to become responsible global citizens and independent life-long learners by providing a rigorous inquiry and multicultural learning environment. To create a global community that values inquiry, critical and creative thinking, open and entrepreneurial minded-ness, and acts with tolerance and compassion. To support an outstanding faculty that embraces the best pedagogical practices, applying enhanced knowledge and skills in math, science, and technology. To prepare students who strive to become entrepreneurial leaders in their desired fields for an ever-changing future.

WHAT IS CAS?

Creativity, Activity and Service definitions

CAS is a collection of experiences undertaken by Diploma Programme students to extend their abilities, encouraging them to think critically, develop collaborative skills, engage in planning, problem solving and self-reflection. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves on a personal level and look into local and/or global issues to engage in, impacting the world around them. As an integral part of the Diploma Programme, CAS provides opportunities for **self-determination, collaboration, accomplishment and enjoyment.**¹

During the CAS program, students engage in experiences in three strands: creativity, activity and service. These are defined as follows:

Creativity

Exploring and extending ideas leading to an original or interpretive product or performance.

Activity

Physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle.

Service

Collaborative and reciprocal engagement with the community in response to an authentic need.²

Why CAS?

Extending from year one to year two of the Diploma Programme, CAS gives students opportunities to develop new skills, explore new areas of knowledge or strengthen existing abilities, while thinking critically and examining the results of their planning and execution. Here are a few reasons why CAS is both educational and enjoyable:

It's a chance to do something different!

Students can engage in a CAS experience to learn a new skill: play an instrument, learn a new language, play sports they never tried before.

You can improve your skills!

Students may choose to work on skills they have been trying to improve: maybe they already play an instrument, but haven't had time to practice, or they like amateur photography but now want to study it in depth. CAS is a great opportunity for that.

It's fun!

CAS experiences can be a great way to relax or take a break from studies while still learning a great deal. Some students even choose to explore meditation in CAS.

¹ Source Creativity, Activity Service guide, IB, 2015, page 8

² Source Creativity, Activity Service guide, IB, 2015, page 18-20

What is and what is not CAS?

When trying to determine what kind of activity can be accepted as a CAS experience, the following guidelines are extremely helpful to students:

- **Does the experience fit into one or more strand?**

If the answer is YES, that's a good start. A proposed action must be classified as Creativity, Activity or Service as per definitions outlines on page 3 of this handbook. It is possible that a proposed experience fits into more than one strand.

- **Is it based on a personal interest, skill, talent or opportunity for growth?**

Any CAS experience proposal must be based the intent to acquire or develop a skill/talent, or an opportunity to improve oneself or serve the community, all sprung from the student's personal interest.

- **Is it a requirement for any other Diploma Programme subject?**

If the answer is YES, that may be a problem. It's important to understand that a CAS experience should **not** be a work/assignment required by any other subject of the Diploma Programme. However, a CAS experience may be linked to or inspired by topics and assignments developed in other subjects. *(For example, if a student is asked to make a sculpture for an Art & Craft lesson, that same work does not count as a CAS experience. However, the student can use the skill acquired in that assignment to propose a CAS experience in which they create other sculptures.)*

Before initiating any experience, students are expected to discuss their proposals with the CAS Coordinator (and the prospective supervisor) to assess whether or not it fits into the requirements of a CAS experience.

Learning Outcomes

A successful and meaningful CAS program is strongly linked to what a student expects to achieve and how they set and pursue those goals. Within the context of CAS, there are 7 defined learning outcomes and students are expected to achieve each outcome at least once during the two years of the program. The learning outcomes are:

1. Identify their own strengths and develop areas for personal growth.
2. Demonstrate that they have undertaken challenges, developing new skills in the process.
3. Demonstrate how to initiate and plan a CAS experience.
4. Show commitment to and perseverance in their CAS experiences.
5. Demonstrate the skills and recognize the benefits of working collaboratively.
6. Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance.
7. Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions.

