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Plagiaruedo*: teaching of academic integrity through a 'whodunnit' game (*any likeness to other games is intentional!)

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Presentation abstract

An academic crime has been committed – someone has been caught plagiarising!
Did Prof. Crastinator forget quotation marks due to poor time management, or did Larry Lastminute deliberately cheat by submitting text generated by artificial intelligence (AI)?

This workshop invited delegates to play 'Plagiaruedo', a board game designed and used to raise students' awareness of academic integrity. In the game, participants visited departments of the University of Portsmouth, tasked with figuring out who plagiarised, how they did it and why they did it, before submitting their answer to 'Turnitin' … but beware – an incorrect answer meant failing the assignment!

Academic integrity is often regarded as a serious topic, making it potentially challenging to teach without resorting to dry or even punitive materials. Through Plagiaruedo, presenters hoped to challenge traditional teaching methods and play with a subject matter that is not traditionally played with (Sicart, 2014), creating an open learning environment that encourages students to try something new (Whitton and Moseley, 2019). Presenters reflected on experimenting with their Learning Development (LD) practice and finding that play has purpose within higher education (James, 2019).

Following the game, delegates were asked for feedback on using Plagiaruedo as a catalyst for subsequent academic integrity activities, before the presenters shared their own in-class examples. Feedback from this 'playtest' will help improve future iterations of Plagiaruedo. Playfully-minded colleagues had the opportunity to join presenters for a

potential research project about perceptions of the game, to enhance the evidence base for playful learning in higher education.

Keywords: academic integrity; plagiarism; playful learning; game-based learning.

Community response

The interactive nature of the session made for an engaging and thought-provoking experience for participants who were able to play Plagiaruedo themselves. Feedback from one participant highlighted the benefits in making academic integrity more relatable:

> I really liked this interactive session! It was a well-designed session with the presenters, who had the audience participate in the game to understand the concept of academic integrity. It opened up many conversations as a participant on academic integrity and how this can be placed in conversations via a game-based approach. As an educator, it stimulated my thinking on what I can do to engage my students. For example, how can I adapt this game to suit my discipline/modules so that it can be relevant to my students? A lot to think about following this session, and I hope I can adopt this game somehow in the near future.

Providing a memorable experience was also welcomed by another participant:

> The immersive experience allowed participants to see first-hand how the game operates and its potential impact on students. By embodying different roles and making decisions within the game, participants could appreciate the nuances of plagiarism and the importance of academic honesty in a dynamic and memorable way.

Another area this presentation sought to invoke was the importance of play in education, and how game-based pedagogies can be embedded within Learning Development. This was a talking point among participants:

> Overall, the 'Plagiaruedo' session at ALDinHE showcased the potential of playful learning in higher education. The game not only made the topic of plagiarism accessible and engaging but also demonstrated how educational games can foster a deeper understanding and lasting knowledge. By incorporating such innovative approaches educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments that motivate and inspire students.

This hands-on experience was not only informative but also immensely enjoyable, demonstrating how play can serve as a powerful tool in education and making perceivably 'dry' topics more approachable.

This session stimulated thoughts from participants on how they might be able to use similar game-based approaches in their own practice. While participants were inspired there was some reflective commentary on the time required to make such a game, and the types of session it would be most applicable for: smaller workshop/seminar settings rather than larger groups.

While the game offered a great opportunity to introduce this subject in a gentle manner, something like this would be difficult to apply if a Learning Developer had limited time with the students. If LD was fully embedded in the curriculum, perhaps the game could be incorporated into seminar group activities, following a more formal introduction to the subject. I am also thinking that in some of the large lecture theatres I tend to teach in (200+ students), it would be rather impractical, which is why small seminar groups may lend themselves more to activities like this. Despite the practical challenges I have just raised, the session offered plenty of food for thought and really got me thinking how playfulness could be utilised in LD practice.

