Course Creation & Definitions Guidance

The Carbon Literacy Project

Registered Charity No.: 1156722

Contents

Context

This guidance document answers common questions on the delivery format of Carbon Literacy (CL) courses. In this document, we clarify the **two learning styles** associated with Carbon Literacy training and **provide examples of how they can be implemented**. In addition, we recognise appropriateness factors which influence the balance of learning styles when developing a course. By defining the key terms below, we aim to **minimise any confusion and to ensure consistency** across various delivery settings. This has been created drawing on the experiences of both our team, and our Carbon Literacy trainers, and we hope to continue maximising the learnings from trainers as the FAQ section grows.

If you have any questions when going through this document, please contact us at **criteriacheckers@carbonliteracy.com**

Helpful technical terminology

Delivery format	The overall design, configuration and setup of a course, made up from the factors below
Learning style	The educational approach used when delivering the course content: synchronous or asynchronous (e.g. face-to-face, live workshop, E-Learning, Learning Management System)
Audience type	The group of learners the trainer intends to deliver to (e.g. closed or open, internally or externally facing)
Delivery setting	The context in which training is delivered (e.g. in-person, online, etc…)
Audience appropriateness	Characteristics of the learners which influence how the training should be delivered e.g. levels of reading or IT literacy, determining how much online or asynchronous learning might be appropriate

Terminology explained: Learning Style

Carbon Literacy training can either be made up **entirely** of synchronous learning, or a **combination** of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Carbon Literacy training cannot be purely asynchronous learning. Synchronous and asynchronous are defined below with some examples of formats and common terms related to both styles.

Synchronous Learning

This is the 'real time' or 'live' element of the training, which promotes **group interaction** through activities, either in-person (in the same room) or online (e.g. via Zoom, Teams, Webex, etc.).

Commonly associated with the 'Group Enquiry' and 'Communication' criteria in the Carbon Literacy Standard

Face-to-Face Session

A session that occurs in person, where the trainer and learners are in the same room at the same time.

'Live' Workshop / Group Session

A session that occurs in real time so that the learners are present either in person, online, or both. This is not pre-recorded or in the form of e-learning.

Interactive Training

A session that requires learner participation via small group discussions as well as activities to encourage further discussion.

Asynchronous Learning

In contrast, asynchronous learning is a teaching method where learners access and work through materials **alone** and **at their own pace**. Asynchronous learning can be completed through various formats, either through a combination of self-paced/self-directed learning such as videos, further reading, solo activities; and/or through a formal Learning Management System (LMS).

Generally used for the less interactive 'Climate Science' criteria of the Carbon Literacy Standard

E-Learning
For the purposes of Carbon Literacy training, e-learning refers to any online learning which learners are directed to do in addition to the live sessions. Two different approaches to e-learning commonly used by trainers:

Learning Management System (LMS): A software application that supports the creation, management, delivery and tracking of learning. This ensures all materials have been engaged with and understood (through progress tracking & quiz/test elements).

Self-paced/self-directed learning: A teaching method where learners individually progress through materials at their own pace. Learners can be asked to engage with a variety of materials, such as videos/documentaries, read information or reflect on activities.

⚠️ **Note:** We generally **prefer a higher percentage of synchronous learning**, as it enables interaction between learners, so the 'Group Enquiry' criterion within the CL Standard is met. Based on best practice from other trainers, **we feel more confident accrediting training that uses a formal LMS for asynchronous learning**. In either scenario, trainers must clearly show how e-learning content will be integrated into live sessions, including a knowledge check on the asynchronous learning (e.g. a quiz, key points review, or opening discussion). Learners should also have the opportunity to ask questions and review some asynchronous content together.

Terminology explained: Audience Type

Open Course
An externally facing CL course which is typically advertised publicly to learners in relation to their **common geographical, contextual and/or professional background**. Examples include:

A 'Carbon Literacy for Community Leaders' course, being delivered to leaders of various community groups, within the same session.

Carbon Literacy training initiatives designed to be delivered to a variety of organisations within a specific sector, e.g. 'CL for Hairdressers'.

Another example of an open course could include a 'Carbon Literacy for Interested Organisations' (CLIO) course. While they still allow individuals to gain CL certification on completion, they differ from typical Carbon Literacy courses in being designed specifically for individuals with an interest in rolling out CL more widely. CLIO courses are more generic to cover a broader range of topics & sectors. They are intended to introduce organisations to Carbon Literacy but are not sufficiently tailored or relevant enough for wider rollout within an organisation. More information and FAQs on CLIO courses and their use are available here.

Closed Course
An internally facing, bespoke course that has been designed to be delivered to a single organisation, for example, a Carbon Literacy course designed by a supermarket to be delivered to its own staff. These courses have organisation-specific content regarding emissions and carbon reduction strategies. Most medium to large sized organisations should be creating closed courses to maximise the relevance for learners.

Terminology explained: Delivery Setting

In-person: Delivery that is carried out in 'real-time', exclusively in a physical setting/room together.

Online/Distance Delivery: Delivery that is carried out in 'real-time', exclusively via an online platform such as Zoom, Teams, Webex, etc.

Mixed Delivery (In-person & Online): Delivery that is carried out in 'real-time', but through a combination of both in-person & online training, e.g. part 1 - online (via Zoom), part 2 - in person (in a physical room).

Flexible: Delivery that is carried out in 'real-time', but could be delivered in either an in-person or online setting. These courses can be created and accredited in a way where this is adaptable depending on the group.

Note: Please be aware, if you are planning to run your training in a **dual setting** (i.e. **simultaneous** training delivered to both a group in a physical setting/room together, and with a group via an online platform), then you must ensure your delivery format is **flexible**. Dual setting training must involve the support of **at least one co-facilitator plus lead trainer** to ensure high-quality delivery to both audiences. It is not recommended to start with this delivery setting given the additional challenges this will bring.

