

ONLYHUMANMADE.ORG · POLICY DOCUMENT · VERSION 1.0

Certification Policy: Human-Made vs. *AI-Assisted Work*

Defining the boundary between human authorship and machine generation for purposes of OHM certification. This document is binding on all certified creators, studios, and brand partners.

Effective date: April 13, 2026
Version: 1.0 — Initial release
Status: Active policy
Supersedes: N/A (first version)
Review cycle: Every 6 months
Maintained by: Policy & Standards Committee
Contact: hello@onlyhumanmade.org

§0 Preamble

This document establishes the binding definitional framework used by OnlyHumanMade (OHM) to determine whether a submitted work qualifies for certification as human-made. It is a living document, reviewed every six months and updated to reflect the evolving capabilities of AI tools and the evolving practices of human creators.

The purpose of this policy is not to be anti-technology. OHM does not require creators to reject tools, software, or digital workflows. The purpose is to draw a principled line between work where a human being is the primary author — where the creative decisions, the voice, the choices are theirs — and work where a machine is the primary generator, regardless of how a human frames or edits the output.

This line matters. It is the entire basis of the OHM seal's value. If the line is vague, the seal means nothing. If the line is too rigid, it excludes legitimate human creativity. This document attempts to draw it carefully, honestly, and with enough specificity to be useful.

NOTE

This policy applies to all submissions for OHM certification across all creative categories: visual art, writing, music, code, craft, design, film, and any other category accepted by OHM.

Where this policy is silent on a specific scenario, the applicant should contact hello@onlyhumanmade.org before submitting. Absence of a rule is not permission.

§1 Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this document. Where terms are left undefined, standard industry usage applies.

Term	Definition
Human-Made Work	A work in which a human being is the primary creative author: making the core aesthetic, structural, and expressive decisions, and producing the substantial majority of the output through their own effort, skill, and judgment.
AI-Assisted Work	A work in which AI tools are used in the creation

	process, but where human creative decisions dominate and the AI serves as a tool rather than a generator. May be eligible for certification depending on the nature and extent of AI use.
AI-Generated Work	A work where the substantial content — text, imagery, sound, or other output — is produced by an AI model in response to a prompt or instruction, regardless of how the output is subsequently edited or refined. Not eligible for certification.
Primary Author	The party responsible for the core creative decisions in a work: its concept, voice, structure, aesthetic choices, and expressive content.
AI Tool	Any software using machine learning, large language models, generative image models, neural audio synthesis, or similar AI technology to generate, complete, or substantially transform creative content.
Productivity Tool	Software that automates mechanical, technical, or administrative tasks without generating creative content: spell checkers, grammar checkers, autoformatters, DAW plugins, Photoshop filters, coding IDEs, etc.
Generative AI	A subset of AI tools capable of producing novel content (text, images, audio, code, etc.) from natural language prompts or other high-level instructions. Includes but is not limited to: GPT models, Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, Suno, Udio, GitHub Copilot, Claude, Gemini, and equivalent tools.
Certification	The formal OHM determination that a specific work meets the human-made standard defined in this policy, resulting in issuance of the OHM seal for that work.
Submission	A work presented to OHM for certification, accompanied by required process documentation.
Process Documentation	Evidence of how a work was created: draft files, version histories, session logs, sketches, recordings, Git commits, timestamped exports, or other artifacts demonstrating the human creative process.

§2 The Core Standard

A work is eligible for OHM certification if and only if the following three conditions are met:

1. The primary author of the work is a human being or a team of human beings.
2. The substantial creative content of the work — its ideas, voice, structure, imagery, sounds, or other expressive elements — was produced by human effort, skill, and judgment.
3. Any AI tools used in the creation process served as instruments in the human author's hands, not as generators of the work's primary content.

These three conditions must be satisfied together. Meeting two out of three is not sufficient for certification.

§ POLICY

The governing question in any certification determination is: "Who is the primary author of this work?"

If the answer is a human being who made the core creative decisions, the work is a candidate for certification.

If the answer is an AI model that generated the primary content in response to a prompt — even a very detailed prompt — the work is not eligible for certification, regardless of subsequent human editing.

§3 Permitted: Tools and Workflows

The following tools and workflows are consistent with human-made status. Their use does not disqualify a work from certification. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

3.1 Writing and Text

✓ PERMITTED

Word processors, text editors, and publishing software (Word, Scrivener, Google Docs, etc.)

