Doctoral programme in Education and ICT (e-learning)

Persistence, dropout, and the time-factor in fully online higher education:
A qualitative study with first-year students

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What?

AIM: exploring how first-year, fully online OHE students experienced and managed their time and how it impacted their persistence, stop-out behavior, or dropout

_Persistence_: to persist with studies (not to stop or dropout)
_Stop-out_: not to re-enroll for one semester
_Dropout_: not to re-enroll for two semesters (to abandon or withdraw)
Where?

UOC – undergrad programs

fully online, open university

majority: non-traditional students (adults, job/family)

context: ESPRIA (Estudiantes de Primer Año) Project
interventions to better students’ first year experience
focus on time
Why?

high dropout rates remain a pressing and complex problem
rates at UOC: 57.6%
dropout: mainly during first-year, especially first semester (half of 57.6%)
due to:

time constraints and conflicts, poor time management, procrastination
misconceptions about the workload/system (Bawa, 2016)
home/family and employment obligations/conflict (Carroll, 2008)
Who?

24 first-year, fully online undergraduate UOC students who started their studies at UOC in September 2017

three main profiles:

*persisters* (students who enroll for three consecutive semesters),
*break* (students who leave for one semester but return), and
*dropouts* (students who do not enroll for two consecutive semesters)
### Who?

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<th>Género</th>
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<th>BREAK</th>
<th>ABANDONADOR</th>
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TOTAL: 24
How?

qualitative, exploratory method

semi-structured in-depth interviews

thematical analysis
Preliminary findings

each profile experiences time in different manners, and has dissimilar time management skills

usually no significant gender differences

time-related factors represent the major issue for persistence, continuance, and dropout behavior
Preliminary findings

Persisters
traditional part-time persisters: 30h work week; good time management skills; value UOC system; some time conflict, especially first semester
traditional full-time persisters: no work; 30 credits; procrastination problems; succeed; stress at end of semester (conflict)

Break
Mostly part-time students
More women
Non-traditional: take breaks mostly because of work conflicts (juggle responsibilities) etc.
Thank you