

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Carbon Offsetting Encouragement Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

A. The Policy

1 Is this policy mandatory?

At the initial stage of the implementation of the Carbon Offsetting Encouragement Policy, the purchase of carbon offsets is voluntary. Staff members are encouraged to offset their carbon footprint from air travel related to university and personal activities and events by their own means.

2 Who should participate in this policy?

Staff members of CUHK who use air travel related to university and personal activities and events are encouraged to participate. Students and guests participating in such activities and events are also welcome to offset their carbon emissions.

3 What kind of events are included in this policy?

All kinds of university and personal activities and events which involve air travel, including conferences, visits, ceremonies and meetings.

4 Do I need to offset carbon emissions for my trips other than air travel?

The Carbon Offsetting Encouragement Policy focuses on air travel, where carbon emissions are higher than if the journey was made by land (e.g., by train). However, you are also welcome to offset your journeys made by other means, and this will also gain bonus points in the [Green Office Programme](#).

5 Is it considered as a voluntary contribution if the airlines of my choice already include the cost for carbon offsetting in the air ticket?

Yes, it will also be considered as a voluntary contribution. However, it will not gain bonus points in the [Green Office Programme](#).

6 How can I record the carbon offset?

The voluntary purchase of carbon offsets can be recorded by completing this [e-form](#) and uploading screenshots of the relevant receipts.

B. Budget and Cost

1 How much does it cost for carbon offsetting?

The prices vary between airlines and service providers, and the differences are attributable to fuel consumption calculation metrics and operating data. The prices are usually charged in terms of the tonnes of CO₂ emitted per passenger. Some airlines apply a standardized price per passenger.

- Example: Cathay Pacific's FlyGreener carbon offset programme
A round trip from Hong Kong to New York in economy class

= HK\$66 (average unit fee per tonne of CO₂) x 1.76 tonnes (carbon emission per passenger)

= HK\$115.51 per passenger

- [Examples of Carbon Offset Prices for Air Travel](#)
- [Examples of Carbon Offset Programmes offered via Airlines](#)

2 Why are the offsetting costs different between airlines as well as third party service providers?

The prices vary between airlines and service providers because of differences in the fuel consumption calculation metrics and operating data. Examples of these metrics include the types of aircraft, fuel efficiency and consumption, flight distances, wind speed, and number of transitions. Other factors, including the cabin class and the nature of the carbon offset projects, can also lead to price variation.

3 Can the carbon offset be covered by the unit's budget?

The policy aims to raise university members' awareness of the desirability of offsetting unavoidable carbon emissions from their air travel, and the offset will be borne by the participating staff members. However, subject to the budget holder/unit head's prior approval, the purchase of carbon offsets using private funding sources without any restricted funding purpose may be allowed. UGC funding is not an appropriate funding source for the reimbursement of the cost of purchasing carbon offsets as it is primarily for teaching, learning and research.

C. Carbon Offset Programme

1 How does carbon offsetting work?

Carbon offsetting is a mean of funding carbon reduction on the ground to compensate for emissions associated with your flight. Through participating in carbon offsetting, you are contributing to the purchase of carbon credits generated by projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

2 Why should I/my office offset carbon emissions from air travel?

- Climate change affects us all, and we should work together to reduce carbon emissions. Although offsetting the CO₂ emitted during air travel does not reduce this particular carbon footprint, offsetting programmes allow us to give back to the environment and contribute to projects which can help to reduce carbon gain.
- As an incentive, the participating offices will be rewarded with additional points in the [Green Office Programme](#) (please refer to AE2 Reducing carbon emissions from transportation). Remember to record the carbon offsets of your office colleagues via this [e-form](#).

3 Can I select my own carbon offsetting programme?

Yes, you can select any carbon offsetting programme of your choice.

4 How should I purchase a carbon offset if the airline of my choice does not offer any carbon offset programme?

You can consider engaging a third party service provider, such as myclimate and CLP Holdings (the two examples given in the [Step-by-step Guide to Purchasing Carbon Offsets from Third Party Service Providers for Air Travel](#)).

5 What are VER and CER projects?

- Verified/Voluntary Emission Reduction (VER) is a certificate given to projects that have attained a voluntary and recognized third party approval. VERs are typically purchased by businesses and individuals seeking to offset their carbon emissions.
- Certified Emission Reduction (CER) is a certificate issued by the United Nations to its member nations for projects achieving greenhouse gas reductions through the use of [Clean Development Mechanism](#) (CDM).

6 Should our office keep and submit the carbon offset record after carbon offsetting?

To record your office's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality, you are advised to document the purchases of carbon offsets via this [e-form](#).