Spell checkers and grammar checkers (Grammarly, ProWritingAid) — mechanical error correction only

Thesaurus and dictionary tools for word choice research
Research tools including search engines, databases, and reference managers
Translation tools used to assist a human translator (not to generate the full translation)
Transcription tools used to convert the creator's own spoken words to text
Text-to-speech tools used for proofreading by listening
Readability analyzers and structural outlines used to inform human revision

3.2 Visual Art and Design

✓ PERMITTED

Digital painting and drawing software (Procreate, Photoshop, Illustrator, Clip Studio)
Photo editing and retouching tools (Lightroom, Camera Raw) applied to the creator's own photographs
Filters, effects, and adjustments applied to the creator's own original imagery
Vector illustration tools and CAD software
Layout and design tools (InDesign, Figma, Canva used to arrange the creator's own content)
Color correction and grading tools
3D modeling software where the human builds and animates the models themselves
AI-powered upscaling or noise reduction applied to the creator's own original imagery
Background removal tools applied to photographs taken by the creator

3.3 Music and Audio

✓ PERMITTED

Digital audio workstations (Ableton, Logic Pro, Pro Tools, GarageBand)
MIDI sequencers and virtual instruments played or programmed by the human
Audio effects, EQ, compression, reverb, and mastering tools
Sample libraries used as instruments played by the human (one-shots, loops the human arranges)
Pitch correction (Auto-Tune, Melodyne) applied to the creator's own recorded voice or instrument
Audio editing and splicing tools
Notation software (Sibelius, Finale, MuseScore) for composing
Acoustic recording of the creator's own performance

3.4 Code and Software

✓ **PERMITTED**

IDEs, code editors, and version control systems (VS Code, Git, etc.)

Linters, formatters, and static analysis tools

Autocomplete features that complete a single line or short snippet based on the human's typed context — where the human is directing the logic

Documentation generators that extract comments and signatures the human wrote

Testing frameworks that run tests the human wrote

Package managers and dependency tools

Debuggers and profilers

3.5 Craft and Physical Work

✓ **PERMITTED**

Any physical craft where the human creates the object with their hands and tools: ceramics, woodworking, weaving, metalwork, glasswork, bookbinding, printmaking, etc.

Photography using cameras (film or digital) operated by the human

Darkroom processes and traditional printmaking

Digital photography and scanning of physical works created by the human

CNC machines or laser cutters operating from designs the human created

3D printing from models the human designed

§4 Not Permitted: Disqualifying AI Use

The following uses of AI tools are inconsistent with human-made status and disqualify a work from OHM certification. A work containing these elements in its primary content is not eligible for the OHM seal, regardless of the amount of subsequent human editing or curation.

4.1 Text and Writing

x NOT PERMITTED

Using a large language model (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, etc.) to generate any substantive portion of the text — including paragraphs, sections, scenes, stanzas, or arguments — that appears in the final work

Generating the text via AI prompt and then editing it, even substantially

Using AI to generate the structure, outline, or argument of a work and then filling it in

AI-generated translations presented as the creator's own translation work

Using AI to write in the creator's voice based on examples of their previous work

"Ghostwriting" by an AI — generating content that the human passes off as their own writing

4.2 Visual Art and Design

x NOT PERMITTED

Using text-to-image models (Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, Firefly, etc.) to generate images, illustrations, or visual elements that appear in the final work

Using AI image tools to generate a base image and then painting over it

Using AI inpainting or outpainting to extend, fill, or substantially alter a work's content

AI-generated backgrounds, characters, objects, or environments incorporated into an otherwise hand-drawn or photographed work

Using AI style transfer to apply an artistic style to a photograph in a way that generates the substantial visual content

AI-generated textures, patterns, or design elements used as primary visual components

4.3 Music and Audio

x NOT PERMITTED

Using AI music generation tools (Suno, Udio, MusicLM, etc.) to generate melodies, harmonies, arrangements, or any compositional element

AI-generated vocals, vocal performances, or voice synthesis presented as the creator's own

Using AI to generate stems or tracks and then mixing or arranging them

AI-generated sound design or foley that constitutes the primary sonic content of a work

Using AI voice cloning to generate spoken content

4.4 Code and Software

x NOT PERMITTED

Using AI coding assistants (GitHub Copilot, Cursor, Claude Code, etc.) to generate entire functions, classes, modules, or architectural components

Generating the primary logic or algorithm of a program via AI prompt

Using AI to generate the majority of a codebase, even with human review and editing

AI-generated tests, documentation, or configuration files presented as the creator's own original work

§5 The Grey Zone: Boundary Cases

Between clear human-made and clear AI-generated work lies a zone of genuine ambiguity. This section addresses the most common boundary cases and provides OHM's current position on each. These positions are subject to revision as technology and practice evolve.

5.1 The Governing Principle for Grey Zone Cases

Where a case is ambiguous, OHM applies the following test:

§ POLICY

AUTHORSHIP TEST: Remove all AI-generated content from the work. What remains — does it constitute the work?

