

Why You Should Be Crazy For CAS

By Boris Choy

Creativity Action Service, or CAS in short, is one of the three core elements of the internationally renowned International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. It is described by the IB as “a fundamental part of the programme and takes seriously the importance of life outside the world of scholarship, providing a refreshing counterbalance to academic studies” (International Baccalaureate, 2013). And yet, students just cannot seem to appreciate this “refreshing counterbalance”.

Perhaps the reason behind why so many students undervalue CAS is in their own perception. “Chore”, it seems, forms the general attitude towards CAS, rather than what it should be - “Opportunity”.

Possessing three distinct categories, “Creativity”, “Action”, and “Service”, CAS encourages students to pursue their own passions. More than anything, CAS is an opportunity for students to use their strengths and interests in a way that can boost some very important 21st century life skills.

With each category, a different attribute is developed. “Creativity” stimulates a student’s ability to plan, to express, and to bring things into existence. “Action” encourages the student to become active, whether it is in sports, involvement of physical endurance, or in the conquest of personal fears. “Service” allows the student to identify problems facing the community and their ethical implications, as well as urging them to find solutions.

On top of the immediate learning outcomes and the sense of self-fulfillment, CAS can also play a massive role in the future of a student. With a constantly evolving world, recruiting universities and businesses look for more than just an excellent academic record. They don’t want lifeless robots that only know how to regurgitate paragraphs of a textbook. They want people who can use their imaginations, people who can take new ideas into play. They know to trust people who have healthy lifestyles, people who are well balanced with positions in management. They want people who can understand the textbooks and make ethical judgments and decisions.

To quote the eternally classic ‘Crimson Tide’:

“Rickover gave me my command, a checklist, a target and a button to push. All I gotta know is how to push it, they tell me when. They seem to want you to know why.” (Simpson, Bruckheimer & Scott, 1995)

Today, major companies recognise that many skills developed in CAS are skills that they want in their employees. Even having CAS on your record to begin with is a major boost; it shows experience and initiative developed towards or through unpaid labour.

Recent studies by Universum have shown that 58% of employers look for **self-monitoring skills** (Universum, 2012). This directly correlates with several of the outcomes listed in the CAS programme:

Being involved in planning activities shows ambition, organisational skills, and problem-solving ability. It proves that you possess leadership skills and will not tremble when given responsibility.

When you **develop an awareness of your strengths and areas for growth**, it shows that you can understand your weaknesses and independently work towards improving those qualities. It shows that you are confident about what you can do and have capacity to develop what you cannot.

To **show perseverance and commitment in your activities** communicates that you are self-motivated and prepared to be dedicated to the job. Possible employers see that you are adaptable and will follow through in spite of any problems or negative influences.

Another favourable trait discovered through this study is **intellectual curiosity** (57%), a need to question ideas and a fearlessness to try new things (Universum, 2012). Whether it be **addressing issues** or **identifying ethical implications**, CAS is driven by students who use their creativity, their ideas, and take action towards a cause.

So not only is CAS a goldmine of opportunity for student potential, it could also be a pivotal point in future education and job opportunities. What is more, doing CAS feels good. It is a sense of achievement that comes only from doing something worthwhile.

Bearing all this in mind, students should ask not what they must do for CAS, but what they can do for CAS, and what CAS in turn can do for them.

Bibliography

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