When a student develops the proposal for a CAS experience or project, they are asked to select which learning outcomes will be tackled in that activity. Here are some examples of CAS experiences and the learning outcomes connected with them.

CAS strand	Description of Experience	Learning Outcomes
Creativity	A student who plays the piano at beginner level decides to learn different musical pieces and improve their hand work to intermediate level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify their own strengths and develop areas for personal growth.
Activity and Service	A group of students plan a large event, inviting the school community for a day of physical activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate that they have undertaken challenges, developing new skills in the process. Demonstrate the skills and recognize the benefits of working collaboratively. Demonstrate how to initiate and plan a CAS experience.
Activity	A student takes up a 30-day workout challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show commitment to and perseverance in their CAS experiences.
Service	Volunteering once a week at a pet shelter and helping raise awareness about their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance. Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions.

Approaches to CAS (types of experiences)

CAS experiences can be classified into one of the four approaches:

Ongoing Activity

This is an activity the student is already engaged in when they decide to make it into a CAS experience, for example a sport they are already playing and decide to improve upon.

School-based

An experience that takes place in the school premises, such as volunteering for lunch duty or creating a club/after school activity.

Community-based

This is an experience outside school premises and focused on the local community such as volunteering at shelters, soup kitchens, or organizing a clean-up day in the city.

Individual experiences

An experience that the student conducts on their own (though a supervisor may be present), such as individual workouts, or teaching themselves to play an instrument.

In addition to the approaches above, Service experiences/projects may be classified in the following sub-categories:

Direct Service	Indirect Service
Students interact directly with the community to offer assistance, for example when volunteering hours at an elderly home.	The students don't interact directly with the community but benefit them through an indirect action, such as creating a website for a non-profit organization.
Advocacy	Research
Students advocate for a cause or promote awareness and action related to issues of local/global interest; for example, students create a podcast to discuss climate change and what the school community can do.	The student collects data, analyses and reorganizes their findings and presents the results on a topic of local/global relevance, such as conducting research on the air quality of the city they live in.

IB Learner Profile

The CAS program aims at developing students' IB Learner Profile attributes by allowing them to plan their activities while keeping these attributes in mind, as a guiding light to determine new paths to follow. In their exploration of potential CAS experiences, students are encouraged to look at the list of attributes and think about which ones they would like to improve, determining new opportunities based on challenges set by themselves. The IB Learner Profile encourages students to be³:

Inquirers

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

Knowledgeable

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

Thinkers

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

Principled

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Open-Minded

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

³ Source <https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/fd82f70643ef4086b7d3f292cc214962/learner-profile-en.pdf>

Risk Takers

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

Balanced

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives — intellectual, physical, and emotional — to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

Reflective

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

Approaches to Learning

The IB identifies skills in the form of Approaches to Learning that students are expected to develop throughout their educational experience. In CAS, students are reminded of these skills both in preparation for CAS experience/project and when reflecting after it. The skills listed as:

Thinking skills

Concerning analysis and evaluation of ideas.

Communications skills

Focused on exchanging ideas with others, understanding and being understood.

Social skills

Concerning collaborative work.

Self-Management

Organizational skills including time management, commitment and resilience.

Research skills

Concerning the collection, analysis and interpretation of information.

HOW TO START A CAS EXPERIENCE

When starting a new experience, students are guided by the CAS coordinator to make sure they follow the essential steps:

Discussing the idea: the student will present the idea to the CAS coordinator and together they will determine if this idea can be accepted as a CAS experience, which is/are the strand(s) pursued, what are the next steps in terms of planning, including finding a supervisor.

Approaching a supervisor: while the CAS coordinator may recommend supervisors who are part of the school staff (based on their connection with the proposed experience), students are highly encouraged to take the lead and approach potential supervisors to discuss the experience. A supervisor will be responsible for following the student's progress and writing a review upon the end of the experience.

