CYPHER AI Usage Marking

Lightweight label for transparent AI contributions, supporting a shared AI-usage norm.

What it is

- **Shared language** (A0 – A5) for consistent AI usage discussion and disclosure, reducing guesswork and misinterpretation.
- **Learning tool** to build AI literacy: what AI is, what it can and can't do, and when to use it (or not).
- **Reader-facing cue** that signals how AI was used in the creation of the work product.
- **Community trust** building by shifting from detection and speculation to self-disclosure
- **Transparency tool** aligned with URI's guiding principle of clearly disclosing AI use

What it is not

- **Not a policy** or requirement
- **Not a restriction** on how AI tools are used
- **Not a ranking**, as all levels can yield good or poor work
- **Not a detection or surveillance** tool

Important reminder:

AI-use level ≠ human effort level

≠ quality and reliability

CYPHER AI Usage Marking

A0 — Human Authored
Content created entirely by a human author.

A1 — AI-Edited
AI tools were used for grammar, clarity, and formatting.

A2 — AI-Assisted Ideation
AI tools were used for brainstorming and outlining.
The document was written, reviewed, and approved by the human author.

A3 — AI-Assisted Drafting
AI tools were used to generate portions of the draft.
The human author verified and revised the content.

A4 — AI-Generated
AI tools generated most or all of the content.
Human review was performed at a high level.

A5 — Fully AI-Generated
The document was generated entirely by AI tools, with minimal or no human review.
It should be treated as one of multiple possible information sources.

CYPHER AI Usage Marking

Disclaimer and Usage Guidance

Disclaimer:

The CYPHER AI Usage Marking system is intended for use in academic settings. If you use or adapt this system, please **acknowledge** its source as the URI CYPHER Center.

Its effectiveness depends largely on how it is implemented, especially through **clear communication** with stakeholders and **thoughtful integration** into specific contexts.

Acknowledgement:

We welcome feedback, suggestions, and especially examples of how the CYPHER marking system is used in your context. We encourage you to share these with us at yansun@uri.edu.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of CYPHER and ECBE colleagues at URI, the CYPHER Chief AI Officer, and all those who have shared use cases and implementation experiences.

Context for URI Participants

URI Guiding Principles: https://its.uri.edu/ai-at-uri/, including

Transparency: Clearly disclose when AI tools are used to create content or inform decisions.

- We are seeing more and more A3 and A4 documents in professional settings. Unfortunately, marking tools are not yet (conveniently) available to our faculty and staff.
- Tools for detecting AI-generated text are widely available. They can provide some insights, but not reliable.
- AI-assisted or AI-generated content can be of high quality. However, its usage needs to be transparent to maintain trust and reduce institutional and personal risk.

