

## **Chapter 2 Advantages and disadvantages of group and individual virtual tutoring by UNACAR International Business students**

### **Capítulo 2 Ventajas y desventajas de la tutoría virtual grupal e individual por estudiantes de Negocios Internacionales de la UNACAR**

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## **Abstract**

The possibility of studying and successfully completing a degree offers greater opportunities for personal growth, getting a formal job that meets professional expectations. The tutorial accompaniment at the higher level provides advantages such as constant and effective advice, adding to the student's training and generating a satisfactory and/or outstanding educational career. This study is of a qualitative and quantitative nature with a focused character that expects to describe the advantages and disadvantages of group and individual virtual tutoring of International Business bachelor students of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen of the generation 2018 and 2019. According to the presented information, group and individual virtual tutoring are functional and generate a positive impact on academic performance, so it is necessary to continue with both group and individual tutoring to graduate and get a bachelor's degree from the selected educational program.

## **Academic, Accompaniment, Successfully**

### **Resumen**

La posibilidad de estudiar y culminar con éxito una carrera ofrece mayores oportunidades de crecimiento personal, consiguiendo un trabajo formal que cumpla con las expectativas profesionales. El acompañamiento tutorial en el nivel superior brinda ventajas como una asesoría constante y eficaz, sumando a la formación del estudiante y generando una trayectoria escolar satisfactoria y/o sobresaliente. Este estudio es de carácter cualitativo y cuantitativo con carácter focalizado que pretende describir las ventajas y desventajas de las tutorías virtuales grupales e individuales de los estudiantes de licenciatura en Negocios Internacionales de la Universidad Autónoma del Carmen de la generación 2018 y 2019. De acuerdo a la información presentada las tutorías virtuales, grupales e individuales son funcionales y generan un impacto positivo en el rendimiento académico, por lo que es necesario continuar con las tutorías tanto grupales como individuales para egresar y obtener el título de licenciatura del programa educativo seleccionado.

## **Académico, Acompañamiento, Exitosamente**

### **Introduction**

Given the current context generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the aim of providing attention to students at the higher education level at crucial moments, one of the important services that had to move from the on-site to the distance modality was academic tutoring (Díaz, 2021, cited in Ponce, et al., 2022). From the vision of the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education, tutorials are defined as a service of accompaniment and support provided individually by the professor to the student, with the aim of helping the student to face his or her problems and to adapt to the university environment, to achieve his or her academic objectives and to face the commitments of future professional practice (Anuies, 2000, cited in Ponce, et al., 2022).

At the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, during the virtual contingency, classes were resumed online, as well as tutorials. Each tutor was in contact with his or her students to continue guiding them in the new online modality. All activities were carried out using the Microsoft Teams technology platform.

### **Literature review**

Education, at all levels, plays an important role, as it is the main factor in the progress of nations; in practically all countries of the world, it is considered the ideal means of training the citizens that today's society needs to face global challenges. For its part, at the national level, the Sectoral Programme of Education 2013-2018 points out that in higher education Mexico finds one of its main riches for social, political and economic development (SEP, 2013, as cited in García, et al., 2016).

The figure of the tutor dates back more than 5,000 years in Africa, where there were individuals who acted as guides in preparing young people to take on the various roles required within the community. The same author points out that for the Greeks, a tutor or mentor meant an adoptive parent, a person who took responsibility for the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development of young people, which is currently a reference for the implementation of tutoring processes (Carr, 2000, as cited in Espinoza & Ricaldi, 2018).

Some antecedents of tutoring in higher education in our country are the experiences of some faculties of the UNAM, dating back to the early forties, particularly the proposals developed in the faculties of Chemistry and Political and Social Sciences. In these pioneering experiences, the first definitions of a tutorial system were elaborated, and the tutor was identified as a guide, that is, as a figure close to the student regarding academic and research activities. These first approaches were refined in various institutions, so that by 1970 the figure of the tutor had already been formally recognized in graduate study plans and programs (Fresán and Romo, 2011, as cited in Ponce, et al., 2022).

We consider that tutoring involves communication and interaction processes on the part of teachers; it implies personalized attention to students, based on the knowledge of their problems, needs and specific interests (Obaya & Vargas, 2014). We can define it as a teaching intervention in the educational process of an intentional nature, which consists of close, systematic and permanent accompaniment to the student, to support and facilitate the process of construction of learning of various types: cognitive, affective, sociocultural and existential (Narro & Martiniano, 2013).

In the current educational context, a tutor is considered to be the teacher, who provides support to students, in a real or virtual space, so that they develop their cognitive potentialities in the learning process beyond the current competence of skills they possess and with which they enter the teaching situation (Pagano, 2008, as cited in Espinoza & Ricaldi, 2018).

Tutorial functions are divided into the guiding function, centered in the affective area and the academic function, which takes its center in the cognitive area. These functions are the basis for adequate tutoring.

