

# **GUAJOME PARK ACADEMY**



**INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANIZATION**

**CREATIVITY, ACTIVITY, SERVICE**

Student Handbook

**Name**

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## Aims

Why CAS? Because you are more than just a grade point average. Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) is intended to move you out of the academic arena and help you learn through life experiences. Yes, as an IB student, we know you are involved in many interesting activities. What we are asking you to do is consider how these activities help you to become a better person. CAS is about:

- Reflective thinking—understanding your own strengths and limitations, identify goals, and devise strategies for personal growth
- The willingness to accept new challenges and new roles
- Awareness of yourself as a member of communities with responsibility towards others and the environment
- Being an active participant in sustained collaborative projects
- Balance—enjoying and finding significance in a range of activities involving intellectual, physical, creative and emotional experiences.

## Creativity, Activity, Service

CAS is at the heart of the Diploma Programme. It is one of the three core elements in every student's Diploma Programme experience. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Programme. The three *strands* of CAS, which are often interwoven with particular activities, are characterized as follows:

1. **Creativity:** Exploring and extending ideas leading to an original or interpretive product or performance
2. **Activity:** Physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle
3. **Service:** Collaborative and reciprocal engagement with the community in response to an authentic need

CAS enables you to enhance personal and interpersonal development through experiential learning. At the same time, it provides an important counterbalance to the academic pressures of the rest of the Diploma Programme. An effective CAS programme should be both challenging and enjoyable - a personal journey of self-discovery. Each individual student has a different starting point; and therefore, different goals and needs. Yet for many, CAS *experiences* are profound and life changing.

CAS *experiences* should involve:

- Real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes
- Personal challenge—tasks must extend you and be achievable in scope
- Thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress, reporting
- Reflection on outcomes and personal learning

**All proposed** CAS *experiences* need to meet these four criteria. CAS *experiences* should continue on a regular basis for **at least 18 months** and ideally for as long as possible throughout and beyond the Diploma Programme.

A CAS *experience* is a specific event in which the student engages with one or more of the three CAS strands (Creativity, Activity, Service). It can be a single event or an extended series of events.

A CAS *project* is a collaborative series of sequential CAS experiences lasting at least one month (collaborative series of CAS experiences).

## CAS Stages

1. ***Investigation*** – Identifying interests, skills and talents to potentially use for CAS and areas of personal growth and development.
2. ***Preparation*** – Determining roles, responsibilities, necessary resources, and an action plan.
3. ***Action*** – Implementation of the idea or plan to meet the CAS experience/project.
4. ***Reflection*** – Describing what happened, expressing feelings, formulating ideas, and making connections.
5. ***Demonstration*** – Make it clearly known what was learned and accomplished.

## Learning Outcomes

Completion of CAS is based on student achievement of the *seven learning outcomes*. Some learning outcomes may be achieved many times, while others may be achieved less frequently. As a result of your CAS programme, there should be evidence, artifacts, and supporting documentation that you have achieved the following *Learning Outcomes*:

### 1. Identify own strengths and develop areas for 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 of 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 locally, nationally or internationally.

## 7. Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions

Students show awareness of the consequences of choices and actions in planning and carrying out CAS experiences.

All seven *Learning Outcomes* must be present for you to complete the CAS requirement. Some may be demonstrated many times, in a variety of activities, but completion requires only that there is **some** evidence for every *Learning Outcome*.

# Responsibilities of the Student

The CAS programme is a personal responsibility. Guidance will be provided; however, CAS *experiences* are personal and only you can build a programme that meets your needs. Additionally, there are stipulations set forth by IB that must be met.

You are **required** to:

- Set personal goals for what you hope to achieve through the CAS programme.
- Plan, Do, and Reflect (plan activities, carry them out, and reflect on what was learned).
- Communicate with your CAS advisor at the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the 18 month program to discuss progress (Three Interviews)
- Engage in a variety of *experiences*, including at least one *project*. The project may include a single CAS *strand* or multiple of the three *strands* (creativity, activity, service).
- Keep records of activities and achievements within MangeBac; including answering CAS Questions in CAS Questions section.
- Demonstrate achievement of the seven CAS *learning outcomes*.
- Create a digital portfolio of all reflections, evidence, communication utilizing ManageBac.
- Have a completed supervisor review.
- Participate in final CAS Defense/Presentation.