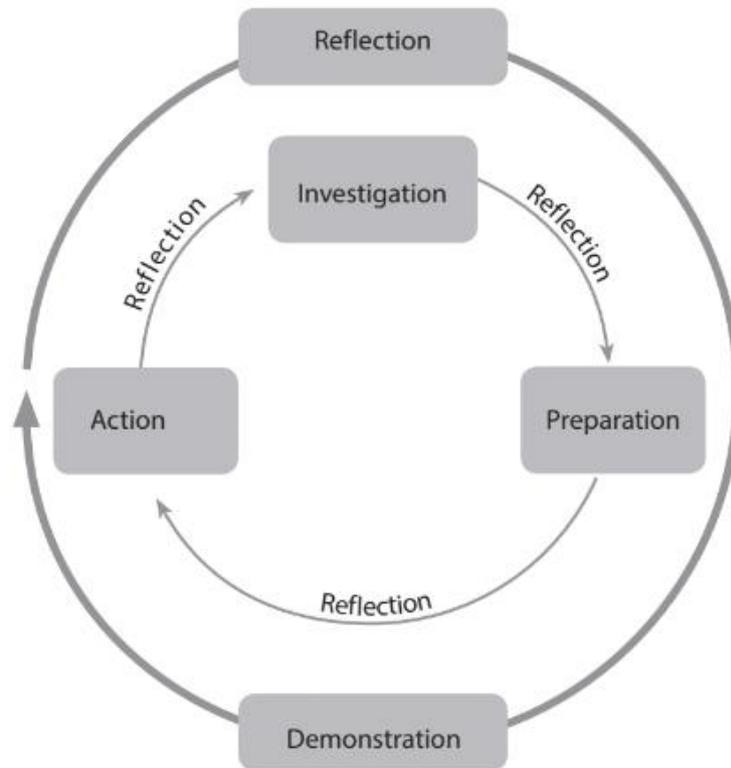
Writing the CAS experience proposal: having discussed the essential ideas with the CAS coordinator and secured a supervisor, the student must write a CAS experience/project proposal detailing the goals, intended outcome and schedule of the activity.

Students at IST use ManageBac when proposing a new experience. The online platform allows students to easily describe their experience by selecting the appropriate strand(s), approaches and/or types of service, and learning outcomes. At this point, the student is encouraged to revise the 7 learning outcomes and determine which one(s) are appropriate goals for the experience they are about to initiate. The platform also allows for easy selection of dates for the beginning and end of the experience.

A thorough CAS proposal must also include a description of the experience, in which students detail the **actions that will be undertaken, where, when/how often, and how**. They must clarify whether the activity will be done individually or in collaboration with others, what they intend to achieve (specific goals they are aiming at), and why this is a meaningful activity to them.

CAS STAGES

In order to support students' planning and execution of experiences throughout the program, the IB present the CAS Stages, a process illustrated and described below:



Investigation: concerns discovering students' wants, interests and needs.

Investigate themselves: students think about activities, hobbies, things they like to do or would like to achieve, including skills they want to develop or certain attributes they want to enhance.

Investigate communities: students look at the needs and issues of their local community, identifying action paths they may take to help.

Investigate further: students think about the necessary resources to plan their experience, including people, financial support, etc.

Risk assessment: students along with the CAS coordinator determine the risks of any given activity based on the actions that will be taken, when and where.

Preparation: concerns the development of an action plan that includes an outline of tasks, who is responsible for them, and when they are expected to be completed.

Action: students execute the action plan.

Reflection: concerns the contemplation and analysis of actions taken in order to assess how the student feels about the experience and consider adjustments or things to be changed in future approaches.

Demonstration: concerns students sharing their CAS experience with an audience, whether it is being mentioned in school news outlets (newsletter, social media) or presenting it to fellow students (current or future CAS students in an exhibition, for example).

CAS PROJECT

What is a CAS project?

