Updated June 2024: Use of AI tools within submission of evidence for Individual and Organisational Certification

With the growing use of AI tools and platforms to generate text and content within documents, the question has inevitably arisen "Is it okay to use AI tools to generate responses in order to complete individual Participant Forms or other CL forms to apply for individual or other certification schemes within Carbon Literacy?".

The answer, as a general rule, is no.

All we see to assess whether or not an individual is Carbon Literate is the evidence that is submitted on their behalf. These forms are an individual assessment of Carbon Literacy. We are keen to understand what a learner has taken from their training and how a learner is engaging with low-carbon behaviour change, taking into consideration their ability level.

We understand that AI can be used in a variety of different ways; as a research tool, a writing tool and to find answers to questions. Tools such as those for Spelling and Grammar or Speech-to-Text can help learners with a variety of challenges get their thoughts and ideas across without compromising our ability to understand what a participant has learnt and how that has translated into action (more on this here). However, to protect the integrity of the assessment we do need to exclude the use of AI to simply generate the content of a submission.

In the instance of evidence forms being flagged as being largely created by AI;

In cases where these programmes have been used, it becomes more about what the AI programme knows about the topic. We have incorporated our own assessment mechanisms to identify when these types of tools have been used by a participant with little or no learner input into the response or idea. It is for these cases The Carbon Literacy Project will ask for evidence to be resubmitted, or in some instances they'll be invited to a short, informal conversation with one of our team members (via Zoom). During the call, we will speak to the learner about their actions to find out more about why they committed to these particular actions, and how they intend to achieve them. We'll use the call with the learner to make a decision on their Carbon Literacy and certify them accordingly. The decision of The Carbon Literacy Trust on this is final.

If our assessment mechanisms identify a 'high probability' of AI use from numerous cohorts of evidence from the same organisation we will seek to work with that organisation to identify the causes, and support trainers to better communicate the CLP stance on AI-content generation to their learners.

Why have we taken this approach?

To ensure the hard work of our existing learners and trainers is not undermined and the quality of an individual Carbon Literacy certification continues to uphold its strong reputation.

How can you support our approach?

We encourage trainers to highlight any additional learning needs for a particular group of learners, or specific learner, so that we can take this into consideration when reviewing evidence submissions. We also provide an opportunity within the Participant Form for learners to highlight anything they would like us to take into consideration during the evidence review process. This can be found on page 2 under the 'Extra Information (optional)' space. This helps our team make an accurate and informed decision. We meet learners where they are and reasonably adjust requirements depending on a number of factors relating to the individual and/or group; including – ability, age, opportunity and influence. It is for this reason Carbon Literacy training is so adaptable and can be used as a learning tool for a variety of audiences across society.

We would encourage restructuring a course to ensure live trainer presence during evidence completion, wherever possible. Trainers play an enormously valuable role in supporting and coaching each learner, helping them recognise their own agency and thus committing to high quality actions. "Post-event actions" tend to result in a much lower evidence completion rate and ultimately a much lower pass rate.

We are aware that text which has been machine-translated, by Google translate for example, can incorrectly flag as AI generated due to the way translation tools work. Please encourage and ensure all learners write in the language they feel most comfortable with, and do not seek to machine translate it themselves. We have translation tools which we can use upon receipt of the evidence, which will reduce the risk of false positives, and additionally we feel that learners can express themselves more effectively this way.

In order to make this policy clear to all organisations and learners it is:

1. Covered in the Trainers section of the Project website www.carbonliteracy.com

2. Publicised via our CLP Pioneers Network for facilitators, trainers and consultants, together with some advice for trainers on how to deal with the situation when they suspect evidence given to them for submission may have been AI-generated.

3. Thank you for your cooperation and if you would like to discuss any of the above in more detail please do get in touch at info@carbonliteracy.com

4. Made clear in a statement on the Participant Form itself.

Advice for trainers and consultants who think there has been use of AI in the submission of evidence

We don't want to assume that everyone involved in the admin of Carbon Literacy sessions has the same amount of time to commit to reviewing forms (though we would always advise some sense check wherever possible before submission to CLP). We know that some deliver training as part of their job role, or as a business opportunity, but there are also some who do this on a voluntary basis, and equally, in the same way that learners have different abilities, the same applies to trainers. We also understand that this is new technology, that many are still very unfamiliar with, so we are not relying on or asking trainers directly to spot this. If you would like to familiarise yourselves with the basics, and intervene before we might, we are sharing these tips on spotting the use of AI-content generator tools here.

In truth, it's also a bit awkward as the trainer if you think one of your learners has used content generation software to create the majority of their application.

Pragmatically – here are a couple of suggestions for you:

If you are concerned, it might be effective to proactively contact the learner before submitting to us, and communicate something along the lines of the below:

"Reading your application, it has some aspects which read as if it had been generated using AI. The Carbon Literacy Project uses software tools to detect the use of AI to protect the integrity of Carbon Literacy certification, and looking at the wording of your application I am worried that it may trigger these tools. If that's the case, they will likely either ask you to re-write and resubmit your application, or you will be invited to have a short online meeting with a CLP team member so that they can better gauge your understanding, and gather some further evidence in order to pass your submission. If you would like to revise any aspects of your application prior to me submitting it on your behalf, please return it by [date]. If I don't hear otherwise, I'll submit the current application on your behalf, as is, on [date]"

In this way, you are doing everything you can to maintain integrity (and send a message to your learner groups that use of AI content generation tools in this way is unacceptable) but making no accusations. And whilst demonstrating your experience as a trainer, you are leaving the responsibility for action entirely with the learner...

Alternatively, if you are unsure or don't want to intervene in this way, you may wish to just submit the learners' evidence, and leave it up to the Project to assess - your call! Thank you for your cooperation.