

The following is provided as an example of the kind of research proposal that the IB Research Committee expects to receive. Unless absolutely necessary, the length of the proposal should not exceed 5 pages of A4, single-spaced.

A research proposal to investigate the aims of the CAS component of the IB Diploma Programme

1. Abstract

Name of researcher and brief CV including affiliation, academic degrees and publications (if any). This project seeks to identify how different groups view the aims of the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) component of the IB Diploma. By comparing the information contained in the written protocols used by students and schools to evaluate the course against the opinions of subject experts it is hoped to define the strengths and weaknesses of the current CAS programme.

2. Background to the proposed research

Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) is unique to the IB Diploma programme. The main aim of CAS is to make students aware that learning extends beyond the classroom into the wider community of which they are a part. There is no external evaluation of student performance on CAS. Students have to maintain a record of their contribution to the CAS programme through self-reports which are supplemented by an individual written report from the CAS co-ordinator. The co-ordinator decides whether or not students have successfully completed the course and the results are sent to the IB Regional Office. CAS results are entered into an assessment matrix with the results from Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Extended Essay (EE) and together they contribute a maximum of three points to final Diploma scores.

While CAS results may not contribute significantly to the overall Diploma assessment, it is a core part of the programme and central to the IB's philosophy of international education. The benefits of CAS to the individual student are detailed in the IB literature, but it appears that no substantive research has been done to establish the validity of the claims.

An educational programme is considered to be a valid course of instruction if, a) the aims relate directly to the constructs being measured (construct validity), b) outcomes are related to the programme contents (content validity), and c) it can be shown that students have benefited from the experience in tangible, positive ways (consequential validity) (Messick, 1989). The application of these criteria to CAS is problematic, however. This is due, in part, to the fact that the programme outcomes are difficult to measure since they are expressed in broad, experiential terms, and partly due to the fact that there is no common content to assess because students are free to choose from a miscellany of CAS activities. Therefore, in order to evaluate CAS, it will be necessary to a) define more precisely what the programme seeks to achieve, and b) develop common assessment criteria which can be applied to diverse activities. The research proposed in this document is only concerned with the first of the two issues.

3. Relevance for the IB

The results of the research should provide the IB with useful information which will facilitate appropriate changes to the CAS programme.

4. Research questions

1. This proposal will address the following questions:
2. How do the principle stake holders – students, schools and IB – perceive the aims of CAS?
3. In what areas do the groups differ in their views?
4. In what areas do the groups concur?
5. Do the views held by students and schools vary according to
 - the type of CAS activities undertaken?
 - regional differences?
 - national differences?
 - local differences?

5. Project Description

A. Methodology

The data for study will come from the reporting protocols produced by students and CAS co-ordinators as part of the programme requirements. The views of the IB will be elicited from members of the IB's CAS working group. Each member, independently, will be asked to prepare a set of written statements which they feel reflect the aims of the CAS programme. These 'expert' views will represent the *de facto* curriculum aims against which the views of others will be compared.

The stages in the research process will be as follows:

1. Identify a representative sample of twelve (12) IB schools. The selection will be stratified by region, country, and language of instruction so as to reflect, as closely as possible, the variety and balance of IB Diploma schools world-wide.
2. IB regional offices will collect all student and co-ordinator reports from the selected schools and send them to the research project office.
3. The texts from all reports will be word processed and stored on a PC.
4. The collective texts from each of the three groups will be analysed separately to identify key phrases relating to the aims and outcomes of the CAS programme. Content analysis will be carried out using an appropriate computer programme.
5. The three sets of key phrases will be compared to address the research questions specified in section B.
6. A draft report will be submitted to the IB Research Committee for comments.
7. The final research report will be completed.

B. Expected outcomes

By identifying where the sample groups converge and diverge in their opinions it should be possible to develop appropriate survey instruments which can be administered to a broader cross-section of the three groups, as well as other

interested parties, e.g., parents, university admissions personnel and employers. A more comprehensive study will increase the reliability and generalisability of the research and, ultimately, should provide an indication of where the aims of CAS programme need to be refined or developed further.

C. Timetable

The project is expected to take around 6 months from the time all of the CAS documentation has been received to the completion of the draft project report. The estimated breakdown is:

1. Keyboarding the CAS documentation 1 month
2. Analysing the texts 3 months
3. Producing the draft project report 2 months

6. Dissemination of the completed research

It is hoped that the research will be published in one of the major international journals in international education.

7. Funding

The project will be funded by the Community Education Group in conjunction with funding provided by my educational institution.

The funding will be required to cover the costs of keyboarding the documentation as well as distribution and collation of questionnaires etc.

A budget can be provided if required.

Reference

Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In Linn, Robert L. (Ed.) *Educational Measurement* (3rd Edition). American Council on Education. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

CAS Guide (2001) IB, Geneva
(plus other relevant references)