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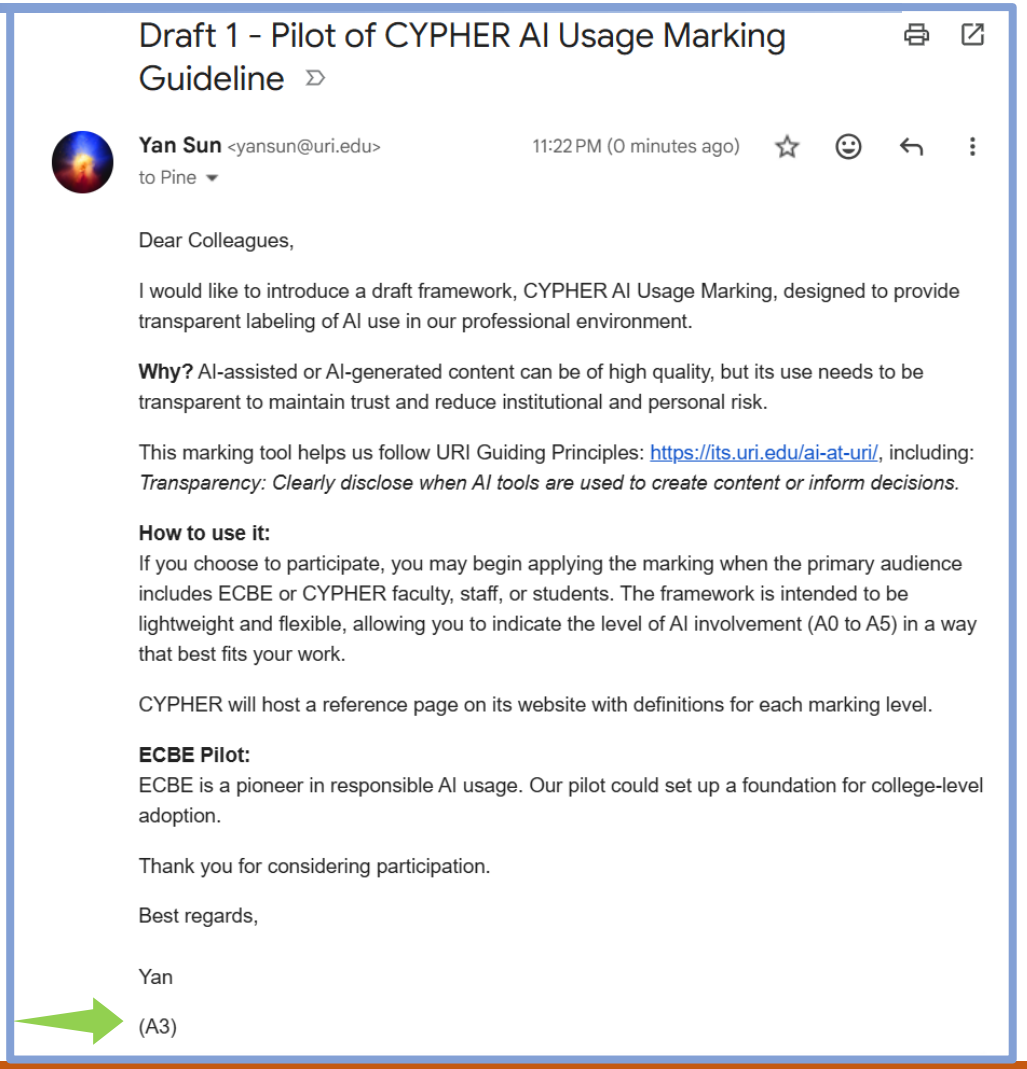
How to use

Scenario A - Drafting a memo-like email (serious, longer than a few lines)

Scenario 1 –

- **A0** – I wrote this email as I would have before the release of ChatGPT3.0.
- **A1** – I wrote a draft and then used AI for grammar, clarity, or formatting improvements.
- **A2** – I used AI for brainstorming or outlining ideas, but wrote the email myself.
- **A3** – I used AI to generate a draft and then carefully reviewed and edited it.
- **A4** – I used AI to generate most of the content, performed a quick review, and sent it.
- **A5** – I used an AI agent to draft and send this email with minimal or no review.



Draft 1 - Pilot of CYPHER AI Usage Marking Guideline

Yan Sun <yansun@uri.edu> 11:22 PM (0 minutes ago)
to Pine

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to introduce a draft framework, CYPHER AI Usage Marking, designed to provide transparent labeling of AI use in our professional environment.

Why? AI-assisted or AI-generated content can be of high quality, but its use needs to be transparent to maintain trust and reduce institutional and personal risk.

This marking tool helps us follow URI Guiding Principles: https://its.uri.edu/ai-at-uri/, including: *Transparency: Clearly disclose when AI tools are used to create content or inform decisions.*

How to use it:
If you choose to participate, you may begin applying the marking when the primary audience includes ECBE or CYPHER faculty, staff, or students. The framework is intended to be lightweight and flexible, allowing you to indicate the level of AI involvement (A0 to A5) in a way that best fits your work.

CYPHER will host a reference page on its website with definitions for each marking level.

ECBE Pilot:
ECBE is a pioneer in responsible AI usage. Our pilot could set up a foundation for college-level adoption.

Thank you for considering participation.

Best regards,

Yan

(A3)

Why A3?

Draft 1 - Pilot of CYPHER AI Usage Marking Guideline

Yan Sun <yansun@uri.edu> 11:22 PM (0 minutes ago)
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Thank you for considering participation.