If yes (the human-produced content is the work, and the AI content was incidental, corrective, or additive at the margins) → the work is likely certifiable.

If no (without the AI-generated content, there is no work, or the work is substantially different or lesser) → the work is likely not certifiable.

When in doubt, the burden of proof lies with the creator to demonstrate human authorship, not with OHM to prove AI generation.

5.2 Specific Grey Zone Cases

Example scenario	Verdict	Reasoning
Writer uses AI grammar suggestions (Grammarly) on their manuscript	Human-Made ✓	Grammar correction is a mechanical productivity tool, not creative generation. Analogous to a spell checker.
Writer uses AI to suggest alternative phrasings for a sentence they wrote, then selects one	Human-Made ✓	The human authored the sentence; the AI offered variants. Human selects and judges. Analogous to a thesaurus.
Writer uses AI to generate a paragraph they didn't like, rewrote entirely in their voice	Boundary case	If genuinely rewritten to the point the AI text is unrecognizable, may qualify. Must disclose in submission. Auditor reviews.
Writer uses AI to write 30% of a novel, writes the rest themselves	Not Eligible ✗	Substantial AI-generated content in the final work, regardless of proportion. The 30% is disqualifying.
Photographer uses AI noise reduction on their own photographs	Human-Made ✓	Noise reduction is a technical correction tool. The photograph is the human's work.
Illustrator uses AI to generate a background, draws characters over it	Not Eligible ✗	AI-generated content is part of the final work. The background is not the illustrator's work.
Artist uses Photoshop's AI "Generative Fill" to extend canvas on their painting	Not Eligible ✗	Generative Fill produces AI-generated content. Even a small AI element in the final image is disqualifying.
Musician uses AI to master their recorded tracks	Human-Made ✓	AI mastering is a technical process applied to the human's performance and composition. Analogous to professional mastering services.
Musician uses AI to generate drum patterns for their song	Not Eligible ✗	The drum pattern is a compositional element. AI-generated compositional elements are disqualifying.
Musician records themselves humming a melody, uses AI to transcribe it to sheet music	Human-Made ✓	The melody is the human's. AI transcription is a technical conversion, not generation.
Developer uses Copilot to autocomplete one line in the middle of code they're writing	Boundary case	Single-line autocomplete in an otherwise human-authored codebase may qualify.

		Sustained use across large portions of the codebase does not.
Developer uses AI to generate a full React component, integrates it into their app	Not Eligible ✗	The component is AI-generated. Integration does not constitute authorship of the component.
Translator uses AI to produce a first draft, rewrites it substantially	Boundary case	If the human translator's knowledge and judgment dominate the final output, may qualify. Must demonstrate significant departure from AI draft. Auditor reviews.
Creator uses AI to generate ideas or concepts, then creates the work themselves	Human-Made ✓	Ideation and brainstorming via AI, followed by human creation, is permitted. The work itself must be human-made.
Creator uses AI to generate reference images, then paints their own work from observation	Human-Made ✓	AI as a reference tool (like using Google Image Search) is permitted. The painted work is the creator's.
Creator uses AI to write a marketing description of their handmade product	Not applicable	The product itself may be certified. The marketing copy is separate — OHM certifies the work, not its description.

§6 Disclosure Requirements

Creators whose work falls into the permitted AI-assistance zone (Section 3) or grey zone cases (Section 5) determined to be certifiable are required to disclose their AI use in their certification submission. Disclosure does not disqualify a work — it is part of OHM's commitment to transparency.

6.1 What Must Be Disclosed

- Any AI tool used in the creation process, even if the use is clearly in the permitted zone
- The specific tool(s) used (e.g., "Grammarly for grammar checking," "Lightroom AI noise reduction," "one-line autocomplete in VS Code")

- The nature and extent of use (e.g., "applied to the final manuscript," "used on approximately 15% of the codebase for line completion")
- Any grey zone use that the creator believes qualifies under the Authorship Test in Section 5.1

6.2 What Need Not Be Disclosed

- Use of AI tools for entirely non-creative purposes: scheduling, communication, research (not content generation), accessibility aids
- Use of AI for purely administrative tasks related to the work but not part of the work itself

6.3 Consequences of Non-Disclosure

§ POLICY

Failure to disclose known AI use in a certification submission constitutes a violation of the Maker's Oath (Section 8) and grounds for immediate decertification.

Non-disclosure discovered after certification is treated as fraudulent misrepresentation and may result in permanent ban from OHM certification and referral for legal action under the terms of the Maker's Oath affidavit.

§7 Process Documentation Standards

All certification submissions must include process documentation demonstrating the human creative process. The following standards apply by category.