All students must participate in at least one CAS project during the 2 years of the CAS program. A CAS project differs from a CAS experience in 3 key aspects: it is always collaborative, it must last at least 1 month, and it must involve two or more CAS strands. To determine whether or not an activity can be a CAS project, a student should consider the following questions:

- **Does the project fit into more than one strand?**

If YES, that's a good start. For example, the development of an app for a non-profit organization is a project that combines Creativity and Service.

- **Is the project individual or collaborative?**

A CAS project must always be done in collaboration with others, whether they are fellow CAS students or other members of the community. It is important that the student is deeply involved in the project, making meaningful decisions and participating constantly, while also being aware of the needs of others. If the student wants to undertake the task alone, this will be a CAS experience, not a project.

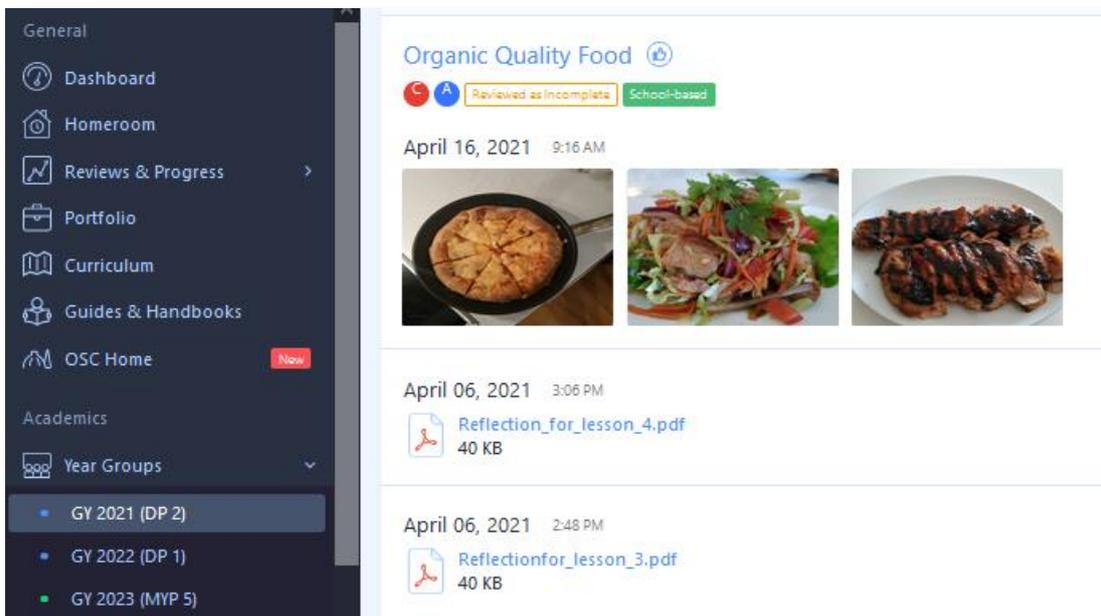
- **How long is the project?**

An activity that will last a couple of weeks, from planning to full execution, is a CAS experience. A CAS project must be a long-term action, requiring regular involvement (weekly meetings, research, etc.) over more than a month between its inception and the final outcome.

PORTFOLIO

The CAS portfolio is a collection of a student’s experiences and projects, including evidence and reflections, showing their progress throughout the program. At IST, students use ManageBac to record experiences and organize a digital portfolio.

Besides the required reflections, students are expected to add evidence of their experiences to their portfolio in the form of photos, videos, journals or links to external material. Below is an example of photos added as evidence for a culinary CAS experience focused on teaching other students to cook quality food.



MANAGEBAC

Using ManageBac for CAS purposes is easy. Students can access their CAS portfolios under the platform, and easily add or edit an experience or project, as well as organize the information needed for proposing the activity with just a few clicks.