Best regards,

Yan

(A3)

Draft 2 - Pilot of CYPHER AI Usage Marking Guideline

Yan Sun <yansun@uri.edu> 11:22 PM (2 minutes ago)
to Pine

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to introduce a draft framework, *CYPHER AI Usage Marking*, designed to provide transparent and consistent labeling of AI use in academic and professional materials. The goal is to support clarity, trust, and shared understanding as AI tools become more integrated into our work.

I am proposing a pilot of this framework within ECBE and CYPHER. Participation is entirely optional, and I welcome your feedback as we explore its usefulness in practice.

How to use it:
If you choose to participate, you may begin applying the marking when the primary audience includes ECBE or CYPHER faculty, staff, or students. The framework is intended to be lightweight and flexible, allowing you to indicate the level of AI involvement (A0 to A5) in a way that best fits your work.

At a later stage, CYPHER will host a reference page on its website with definitions and examples for each marking level. In the meantime, if questions arise, I am happy to provide clarification or share the draft guidance.

This is an exploratory effort, and your input will be valuable in determining whether and how we refine or expand its use.

Thank you for considering participation.

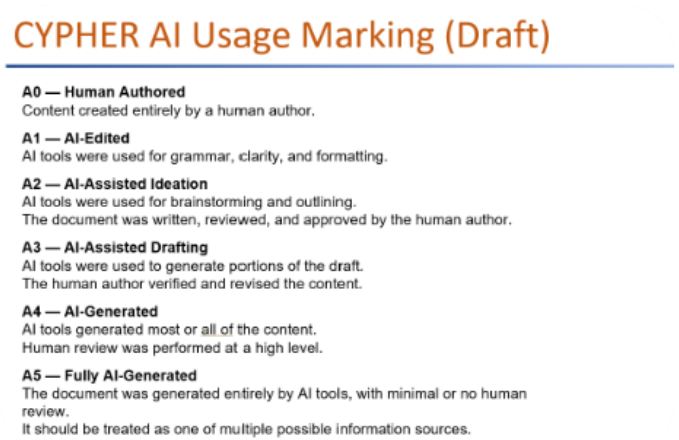
Best regards,

Yan

(A4)

How I Got Draft 2

My Prompt:



CYPHER AI Usage Marking (Draft)

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I introduce this as a tool. How should I communicate with faculty members on how to use it? (a) I would like to pilot this in ECBE and CYPHER. Participation is totally optional. (b) How? Start using it when the recipient is primarily ECBE and CYPHER faculty, staff, and students. (c) Later, CYPHER can add this to its website. If people ask, you can always refer to the CYPHER website for the specific meanings of the marking.

Draft 2 - Pilot of CYPHER AI Usage Marking Guideline

Yan Sun <yansun@uri.edu> 11:22 PM (2 minutes ago)
to Pine

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At a later stage, CYPHER will host a reference page on its website with definitions and examples for each marking level. In the meantime, if questions arise, I am happy to provide clarification or share the draft guidance.

This is an exploratory effort, and your input will be valuable in determining whether and how we refine or expand its use.

Thank you for considering participation.

Best regards,

Yan

(A4)

Scenario B – Brainstorming ideas with colleagues (collaborative, early-stage work)

- **A0** – We developed ideas entirely through human discussion without using AI tools.
- **A1** – We developed ideas ourselves and used AI to organize notes, improve clarity, or summarize discussions.
- **A2** – We used AI for brainstorming and literature search, and we refined, selected, and expanded the ideas as a team.
- **A3** – We used AI to generate potential proposal concepts or outlines, and we reviewed, selected, and revised them carefully.
- **A4** –We used AI tools to generate a report, reviewed it for alignment and high-level quality, and treated it as one source of information.
- **A5** –We used AI tools to generate a report with minimal or no review, and clearly marked it as A5.

Note: Using AI to generate a high-quality report takes time. Sharing A4 or even A5-level documents with clear marking can save collaborators' time.

