

AI-Generated Imagery Verification and Authenticity Policy

This policy sets out the standards and procedures used by the competition to verify that submitted images are authentic photographs created by human photographers and not generated wholly or in part by artificial intelligence (AI).

1. Definition of AI-Generated Content

For the purposes of this competition, AI-generated or AI-assisted imagery refers to images that are:

- Created wholly or substantially using generative AI tools (including text-to-image or image-generation models), or
- Altered in a manner that introduces synthetic content not captured by a camera.

Standard photographic post-processing (such as exposure adjustment, colour correction, cropping and dust or blemish removal) is permitted unless otherwise stated in the category rules.

2. Principle of Verification

The competition recognises that no single method can determine image origin with absolute certainty. Verification is therefore based on a cumulative assessment of available evidence, rather than any single indicator.

All determinations are made on the balance of probabilities.

3. Entrant Responsibilities

By entering the competition, entrants confirm that:

- They are the original creator of the submitted image.
- The image was captured using a camera or photographic device.
- They retain original capture files and related materials.

The competition reserves the right to request additional evidence to support image authenticity.

4. Verification Methods

The competition may employ one or more of the following methods when assessing image authenticity.

4.1 Original File Request (Primary Evidence)

If you make it to the shortlist, entrants will be asked to provide a high-resolution version of their image. If we believe it could be AI, at this stage, we may ask for:

- Original RAW files (e.g. CR2, NEF, ARW, DNG), or
- Original, uncompressed camera-generated JPEG files.

Valid RAW files are regarded as strong evidence of photographic authenticity.

Inability to provide original files does not automatically indicate AI use but may affect eligibility.

4.2 Metadata (EXIF) Review

Image metadata may be reviewed for:

- Camera make and model
- Lens information
- Exposure settings
- Date and time of capture
- Editing software history

Metadata is assessed for internal consistency, rather than mere presence or absence.

The competition acknowledges that metadata may be legitimately removed during standard photographic workflows.

4.3 Image Forensic Assessment

Images may be checked to make sure they are real photographs. We may look at things like:

- Image grain and noise
- How clean and natural the edges look
- Signs of heavy compression or editing
- Whether the lighting, shadows, reflections, depth of field and perspective look realistic

If anything looks unnatural or inconsistent with a real photo, the image may be questioned or rejected.

4.4 AI Detection Tools

Free or commercially available AI-detection tools may be used as supporting evidence only.

Results from such tools are not considered determinative and are weighed alongside other verification methods.

4.5 Reverse Image and Publication Checks

Reverse image searches may be conducted to identify:

- Prior publication history
- Association with known AI-generated content sources

For images submitted by individual photographers, the absence of online matches is not considered evidence of AI use.

4.6 Portfolio and Contextual Review

Where appropriate, the competition may consider:

- Consistency across an entrant's portfolio
- Technical continuity
- Subject matter plausibility

5. Verification Outcomes

Following review, entries may be classified as:

a. Verified Authentic

Evidence strongly supports camera-based photographic origin.

b. Indeterminate

Available evidence is insufficient to confirm or exclude AI use.

The competition may request further materials or decline the entry at its discretion.

c. Likely AI-Generated

Multiple indicators suggest AI generation or prohibited synthetic alteration.

If the image is deemed to be Likely AI-Generated, we will not upload it to the gallery, or we may remove it from the gallery. We do not need to notify when this is done.

6. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Where an image is deemed Likely AI-Generated:

- The entry may be disqualified.
- Any awards or commendations may be withdrawn.
- Serious or repeated breaches may result in exclusion from future competitions.

7. Appeals Process

Entrants may appeal a decision by submitting additional supporting evidence, including original capture files or workflow documentation, within the timeframe specified by the competition.

All decisions following appeal are final.

8. Acknowledgement of Limitations

The competition acknowledges that:

- AI detection technologies are continually evolving.
- Decisions are made in good faith using current best practice.
- Absolute certainty cannot always be achieved.

By submitting an entry, participants agree to be bound by this policy and accept the competition's final determinations.