



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***

Marlon Xavier & Julio Meneses

June 2019



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?

Edad	Dedicación	Género	PERSISTENTE	BREAK	ABANDONADOR
Tradicional (<25 años)	Tiempo parcial	Hombre	1	1	1
		Mujer	1	1	1
	Tiempo completo	Hombre	1	1	1
		Mujer	1	1	1
No-tradicional (≥25 años)	Tiempo parcial	Hombre	1	1	1
		Mujer	1	1	1
	Tiempo completo	Hombre	1	1	1
		Mujer	1	1	1
TOTAL			8	8	8
					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