Adding a new experience: the button “Add CAS experience” is located at the top right corner of the student’s CAS portfolio page. Selecting this option will open a new page where the student can add all the necessary information about the experience, including strands, approaches, types of service (when applicable), learning outcomes and a description of the proposed activity. If the student is adding a CAS project rather than an experience, they must tick the “CAS Project” box next to the experience name. See the image below for reference:

Overview Plans **CAS** Extended Essay Theory of Knowledge Messages Calendar Files Members

← | New Experience

Select Experience From a Group

Experience Name *

CAS Project

Strands

Creativity Activity Service

Approaches

Ongoing School-based

Community-based Individual

Type of Service Action

Direct Indirect

Advocacy Research

Start date * End date *

Supervisor Name Supervisor Title

Supervisor E-mail Supervisor contact number

Description and Goals

Please select your targeted learning outcomes

Strength & Growth Challenge & Skills

Initiative & Planning Commitment & Perseverance

Collaborative Skills Global Engagement

Ethics of Choices & Actions

Adding evidence or reflections: once the experience has been submitted and approved, the student will be able to access the experience in their portfolio, including a tab called “Reflections and Evidence”. Here, a student can add a new reflection by typing it directly into the text box and ticking the boxes for the learning outcomes achieved, or they can add files (photos, videos, etc.) as evidence of their experience.

Summary Reflections & Evidence Supervisor Review

Add New Reflection & Evidence

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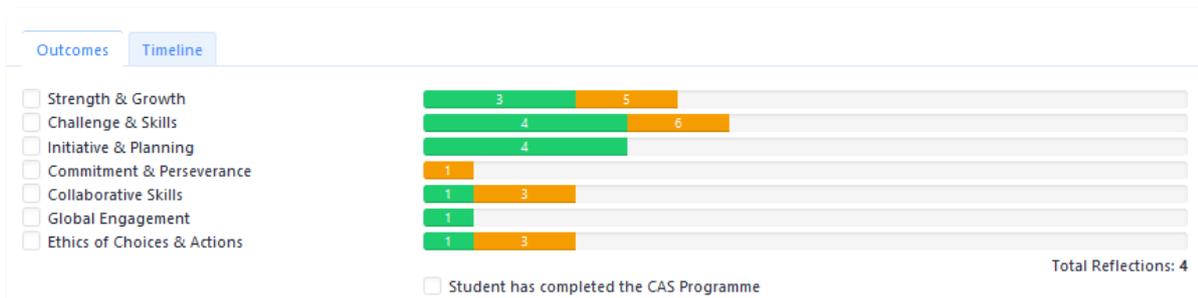
Outcomes

Identify own strengths and develop areas for growth Demonstrate that challenges have been undertaken, developing new skills in the process

Demonstrate the skills and recognize the benefits of working collaboratively Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions

or

A student's CAS page on ManageBac also shows an overview of their learning outcomes and timeline. This tool allows students to clearly visualize which outcomes they have addressed (and how many times) and which ones they have yet to consider.



The Timeline shows how each CAS strand has been distributed in the program so far, also allowing students to consider making adjustments to their plans and ensuring all strands are tackled evenly.



REFLECTIONS

What is a reflection?

Reflection is the process analysing an experience to realize and express what has been achieved. It is a process that allows students to understand which choices made along the experience resulted in a positive outcome and which decisions would be different if they could do it again. In this way, students are able to evolve and pose new questions, gaining a better understanding of the experience, themselves, and others.

A reflection in Cas can take many forms. More often than not, students will write a text to reflect on an experience, but it is also possible to do:

- Video reflection
- Audio reflection
- Photographic reflection (usually with additional comments)
- An online journal/bulletin like padlet

Regardless of the form it takes, a reflection must be thorough and meaningful. Depending on the length of the CAS experience, a student may reflect once or several times: the frequency will depend on how often the student is engaging in new actions or experiencing new outcomes within the activity undertaken. A CAS reflection should cover the following key areas:

Description: Summarize the experience, identify important moments, things that went well and wells as obstacles.