Comparator table of benchmark models most relevant to a lean statewide backbone A5

Benchmark case	Geography	Lead/host & form	Launch timing	Funding model	Why it's relevant to NSF 26-508	Key transferable lesson for Rhode Island
NIST MEP (Hollings MEP)	National + state centers	Federal program (NIST) + state-designated centers [2]	Authorized 1988 [2]	Federal cost-share + state/local + client fees [2]	A mature "deployment support" system with measurement	Build a *service-delivery federation*; charge where appropriate; measure economic impact Rhode Island
SBA SBDC network	National + state systems	SBA cooperative effort; 62 state/territory lead centers + 900+ service locations [3]	Long-running	Federal + state/local + partners	Trusted, locally delivered advising coordinated statewide	A "hosted-by-a-university" model that is not university-owned in legitimacy
Cooperative Extension (Smith-Lever)	National + county presence	USDA NIFA federal partner; land-grants; local agents [4]	Since 1914 (Smith-Lever) [4]	Federal capacity grants + state/local contributions [4]	Trust, neutrality, reach; "train-the-trainer" infrastructure	Embed AI readiness into trusted nodes; invest in intermediary PD as the multiplier
Apprenticeship Carolina	South Carolina	SC Technical College System division [7]	Active since 2008 (public stats baseline) [13]	Publicly supported; no-cost consultants to employers [14]	Scales experiential training through a staffed intermediary	Treat employers + intermediaries as the scaling unit, not individual training programs

AI-use level

≠ Human effort level

≠ Quality and reliability

Marking for the Development of This System A2

Creating the CYPHER AI Marking Design and this PPT required:

1. Critical Thinking:

- We are facing a complex and challenging problem.
- We are not in a position to develop a complete solution, but CYPHER and ECBE can take a critical step toward the solution and address immediate needs.
- The marking system must be executable, scalable, support progressive implementation, have a meaningful impact, and be relatively easy for the community to adopt.

2. Expertise: Department Chair, CYPHER-codirector and CAIO

3. Judgment: is not only based on Dr. Sun's assessment, but also on feedback from ECBE faculty meetings, CYPHER ONR project all-hands meetings, the CYPHER coordinator, and a few colleagues from other departments.

4. AI Assistance:

[A1] formatting and editing for the training PowerPoint (which is more comprehensive than this introductory version.}
[A2] searching for practices at peer institutions;
[A2] brainstorming on issues related to resistance and hesitation toward adoption.

AI-use level

≠ Human effort level

≠ Quality and reliability

Q & A

Q1: Can I use an email signature disclaimer to ‘capture all’?

Answer: Yes, this is recommended if most of your emails can be covered by a single marking, with other markings used for special cases.

A0, www.uri.edu/cypher/AI-marking
Participant in the URI CYPHER AI Usage Marking Pilot, supporting transparent and responsible AI use.

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Q2: Beyond the two scenarios described on earlier slides, can I use it for other scenarios?

Answer: Yes, and

- Please align the usage with established guidelines from the university, professional societies, funding agencies, and other relevant organizations.
- **If you are considering using this in your class**, please refer to the examples, which illustrate how the CYPHER marking can be adapted to specific assignments. These examples were provided by faculty members who are adopting this marking system in their courses.

Q3: Can I invite others to use this marking system?

- You can share the CYPHER Marking System with others. A description is available on the CYPHER website: www.uri.edu/cypher.
- However, if an academic unit plans to recommend it as a common practice or guideline, **training is required**. This training will prepare key personnel in the unit to
  - explain and implement the marking system,
  - understand practices at other universities,
  - develop AI literacy aligned with NSF principles,
  - become familiar with AI usage transparency in relation to other key elements of responsible AI use in the classroom.

Q4: What makes CYPHER Marking different?

Answer:

1. CYPHER Marking is **reader-facing transparency** so colleagues can calibrate attention, trust, and response effort.
2. It can be expanded to specific and complex scenarios, as shown in the examples for **classroom use**.
3. Many institutions focus on data protection, human accountability, and whether AI use must be disclosed at all; few provide a reader-facing marking system that is both convenient for professional communication and adaptable for classroom use. Three adjacent efforts:
   - Some tell staff to disclose AI use when it is substantial, material, significant, or decision-relevant, while exempting trivial editing or routine use.
   - Some ask their communications departments to use or recommend simple label statements for public-facing content. (AI-assisted or not)
   - Tiered AI-use scales do exist in higher education, but they are concentrated in student assessment rather than faculty/staff professional communication.