

National Academic and Research Integrity Conference, Ireland, 2023

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Report by Attendees of ARICI, 2023

Several members of Dublin Business School (DBS) staff and faculty attended the Academic and Research Integrity Conference, Ireland, 2023. A large part of the conference centred around the primary concern across the world in academia - generative AI. The panellists, papers, and workshops identified the challenges of genAI, the reality of how it is being used, research being undertaken on genAI, bold new approaches in integrating genAI into the curriculum, and much more. Other important discussions throughout the conference included important topics such as Open Access and predatory publishers. The staff members were from various backgrounds including the Library and Academic Hub, Lecturing staff, Quality Assurance, and the office of the Registrar. The DBS staff attended several workshops, panel discussions, and talks and have written about the highlights from the conference.

Dr. Andrew Browne attended a session that occurred on the second day of the conference which centred around the ideas of Open Science and Open Scholarship. This session, chaired by Aarhus University's [Dr Serge Pascal Johannes M Horbach](#), opened with one of the University of Galway's own neuroscience researchers, [Dr Ciara Egan](#). Dr Egan's discussion, 'Open Scholarship in teaching and research: Opportunities and challenges for a more equitable academia', which focused on the synergies between slow science and team science in an Open Science environment. The discussion allowed for the vibrant possibilities of this approach to become apparent.

In the following discussion during this panel, 'The Principles and Practices of Open Research (PaPOR TRAIL) course: An open educational resource for open research,' [Dr Karen Matvienko-Sikar](#) from University College Cork discussed a great Open Research tool, [PaPOR Trail](#), an online open access course on the principles and practices of open research. This resource presents great potential and opportunities for staff looking to teach Open Research. Dr Matvienko-Sitar and her research team took notice of the importance for students conducting their first research at the 3BA or MA level to learn

best (or worst) practices towards Open Research. The team compared Teaching & Learning approaches to Open Research tools like the [Framework for Open and Reproducible Research Training \(FOORT\)](#) and the [Agape Open Science Community](#) (specifically designed for PhD students) and discovered a gap for an evidence-based Open Science course. The result is a splendid open access course which has an open licence for teachers to use as long as they attribute PaPOR TrailL.

The following discussion in the panel titled, 'When heroes fall: How can we prevent bias and dishonesty in research publications?', shifted to the topic of research misconduct. [Dr. Maura Hiney](#) gave a stimulating and, at times, quite emotional discussion of how to prevent misconduct in research. Dr. Hiney highlighted her own disappointment at discovering the misconduct of colleagues in her own field whose research she had once looked up to. She discussed the ways to prevent research misconduct before registration and peer analysis and expressed that this was an important way to prevent misuse of data. Open registries of data make the design much more rigorous. Preprinting of data preceding peer-review on specified servers allows for these open registries of data to exist. Open research allows researchers to technically have two outputs - one for the data and one for the analysis.

The final discussion of the session was delivered by two librarians from the University of Galway's [James Hardiman Library](#). Hardy Schwamm and Aisling Coyne presented 'Predatory Publishing – The dark side of Open Access?' This discussion helped inform the audience about the dangers of predatory publishing while also giving the audience some key points to look out for. Essay mills, citation cartels and other aspects of the field were discussed. One interesting point of note was the statistic that one third of papers from India tend to get captured in these types of journals. It was theorised that this might be due to the fact that Indian scholars must publish in order to finish their PhDs and thus a rush to publish leads to them being preyed upon by predatory journals. It was an interesting insight into this dark part of academia.

These four sessions provided a great overview of some of the highs and lows of Open Access, Open Science and publishing in general. It was a succinct representation of the wider themes of the conference and left the audience with many interesting pathways to follow for further development and insights.

David Rinehart, Librarian, attended a panel discussion with students detailing their experiences as students using genAI, ramifications of using and not using genAI, and what they hope the future of academia will look like in relation to the implementation of genAI. It is also important to note that the conference took place during a time in which graduate students and allies across the country were protesting for better pay. One of the student panellists discussed the difficulties graduate assistants face in having to work below the living wage while studying full time.

The student panel was insightful, providing a student perspective on how genAI has impacted their education. While some students are using genAI as a study aid, others note that they have colleagues in their cohort abusing genAI and, as it is very difficult to

catch genAI being that there is no reliable software to identify the use of the technology, these students are both lowering the validity of the assessments but also have an unfair advantage. These are challenges that students hope academic institutions, organisations like the QQI, and others will tackle quickly as they feel that being a good student and following the rules is becoming disadvantageous. This is not to say they will use genAI in a way that would be deemed academic impropriety, but that they want the validity of their degrees and the effort they put in to be recognised.