7.1 Acceptable Process Documentation

- Writing: Draft files with version history, revision timestamps, edit deltas, handwritten notes or outlines, research materials
- Visual art: Sketch files (Procreate timelapse, Photoshop history), layered source files (PSD, AI, CLIP), WIP photographs, reference materials
- Music: DAW session files (Ableton .als, Logic .logicx), stems with creation timestamps, audio recordings of the creation process, handwritten scores
- Code: Git commit history showing incremental development, issue trackers, design documents, architecture notes

- Craft: WIP photographs showing the creation process at multiple stages, video timelapse, material receipts
- Photography: RAW files, camera EXIF data, contact sheets, location records

7.2 Documentation Minimum Requirements

- Indie / Maker tier: Self-certification with at least one form of process documentation. Subject to spot audit.
- Studio tier: One form of process documentation for each submission. All submissions reviewed by metadata forensics. Flagged submissions escalated to human auditor.
- Enterprise tier: Full process documentation package for each certified work. All submissions reviewed by human auditor within 48 hours.

NOTE

Documentation that appears fabricated, inconsistent with the metadata forensics results, or otherwise suspicious will be escalated for human auditor review.

OHM reserves the right to request additional documentation at any point during or after the certification process.

Process documentation is held in confidence and is not published. Only the certification status and the cryptographic registry entry are public.

§8 The Maker's Oath

All applicants for OHM certification must sign the Maker's Oath — a legally binding declaration of human authorship. The Oath is not a formality. It is the mechanism by which the OHM seal derives its legal weight and its trustworthiness.

§ POLICY

TEXT OF THE MAKER'S OATH:

"I declare under penalty of perjury that the work submitted for OnlyHumanMade certification was created primarily by me (or my team), that I am the primary human author of its substantial creative content, that I have disclosed all AI tool use in my submission as required by OHM's Certification Policy, and that to the best of my knowledge this work meets the human-made standard defined in that policy.

I understand that false certification is fraudulent misrepresentation, that OHM may conduct spot audits at any time, and that discovery of a false certification may result in immediate decertification, permanent ban from OHM certification, public notice of the violation, and civil legal action under the terms of this oath.

This declaration is made in good faith. I stand behind my work with my name."

The Maker's Oath is signed digitally at the time of submission. It is accompanied by identity verification for Studio and Enterprise tier applicants. The signed oath is stored in OHM's records and constitutes the legal basis for any enforcement action.

§9 Enforcement and Appeals

9.1 Complaint Process

Any person may submit a complaint alleging that a certified work does not meet the human-made standard. Complaints must be submitted to hello@onlyhumanmade.org with supporting evidence. Anonymous complaints are accepted but given lower priority.

9.2 Investigation

OHM will investigate all credible complaints. Investigation may include: re-review of submitted process documentation, request for additional documentation from the creator, technical analysis of the work, and consultation with domain experts. Investigations are typically completed within 30 days.

9.3 Outcomes

- Complaint not substantiated: No action. Creator notified. Complainant notified.
- Complaint substantiated — unintentional violation: Decertification of the specific work. Creator may resubmit with corrected documentation. No ban.
- Complaint substantiated — deliberate misrepresentation: Immediate decertification of all works by the creator. Permanent ban from OHM certification. Public notice. Referral for legal action.

9.4 Appeals

A creator whose work is decertified may appeal within 30 days. Appeals must include new evidence not available at the time of investigation. Appeals are reviewed by a three-person panel that did not participate in the original investigation. The panel's decision is final.

§10 Policy Updates and Version History

This policy is reviewed every six months by the OHM Policy and Standards Committee. Updates are published at onlyhumanmade.org/policy and are effective 30 days after publication. Certified creators are notified of material changes by email.

OHM acknowledges that AI capabilities are advancing rapidly. This policy will evolve. Scenarios currently in the permitted zone may move to the grey zone or prohibited zone as AI tools become more capable and as the creative industry's norms around tool use change. OHM is committed to consulting with certified creators before making changes that significantly affect them.

Version History

Term	Definition
v1.0 — Apr 2026	Initial release. Establishes core framework, definitions, permitted/prohibited zones, grey zone guidance, and enforcement procedures.

§11 Contact and Questions

Questions about how this policy applies to a specific work or workflow should be directed to:

Policy & Standards Committee
OnlyHumanMade.org
hello@onlyhumanmade.org

OHM is committed to answering policy questions before submission, not after. If you are uncertain whether your workflow qualifies, ask first. We will provide written guidance that you may rely on in your submission.

 NOTE

This document is effective as of April 13, 2026.

OnlyHumanMade.org is a nonprofit certification body. This policy is published in the public interest and may be referenced by other organizations seeking to establish similar standards, with attribution.