Express feelings: Describe how the student feels after the experience; were all results fulfilling or satisfactory or were there moments of frustration as well?

Generate ideas: Re-think choices that were made and consider solutions that could have resulted in a better outcome; think about future projects that could come from this experience.

Ask questions: Has the experience lead the student to wonder, ask new questions, see things in a different light? What new questions have arisen from this activity?

CAS INTERVIEWS

During the CAS program, students go through three interviews that are meant to allow them to reflect and add to their overall progress. The interviews are scheduled as follows:

Interview 1

When: near the end of September of year 1 of the DP

This interview is meant to establish the student's expectations toward CAS, what they hope to accomplish and how. This is scheduled after the student has had a few introductory sessions explaining how the program works and what the opportunities and possibilities may be.

Interview 2

When: near the end of May in year 1 of the DP

This interview is meant to allow students to reflect on the overall success of their first year in CAS, reflect upon things that could have been different, and identify goals for the future, in preparation for DP year 2. In the beginning of the CAS program in DP year 2, students will be encouraged to watch their previous interviews and reflect upon how they want to organize their second year in CAS.

Interview 3

When: near the end of April in year 2 of DP

This last interview is meant to allow students to reflect on the second year and also look at the entire CAS program to identify areas in which they grew, new areas they managed to explore, how CAS experiences have shaped their characters as IB learners and which major lessons learned in CAS they will take with them for life.

CAS and TOK

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) introduces 8 ways of knowing (sense perception, emotion, language, reason, imagination, faith, intuition and memory). Being aware of how different ways of knowing impact their ideas, students are encouraged to take these into consideration when writing a CAS reflection.

For example, emotions play a big role in CAS experiences that are close to students' hearts; or intuition can be an important part of decision working in a large project.

By creating links with TOK, student can write more meaningful reflections or even gain anew perception in a CAS experience.

CAS and EE

The Extended Essay gives students an opportunity to research and write a long essay about a topic of their choosing, usually topics of local and/or global significance. The topic chosen for the EE may become an inspiration for the student to start a new CAS experience or project, and vice versa.

For example, the student may conduct an investigation on illiteracy among adults in their country/region, and that leads to the student joining a project to teach literacy in their neighborhood. Or the student may volunteer at a refugee center and their hands-on experience may lead to an examination of the causes and effects of refugee migration in their area.

By asking themselves "How can this CAS experience inspire me in EE?" or "How can my essay topic be translated into action in CAS?", students not only experience cross-disciplinary integration in the DP program, but also learn a valuable lesson on how to examine current issues from both a theoretical and practical perspectives.

CAS Coordinator

The CAS coordinator is the head of the CAS program, whose responsibilities fall mainly into two categories⁴:

The implementation and advancement of the CAS program

This encompasses planning the CAS program, promoting its importance to the school community, introducing staff and students to the essential concepts to engage in CAS, ensure resources and coordinate with supervisors, identify cases when risk-assessment is needed and execute it, among others.

Working directly with CAS students

Introduce all aspects of CAS in detail, including the strands learning outcomes, approaches and reflections, assist them in identifying personal goals and possible activities in CAS, manage records, reports, and interviews, provide feedback on reflections, among others.

CAS Supervisors

Students usually select supervisors to oversee and advise on the CAS experiences. The CAS supervisor may be a schoolteacher or another member of the community who has the necessary knowledge, availability and sense of responsibility to assist a student in the experience in question. The role of CAS supervisor includes⁵:

- be familiar with elements of the CAS programme as applicable
- be responsible for student safety and risk management procedures
- provide students with guidance, support and feedback on the CAS experience
- encourage reflection
- comment on the student's engagement with the CAS experience if required

CAS Students

Students have a lot of agency in CAS: they are encouraged to make their own choices based on personal interests and inquiries and build their own CAS program as something unique to who they are. That also entails responsibilities, which include the following⁶:

⁴ Source Creativity, Activity Service guide, IB, 2015, page 34

⁵ Source Creativity, Activity Service guide, IB, 2015, page 35

⁶ Source Creativity, Activity Service guide, IB, 2015, page 13

- approach CAS with a proactive attitude
- develop a clear understanding of CAS expectations and the purpose of CAS
- explore personal values, attitudes and attributes with reference to the IB learner profile and the IB mission statement
- determine personal goals
- discuss plans for CAS experiences with the CAS coordinator and/or CAS adviser
- understand and apply the CAS stages where appropriate
- take part in a variety of experiences, some of which are self-initiated, and at least one CAS project
- become more aware of personal interests, skills and talents and observe how these evolve throughout the CAS program
- maintain a CAS portfolio and keep records of CAS experiences including evidence of achievement of the seven CAS learning outcomes
- understand the reflection process and identify suitable opportunities to reflect on CAS experiences
- demonstrate accomplishments within their CAS program
- communicate with the CAS coordinator/adviser and/or CAS supervisor in formal and informal meetings
- ensure a suitable balance between creativity, activity and service in their CAS program
- behave appropriately and ethically in their choices and behaviours

CAS and School Parents

The parents of CAS students are encouraged to take an interest in their children's activities and provide support for the experiences they choose to undertake. Besides that, parents are also welcome to volunteer at CAS supervisors for other students in one of their areas of expertise.

PROMOTING CAS IN OUR COMMUNITY

IST promotes the achievements of its students regularly on social media and its monthly newsletter. CAS experiences and projects may also get a special mention in our regular school correspondence depending on the nature of the activity.

Sometimes, students choose to offer courses in the form of an after-school activity or club on an area of knowledge they have mastered. Those are announced by email and added to our school website. Students may also choose to organize a large event, inviting the whole school community (students, teachers and families), which will be communicated via email, newsletter and social media.

Toward the end of the school year, CAS students are invited to present their achievements in CAS to fellow students in a mini exhibition. This gives MYP students (going on DP) an idea of what to expect when they join the CAS program in the coming years, and it gives current CAS students the chance to showcase their work and take pride in what was achieved.

CAS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

With the world being hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, schools and teaching staff had to adapt quickly. CAS was no different: with many students in distance learning and large gatherings diminished in most places, the challenges in CAS were many.

There is a number of CAS experiences that students can do individually and at home:

- A 30-day fitness challenge
- Taking up yoga or meditation
- Create a food diary to track your nutrition
- Create a collaborative podcast project on any topic of interest
- Learn to play an instrument through video lessons
- Create a photography portfolio
- Take up a reading or writing challenge
- Learn to cook/bake and Instagram the results to your friends
- Create an online campaign to raise awareness for a local NGO

Focusing on individual experiences is not the only solution. In fact, with the whole world experiencing similar issues, we have seen examples of schools and students having brilliant ideas to overcome the hurdle of Covid-19. Here are some ideas on how to adapt a CAS activity in times of Covid:

Pre-covid experience	Adapted experience
Volunteering at a home for the elderly, children, or disadvantaged people.	Connect with them virtually to play games, do aerobics or teach them a new language. If the institution cannot dedicate a computer for that, the school may have the resources.
Playing a team sport regularly.	Create workout challenges for yourself and share them with your teammates.
Collaboratively planning a big event tackling climate change awareness and education.	Organize a virtual live event through a popular social network or live streaming platforms like Twitch or Youtube, where the organizers can discuss the topics live and the audience can interact in the chat.
Collective Cleanup Day	Organize individual cleanup sessions in different parts of town during the same day and share photos with your colleagues.

The CAS coordinator and the supervisor are available to help students restructure any activity they have in mind in order to fit the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. We highly encourage students to think outside the box and see this and yet another challenge in CAS that they can overcome for their own personal evolution.