# Reflection - Recording and Reporting

*Reflection* is a skill that needs to be developed. Reflections are an integral part of demonstrating achievement of the *Learning Outcomes*. The kind of reflection appropriate in CAS is something that requires guidance and practice (may be different from written reflection in literature class), but the fundamentals are simple. Of any *experience*, it is appropriate to ask the following questions.

- What did I plan to do?
- What did I do?
- What were the outcomes, for me, the team I was working with, and others?

## Developing reflection

Moving on from the “What” questions outlined earlier, experiential learners may consider reflections through the lens of chronology (Before/During/After)

- Initially I ...
- Throughout the *experience* I felt/realized...
- Now I ...

If the activity is service, you might also want to consider ethical questions such as:

- What is a service?
- Am I trying to help or empower people with a service?
- What obligation do I have to the person who is being served?
- How do I/Should I/Can I conclude a service relationship?
- What do I do if the person does not want my service?

*Guiding questions for weekly reflections.*

- Who, What, When, Where, Why
- What activities did I do?
- Did my activity go according to plan? Why or why not?
- How do I feel about the activities that I did?
- What steps can I take to improve?
- What challenges did I face? How did I handle them?
- What new insights have I gained?
- What were the outcomes for me, the team I was working with, and others? Did I achieve my goal(s)?

*Guiding questions and areas to address for final reflections.*

- Did my experience/activity go according to plan? Why or why not?
- What were the *learning outcomes*?
- Summarize your effort and commitment
- What skills did I develop and what attitudes and values was I able to discover in me and in others?
- In what ways am I being challenged to think differently about myself and others?
- What have you learned about yourself and others?
- Would you do anything differently?
- How can you apply what you learned to future situations?

Think before, during, and after:

- Initially I....
- Throughout the experience I felt/realized....
- Now I....

Written and verbal reflections are the most common ways students reflect; however, a meaningful reflection can be expressed in various ways. Often times, written reflections cannot express the depth of an experience in the way that visual, auditory, or kinesthetic means of reflection can. Reflections can be expressed in some of the following ways:

- Written paragraph uploaded onto ManageBac
- Photography or painting
- Art, sculpting, ceramic
- Textile or needle work
- Dance
- Theater
- A comic strip
- A piece of music or a poem
- Your own creative expression

## How do I know if it is CAS?

Before you start any CAS project, ask yourself if your project contains:

- real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes.
- personal challenge – tasks must extend the student and be achievable in scope.
- thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress, reporting.
- reflection on outcomes and personal learning.

**IMPORTANT:**

- All proposed CAS activities must meet the above four criteria.
- CAS activities must be on a CONTINUOUS basis over a MINIMUM of 18 MONTHS
- CAS must continue until at least February of the senior year.
- CAS is required to be eligible for the IB diploma.

## What are examples of CAS?

**In the School Community**

**Teaching children who have a disability to swim** (action, service)

*New role:* Volunteer swimming Instructor  
*Real task:* To pass on knowledge and skills to others.

**Coaching the softball team** (action, service)

*New role:* Softball coach  
*Real task:* To pass on knowledge and skills to others.

**Writing for a school newspaper** (creativity, service)

*New role:* Journalist  
*Real task:* Presenting and writing newspaper articles to deadlines.

### **In the Local Community**

These activities strengthen the links between the school and the local community.

#### **Organizing a “Walkathon” to raise money for guide dogs for people who are blind (creativity, action, service)**

*New role:* Organizer, walk participant, assisting people who are blind  
*Real task:* Planning and publicizing, walking with people who are blind, raising money.