Following the game, the session provided space for discussion. Participants shared their insights and offered suggestions on how 'Plagiaruedo' could be applied in their own contexts and used as a follow-up tool with students. Ideas included:

- Incorporating debrief sessions – facilitating discussions post-game to allow students to reflect on popularised examples of plagiarism and 'penalties' for each academic integrity offence to solidify their understanding.
- Ranking – students could rank the offences from most severe to least severe to reinforce the types of offences learned during the game.
- Ongoing engagement – implementing regular sessions throughout the academic year to continually address and revisit the topic of plagiarism.
- Extension pack – have cards related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) students.
- Blank card – students can create their own persona to reflect on their own academic practice.

Editorial comment

It was clear from participant feedback that the game-based nature of the session was well received. Providing opportunities for interaction and activity allowed those attending to experience the game as students. This in turn sparked ideas of how similar game-based approaches could be used more widely.

Taking a subject that was traditionally seen as 'dry' and adding a playful twist, made the session memorable and strengthened concepts relating to academic integrity in a thought-provoking way. Participants left the session reflecting on how to utilise similar approaches and the benefits in creating engaging learning experiences to teach core academic concepts.

Next steps and additional questions

Presenters discussed at the session a potential research project following on from the session, can authors shed some more light on this?

Authors' reflection

It is gratifying to receive such positive reflections from our Plagiaruedo 'playtesters'! Before ALDcon24 we had used the game with students, but this was our first opportunity to showcase it with other educators. The comments are a useful signal that the previous positive feedback extends further.

We acknowledge the logistical difficulties of time and class dynamics that one respondent raised. We would agree that the session is best suited to seminars, and to when the tutor has regular time with students, not simply the dreaded request of 'one hour to fix all their academic integrity issues, please!'. We designed it with those considerations in mind. However, we have also made a boardless, spin-off version to scale the game to be played by bigger groups or in lectures.

The respondent's suggestion that the game serves to 'introduce the subject in a gentle manner' reinforces our beliefs. We use Plagiaruedo in exactly this way – not to cover every

aspect of academic integrity, but to kick-start a spiral curriculum of recurring discussions about academic integrity across classes. We are lucky to have extended class contact with our students, and recognise that this is not always the case with embedded LD input. However, we would encourage practitioners, with or without extended time, to experiment with a playful approach to academic integrity. It can keep students' minds open to learning, if compared to alternatives which leave them feeling sanctioned or 'criminalised' about plagiarism when entering university.

Since the session, we have received ethical approval for a project that explores the perceptions of Plagiaruedo amongst educators and students. We plan to use the feedback to evaluate the game and create an updated version. If any participants from our conference session would like to take part in the research, we would be glad to receive an email from them.

We can use some of the ideas suggested in the community reflection more quickly. We were aware that we could extend our debriefing activities with students. We like the delegates' suggestions of using the outcome of each group's game to scaffold debriefing discussions with students, for example by them ranking the severity of the offences, or deciding the appropriate level of sanction. This activity could enable the students to explain their different understandings of academic integrity. In the conference session, a participant suggested that we incorporate more 'storying' around plagiarism before and after the game, which could work well in the playful spirit of the session alongside the ranking and decision-making activities.

Acknowledgements

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Author details

Ian Johnson has been a Learning Developer at University of Portsmouth since 2015 and is now a teaching fellow in LD. Ian recently completed his professional doctorate on the framing and value of LD in British higher education, and has research interests in how embedded and individualised LD practices contribute to students' learning. He has led ALDinHE's Research and Scholarship Development working group since August 2023 and is part of the steering group, having previously established and led the Research Community of Practice from 2020-2023.

Laura Barclay is a teaching fellow in Learning Development in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Portsmouth, with seven years' experience in Learning Development roles. Laura is currently undertaking a doctorate in education focusing on the application of playful learning in higher education. The project investigates the student experience of learning French through musical theatre. Laura is chair of the ALDinHE events group and a member of the steering group.

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