Dropout in OHE and the time factor

- **Context**: studies on factors that influence attrition, retention, persistence, and success
- **New models of attrition and profiles of students most likely to dropout/persist**
- **Persisters** are academically prepared, possess time management skills and high levels of engagement, self-directedness, self-discipline, motivation, and commitment (Holder, 2007)

**Traditional, brick-and-mortar universities**

- **Time factor**: important issue for dropout in many studies (Kember, 1999), due to conflicting demands from family, work, and social commitments

**Online open universities**

- **Time-related issues**: most important factors for drop out/persistence (Lee & Choi, 2011)

**UOC context**

*Fully distance teaching university; eLearning is mostly self-directed and self-regulated (increases individual responsibility)*

- **Nontraditional learners**: mature-aged or adult, with full- or part-time jobs and family responsibilities
- **Dropout occurs mostly in the first semester**
- **Crucial**: misconceptions about workload/work-family commitments

**Time factor: initial review and implications**

- **OHE flexibility**
- **Misconceptions** about workload, time, involvement, effort required by OHE (Bawa, 2016)
- **Procrastination & conflict**
- **Main attraction to students**

**Theoretical approaches**

**Time management approach**

- ability to plan study time and tasks (Broadbent & Poon, 2015)
- part of academic self-regulated learning strategies
- strongly connected to academic achievement and performance; key factor for persistence
- specific learner characteristic in time management: academic procrastination - negatively related to participation and performance (Michinov et al., 2011)

**Conclusion**: lack of time, time management, and procrastination are the primary reasons for students failing or dropping an online course (Doherty, 2006).

**Work-study-home conflict/balance approach**

- degree to which work affects the student’s ability to meet school-related demands and responsibilities (McNall & Michel, 2017)
- derived from research work-family balance/conflict
- emphasis on conflict (WSC) dominates research
- nontraditional students experience intense conflicts between the work, study, and home domains, especially females (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002)
- WSC is negatively related to academic performance (Owen, Kavanagh, & Dollard, 2017)

**Future directions: possible interventions**

- **Should focus**: first academic year, especially the first semester (highest attrition rates)
- **Embedded in ampler interventions addressing situational, institutional, and personal factors**:
  - flexibility in student assessment
  - identify at-risk students early on – personalized support, introductory module
  - targeted advice and orientation
  - personalized course plans, especially for first enrolment

**@UOC**: recent research/interventional institutional project addressing those issues - ESPRIA (“First-year students”), which provides freshmen with flexible learning paths at course and semester level