#### **Exchanging artistic or musical skills with other students in a local school (creativity, service)**

*New role:* Language teacher  
*Real task:* Preparing lessons and teaching, providing materials.

### **In the International Context**

These activities are designed to create links between the school and the global community.

#### **Organizing student participation in, and raising funds for, the Model United Nations (M.U. N.) (creativity, service)**

*New role:* Conference organizer/politician  
*Real task:* Administrative arrangements and fund-raising.

#### **Assisting victims of natural disasters (creativity, action, service)**

*New role:* Charity campaigner  
*Real task:* Arranging collection and delivery of blankets, tents, food, and medical supplies for victims.

#### **Organizing a beach cleanup (creativity, service)**

*New role:* Organizer  
*Real task:* Planning an event from start to finish which brings light to a international problem.

### **What is not CAS?**

CAS is not a points-scoring exercise. It should be an interesting variety of activities that you find intrinsically worthwhile and rewarding, and that are mutually beneficial to you and to your community. CAS is not taking place when you are in a passive rather than an active role. There should be **interaction**. If you are passive, nothing of real value, either for you or for other people, results from what you are doing, and no real reflection is possible. The focus of your activities should be less on solitary pursuits than pursuing team goals.

### ***The following activities are not approved CAS activities:***

- Any class, activity or project that is already part of the student’s IB Diploma Program

- Any activity for which the student receives personal financial reward
- Doing simple, tedious repetitive work that does not vary (such as shelving library books or making sandwiches)
- A passive pursuit such as visiting a museum, watching a movie, or observing a sports event
- All forms of duty and chores within the family
- Work experience that only benefits the student
- Fund-raising with no clearly defined end in sight
- Activities that cause division amongst different groups in the community.

## CAS Project

A CAS *project* is a collaborative series of sequential CAS *experiences*, engaging students in one or more of the *strands*. Students must be involved in at least one *project* during their CAS programme. Receiving credit for involvement in a *project* entails: being responsible for or initiating a part of, or an entire, CAS *project*.

All CAS *projects* are designed with a defined purpose and goals which guide role(s) and responsibilities within the *project*. A minimum of one month is recommended for the duration of a *project*, yet longer *projects* afford more learning opportunities of a larger scope. When a *project* addresses the *strand* of service (known as a service project), students must take into account additional stipulations and expectations.

- Complete extended planning and proposal requirements.
- Suggested duration of at least one month.
- Show initiative, demonstrate perseverance, and develop skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and decision making.
- Includes sequential *experiences* stemming from one or more strands.
- Assume a role of responsibility or leadership.
- Receiving credit for involvement in a project entails being responsible for or initiating part or an entire CAS Project.

## Portfolio and Documentation

Document and log your CAS experiences - reflections upon your experiences are required in the form of a portfolio. Within GPA digital CAS portfolios are created and managed utilizing ManageBac. Within ManageBac students will document all reflections for their experiences and projects. Reflections must be thoughtful and honest; through reflection students should be making connections to the learning experiences. Extent of documentation should match the significance of the experience(s) to you. The portfolio is a complete presentation of your



achievement of all seven learning outcomes. Students are expected to identify which learning outcomes relate to their experiences and projects.

While the IB does not require any particular format for the CAS portfolio, a three-part portfolio may appeal to students. Profile-Experiences-Evidence could serve as a basic organizational model. To help keep track of your experiences, there is a log form at the end of this handbook. Please remember, the log does not represent reflection or conclusive evidence of experiential learning. However, a log is required as a part of your documentation.

## **Final Word**

The beauty of the CAS programme is that it is an individual experience designed by you, for you. Yes, CAS is about reaching out to your local, national and global community, but it is also about reflecting upon your activities and actions. It's about becoming an active member of life and learning who you are. We hope you enjoy the journey and are here to help guide and advise you through the CAS adventure.

We look forward to the conversations, photographs, art, song, dance, laughter and tears of your next two years and we are privileged to be a part of your CAS experience.

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

~John Dewey



CAS Project:						
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