



DESERT ACADEMY

Engaging the mind. Engaging the world.

Student CAS Guide

CAS OVERVIEW

What is CAS?

CAS - Creativity, Action, Service

The CAS program emphasizes experiential learning in the creative arts, bodily action, and community service. Students learn by becoming involved in tasks that have real consequences and reflecting on these experiences over time. The goal of CAS is to consistently involve students in their communities in order to encourage life long learning and active citizenship.

Over the course of the school year, students complete a certain number of CAS hours, depending on their grade level. These hours should be evenly distributed between creativity, action, and service. Students can log a maximum of 20 hours per activity. CAS tasks should be ACTIVE; passive pursuits, such as attending sports events, viewing art, or attending performances do not qualify for CAS credit. The focus should be on developing new skills and taking on new roles.

In order to graduate from Desert Academy, students must complete 3 CAS credits (.5 in both ninth and tenth grade, 1 in eleventh grade and 1 in twelfth grade.) In addition, middle school students must complete 45 hours per year in order to be promoted to high school.

CAS hour requirements by grade level:

Grade Level	7	8	9	10	11	12
Hours Required per School Year	45	45	60	60	75	75

All three aspects of CAS should be interpreted as imaginatively as possible to cover a wide range of creative, active and service endeavors outside the normal school curriculum. **Students should be engaged in group activities and especially in new roles when possible.** Individual commitment to learning an art form or a sport is allowed as long as goals are set and the student reflects on his/her progress.

What defines a CAS activity?

Creativity - This aspect of CAS is interpreted as imaginatively as possible to cover a wide range of arts and other activities outside the normal curriculum that include creative thinking in the design and carrying out of service projects.

Action - This aspect of CAS can include participation in individual and team sports and physical activities outside the normal curriculum; it also includes physical activity involved in carrying out creative and service projects.

Service - Service involves interaction, such as the building of links with individuals or groups in the community. The community may be the school, the local district, or it may exist on national or international levels (such as undertaking projects of assistance in a developing country).

All activities/projects - Students should be encouraged towards group and team activities, and undertaking new roles, but an individual commitment is acceptable where the general requirements of CAS are met: goals are set and the student reflects on progress.

Guiding questions for the student when choosing CAS activities:

- Is the activity a **new role** for me?
- Is it a **real task** that I am going to undertake?
- Does it have **real consequences** for other people and for me?
- What do I hope **to learn** from getting involved?
- How can this activity **benefit** other people?
- What can I **reflect** on during this activity?

Examples of CAS activities:

- Recreational activities for orphans and elderly.
- Writing for a school newspaper, literary journal, or yearbook (outside of school hours)
- Plays/drama festival.
- Choir and dancing competition.
- Writing stories and poetry competitions.
- Coaching disadvantaged children in different sports.
- Mountain climbing/taking part in an expedition
- Taking part in walkathons/races to raise money for various charities.
- Community clean up
- Building/repairing a school.
- Emergency action.

- Tutoring disadvantaged children.
- Thanksgiving/Christmas dinner for people in need.
- Habitat for Humanity
- Helping youth organizations.
- Tutoring adults
- Literacy campaigns
- Teaching English to disadvantaged children
- Painting murals. Painting walls in different institutions
- Recycling programs
- Volunteering at a hospital
- School sport

What is not CAS?

- Any class, activity, or project that is already part of the student's academic program.
- An activity for which a student is personally rewarded either financially or with some other benefit (unless this benefit is passed on in full to a worthy cause).
- Doing simple, tedious and repetitive work, like returning school library books to the shelves or stuffing envelopes.
- Working in a retirement home or children's home where the student:
 - has no idea of how the home operates
 - is just making sandwiches
 - has no contact at all with the old people or children
 - actually does no service for other people.
- A passive pursuit, such as a visit to a museum, the theatre, art exhibition, concert or sports event, unless it clearly inspires work in a related activity in which a student is already engaged.
- All forms of duty within the family.
- Devotion and any activity that can be incorporated as proselytizing.
- Work experience that only benefits the student.
- Fund-raising with no clearly defined topic in sight.
- An activity where there is no leader or responsible adult on site to evaluate and confirm student performance.
- Activities that cause division among different groups in the community.

CAS Requirements

Performing CAS

Begin by planning and participating in your chosen CAS activities. If you need help with CAS ideas make an appointment with the CAS coordinator, Stephanie Binkley. Make sure you are getting the signatures of supervising adult(s) for each different activity you complete. The signature verifies not only that you participated in a particular activity but also the number of hours of your participation.

Reflecting on your CAS experiences

If you are choosing the option of keeping a reflective journal this year, you should write a brief reflection (addressing the questions on the following page) for each

activity in which you engage. The inclusion of photos, drawings, quotes, brochures, etc. will enhance your journal.

If you choose the option of writing a reflective essay, this should be done at the completion of all your CAS activities. Like the reflective journal, you must address the guiding questions on the following page when writing your essay.

Sample reflections can be found in the last section of this guide.

Requirements for Written Reflections

Students have **two options** for writing their CAS reflections. Students may either write a reflective essay or they may keep a reflective journal. Regardless of the method of reflection chosen, the guiding questions must be addressed for each CAS experience.

Requirements for reflective essay:

- Must be at least two typed pages using Times New Roman or Ariel font/12 point
- Must address all CAS activities using the guiding questions found below
- Students are encouraged to include photos, drawings, or brochures in their essays

Requirements for reflective journal:

- Journal must be some kind of self-contained notebook (composition book, binder, etc). Do not turn in loose pages.
- Journal must contain entries that address the guiding questions about each CAS activity.
- Journal entries may be handwritten or typed. If typed, please use Times New Roman or Ariel fonts/12 point.
- Journals should contain photos, drawings, brochures, poetry, short stories or quotes – anything which illustrates/reflects CAS experiences.

Guiding Questions for CAS Reflections:

1. Describe the activity. What did you do at each stage? Include dates where relevant.
2. What did you hope to accomplish by this activity? What did you actually accomplish?
3. What difficulties did you encounter?
4. Did you feel at any stage that you were failing to achieve what you wanted from this activity?
5. What did you hope to learn from this activity, about yourself, about others, or about academic subjects? (For example: self-confidence, modesty, respect, awareness, responsibility, commitment, initiative, determination, new skills, etc.)
6. Did anyone help you during this activity? If so, describe the help given. How did this affect your experience?

7. How did this activity benefit other people or institutions?
8. What would you change if you did this same activity again?
9. What would you like to do next if you could continue with this activity?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of their CAS experience as a whole, including their reflections, there should be evidence that students have:

- **Increased their awareness of their own strengths and areas for 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
- **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. It can be shown in activities that are part of larger projects, for example, ongoing school activities in the larger community, as well as in small student-led activities.
- **Worked collaboratively with others**

Collaboration can be shown in many different activities, such as team sports, playing in a band, or helping in a kindergarten class. At least one project involving collaboration and the integration of at least two of creativity, action, and service is required.
- **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.
- **Engaged with issues of global importance**

Students may be involved in 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). Evidence of thinking about ethical issues can be shown in various ways, including journal entries and conversations with CAS advisers.