Guidance on Delivery Format

Q What is our preferred asynchronous approach?

A The key to asynchronous learning is to make sure **learners engage with the information** that is being delivered. We advocate that trainers attempt to **track**, **test**, and **promote discussion** regarding the e-learning content learners navigate in their own time.

With the above in mind, a **Learning Management System (LMS)** is usually the preferred approach to e-learning, because tracking and testing are often built-in to maximise user comprehension. It is harder to track/test progress where learners are asked to self-direct their learning through a variety of resources and mediums, meaning the material could be ignored or skimmed through with minimal attention to detail. Therefore, if training includes some asynchronous delivery, **untracked learning should always be limited**, and a **higher proportion of tracked learning would always be better.**

This must be in combination with synchronous delivery, which always needs to be part of the day's worth of learning, to be accredited as CL.

Q How should self-directed learning be reinforced?

A Particularly when self-directed learning is untracked, but also in relation to tracked e-learning, **it is important to bring elements of that learning into the synchronous delivery.** This reinforces their knowledge and ensures learners have engaged in the materials, as well as facilitating **group enquiry** on that material.

e.g. Asking learners to bring the results of a quiz or personal carbon footprint exercise into the live session for discussion

e.g. Starting a session with a short quiz or recap based on pre-session videos or reading (with learners pre-warned)

e.g. Inviting learners to compare statistics from self-directed materials with more recent data, particularly where resources are more than a couple of years old

⚠️ Note that for a course that includes asynchronous delivery to be accredited as Carbon Literacy training, the day's worth of learning must also contain synchronous delivery.

Guidance on Delivery Format

Q How does audience type affect the appropriateness of learning styles?

A The balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning will vary depending on the **audience and context.** The guidance below is based on the **experiences of a wide range of existing Carbon Literacy trainers**.

When a higher proportion of asynchronous learning may be appropriate:

When the audience is a closed group (i.e. colleagues or members of a single organisation). This is because in closed settings, learners **already know one another**, and there is some existing rapport present between members, something which requires more time to build in an open setting. This rapport is significant because it tends to enable an easy transition into group learning.

If the trainer can **exemplify an existing culture of successful e-learning** or **self-directed learning** within the organisation, then the argument for a greater proportion of asynchronous learning may be stronger.

Additionally, some learners might find group learning more difficult than in individual settings. Therefore, this might be another consideration and justification for a higher percentage of asynchronous learning. It also highlights the importance of **knowing your audience**.

Learner motivation and confidence in engagement:

On the other hand, in an open course setting, learners are almost always there because they have chosen to be.

In a closed course setting, it is important to consider the motivation behind learners in the group, i.e. are they undertaking this course **voluntarily,** or is this **mandatory** training? Audience type, coupled with the motivations of learners, are both important considerations when making decisions about learning style and how confident we can be that learners will complete untracked self-directed learning at their own pace. Underpinning this decision is a calculation of implied trust in the learners to engage with the self-directed learning.

⚠ Note: When trying to decide whether your course is appropriate for the intended audience and **suitable for different learning needs**, it's always best to **get in touch with us** so we can support and agree on the suggested balance.

Guidance on Delivery Format

Q What factors should be considered when thinking about using synchronous vs asynchronous learning styles?

A Learning styles will depend on factors relating to audience type (defined above).

Other factors - including (but not limited to) age, ability, access to appropriate technology, and any extra learning needs - must be considered.
It is equally important to think about the audience's understanding of climate science before attending the course.

When a course is accredited for a particular audience, it is reviewed with those specific learners in mind. In another scenario, with a different audience, the learning style may need to be adapted, as the existing ratio of synchronous and asynchronous delivery may no longer be suitable.

Below are examples which took the factors above into account when developing a CL course to make it most relevant for their learners.

e.g. An accredited course designed for roofers has a synchronous session discussing and justifying the need for low carbon practices. It is followed by a practical session to teach learners how to adopt these new low carbon technologies.

e.g. An agency that works primarily on preserving the environment developed a very effective LMS e-learning system. This enabled learners to work through the core concepts of Carbon Literacy at a speed suitable for them.

Justification for a higher percentage of e-learning was largely due to a combination of:
- Learners already having a strong base of climate knowledge going into the training;
- A strong culture of e-learning within the organisation, so learners were very comfortable and familiar with this style of learning;
- A sophisticated system that had been built with CL specifically in mind to create an engaging, bespoke experience for each learner as they worked through content.

The following synchronous sessions then put a large emphasis on group enquiry, inviting learners to share and learn from each other in discussion.

e.g. A course for gardeners was designed to be delivered in many shorter synchronous sessions over a week. The trainer chose this so the information would be engaging for learners who might struggle with long 'classroom' style sessions or are unfamiliar with e-learning platforms.

Guidance on Delivery Format

Q Is there any flexibility on what has been outlined within this document?

A Peer-to-peer learning is a core part of Carbon Literacy training, so we trust trainers to be very familiar with their audience and understand what will work for their groups. We have made these recommendations based on the years of learning since the rise of online and distance delivery.

As technology has improved, combined synchronous and asynchronous methods have become more viable and very popular options for those delivering CL in different spheres and settings.

Getting support early

When starting to develop an initiative, **please discuss with us as soon as possible** if there are questions around what might be most appropriate for a specific audience, and in relation to other factors; we are always happy to help and advise.

Active discussion between the lead trainer, delivery organisation and our team, throughout the whole Criteria Checking process, will ensure the **best solution for the audience** is agreed upon. If you'd like to discuss with a team member before starting to design training, please contact us at **criteriacheckers@carbonliteracy.com.**

Get in touch

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