As can be expected, students have varying and wholly different relationships with cheating, plagiarism, and Generative AI to each other and to academic staff. One student mentioned how they found Generative AI useful for finding references for assignments, for example. While it was important to hear how a student, and likely many students, are using genAI, it is important to note that using genAI to find references is a practice that is strongly condemned. There are many lecturers that would agree, genAI is an exciting tool, however, when writing assignments, the use of GenAI for finding references or automating part of the process can be a slippery slope for a few reasons. As was just mentioned, not enough is known about how genAI finds sources, there could, and likely are, baked in biases that can skew your secondary research. Second, genAI does, in fact, create false references. It is so important that students engage with all the secondary sources they are citing and meet with their lecturers and librarians to learn more about proper referencing and use of genAI.’ Research on inherent biases within genAI are consistently coming out and undergoing and should be frequently reviewed.

Grant Goodwin attended the presentation of a fascinating paper by [Dr Miguel Nicolau](#) from UCD on strategies and approaches he has tried employing to mitigate the risk of Generative AI being misused in his assessments. Recognising the value and advantages in computer-based exams, he has not fled the digital sphere, but rather embraced it in creative ways to facilitate and personalise learning and assessment. Drawing heavily on analytics from the institutional VLEs and deploying their tools to reduce the administrative burden and risk of human error in conducting assessments, his research into learner experience tracked the advantages of the online assessments. These advantages tracked include supporting Accessibility and Universal Design to improved question design (where performance at a question bank level could be analysed over multiple cohorts) and even to personalised exam questions with automated grading systems and the possibility of automated feedback mechanisms.

His research readily acknowledged the challenges posed by Generative AI. In particular, strategies to restrict the use of gen AI by students, such as converting questions to images rather than text, or requiring new windows to be opened or files to be downloaded which at best reduces the speed at which GenAI can be used without quite preventing its use, and at worst counters actions taken to support Accessibility. A fundamental challenge identified was that, almost inherently, any mechanism to support the diversity of the classroom, such as increased Accessibility and utilising Universal Design, could be co-opted by GenAI softwares to produce answers for tests. A fundamental dilemma of principles comes into effect as examiners must determine

which bitter pill to swallow: reduce their teaching and learning Accessibility, and negatively impact learners, or risk the misuse of GenAI in their assessments which inherently lowers the validity of said assessment. This is a challenge facing the sector as a whole as other aspects of academic integrity are threatened. For example, questions of privacy raise serious concerns in terms of proctoring software for online exams. This would be a result of the impact on the individual as institutions try to protect the integrity of their assessment processes. Dr Nicolau, at least, recognised that reducing Accessibility was a bigger threat to his learners, where other strategies could be explored to counter the risks of GenAI.

Sylwia Plucisz, a lecturer at DBS, reports on the second day of the conference where Orna Farrell (DCU), along with Perry Share, Susan McDonnell and Lisa Cronin (ATU) facilitated an inspiring workshop titled 'Authentic Learning through Authentic Assessment: The Challenges of Implementation at Scale.'

In small groups, attendees were tasked with discussing prevalent forms of assessment within their respective fields. The focus of these discussions revolved around determining whether these assessments were susceptible to content generated by artificial intelligence. The emerging consensus indicated that even authentic assessments are not immune to the influence of generative AI, presenting a significant challenge to maintaining academic integrity. In light of this, a thought-provoking suggestion was proposed: allowing students to utilise genAI tools but under clearly communicated boundaries.

This solution, while acknowledging the new, rapidly changing learning environment, emphasises the importance of incorporating critical thinking skills into AI-assisted learning activities and, eventually, assessment. Students are encouraged not only to employ genAI but also to critically evaluate and assess the outcomes, ultimately promoting a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This approach seeks to integrate technology responsibly into education while simultaneously cultivating a sense of criticality among students and maintaining a commitment to academic integrity.

A forward thinking DCU cross-faculty project coordinated by Dr Farrell - [Artificial intelligence, Assessment and Academic Integrity](#) - aims to frame the challenges posed by gen AI as an opportunity for innovation for staff in designing and for students in doing assessments within higher education. Our academic community is eagerly anticipating the outcomes of both the staff and students' research strands, as well as the subsequent development of teaching and learning resources informed by these results.

Overall, the conference highlighted the current and upcoming challenges the academic sphere will face going forward regarding developing technologies as they intersect with academic integrity. However, the spirit of collaboration and clarity regarding the next steps to take, whether for staff, students, or other members of the academic community, demonstrate the address them head on and embrace the future of learning.