It is possible to think that the work of a tutor is similar to that of a teacher, which is a mistake. The difference between a teacher and a tutor is that the former promotes, coordinates and evaluates students, while the tutor advises, encourages and stimulates the development of attitudes, integration skills, decision-making capacity and interest for the student to join and remain in the educational and professional environment (Advantages of studying online, 2021).

In university education, tutoring contributes to the knowledge of students, individually and as a group, to ensure that the university has the necessary information that allows it to carry out its educational action properly and thus prevent complex problems that hinder their education inside and outside the university (UNIVA, 2022).

It is of utmost importance to pay the greatest attention to the first two semesters of the career, since it is when students experience the transition of diverse ruptures and the challenge of adapting to new situations, including the need to rectify decisions that may be transcendental in their lives, given that the greatest proportion of college dropouts or dropout of students occurs precisely in the first year of university education (Tinto, 1992, as cited in Obaya & Vargas, 2014).

There are several tutoring modalities in which the student can be integrated, and according to Martínez and Barrios (2012), they are the following: individual meetings; group meetings; tutoring activities in the group/class; tutoring subject; complementary activities such as courses or workshops; informative activities such as conferences; lectures and other media; individual or group peer activities; channeling to internal and/or external services; tutoring activities supported by virtual media.

Regarding the functions of the tutor, Romo (2010, as cited in Ponce, et al., 2022) refers that he/she should be a permanent promoter of the student's communication with the educational actors and the college context, as well as the development of thinking skills that allow him/her to transfer the acquired knowledge for the resolution of problems in the personal and social dimensions.

## **Analysis of group and individual tutoring at the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen**

The aim of this research is to show the academic performance, the academic trajectory and the virtual accompaniment of each student during the on-site and virtual tutorials.

Upon entering UNACAR, each student is assigned a tutor who will accompany them throughout their academic career; these tutorials are individual and/or can be shared with several students at the same time (group tutorials). At the beginning of the first semester of the bachelor's degree, each tutor contacts his or her students for an interview, which is an appropriate place to introduce oneself and to get to know different aspects such as personal and academic objectives, goals in the chosen career and to receive an initial, continuous and timely orientation in the course of the university's academic training.

Group tutorials are held institutionally, Every Friday from 11:00 to 13:00 in all UNACAR faculties. In the group tutorials they provide essential and interesting information to keep in mind and make good decisions, some of the topics are the following:

- Curriculum mapping
- Psychopedagogical support
- Optional insurance and scholarships
- National or international student mobility
- Requirements for social service and professional internships
- Forms of graduation
- Integral Formation Activities (AFI)

The Integral Formation Activities (AFI) are important for the formation of knowledge in students. To obtain the AFI certificate, 128 hours of comprehensive training activities must be credited, which make up 8 credits. It consists of activities such as attending conferences, seminars, plays and films, among a variety of options, which help in the academic and personal formation.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this research is qualitative and quantitative with a focused character. Qualitatively, the pros and cons of group and individual tutoring in the on-site and virtual modalities are developed, this from the points of view of ten tutored students of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen (UNACAR), who are studying the Bachelor's Degree in International Business; six students of the 2018 generation (Álvarez, Chablé, Fabila, López, Marcano and Zamorano), who are in their ninth semester, and four students of the 2019 generation (De La Cruz, Hernández, Mendoza and Miravete), who are in their seventh semester.

It also has a quantitative approach, as numerical data related to the educational trajectory of the ten tutored students are presented through graphs. The study is of a focused nature, based on the tutorial experience before and during the pandemic in the period 2018-2022.

### **Results**

Advantages and disadvantages of group and individual tutoring in the on-site and virtual modality.

It is important to mention that the information collected and presented from the students, they have different tutors, who have accompanied them since their entrance to the university. Below are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of group and individual tutoring, both, in virtual and on-site modes, information according to the experiences and criteria of the ten tutors.

**Table 1** Advantages of on-site and virtual group tutoring

Group tutoring	
Presential	Virtual
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct contact with tutors</li> <li>2. Attention to students' comprehension problems</li> <li>3. Interaction with peers</li> <li>4. Clearing general doubts</li> <li>5. Dynamics to interact more</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ease of access from home</li> <li>2. Savings in transportation costs</li> <li>3. Connectivity from any device</li> <li>4. Punctual attendance</li> <li>5. More accessible general advisories from Microsoft Teams</li> </ol>

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Table 1 shows on-site group tutoring, which has the advantages of allowing interaction with tutors and classmates, topics are more specific and understandable, in face-to-face tutoring if a student has doubts about the topic being covered they can raise their hand and be heard at the same time. The benefits of virtual group tutoring include: no need to travel to the university, saving on transport costs; tutoring can take place anywhere and on any device with an internet connection through the Microsoft Teams application.

**Table 2** Disadvantages of on-site and virtual group tutoring

Group tutoring	
Presential	Virtual
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time spent commuting to the university</li> <li>2. Expenditure on commuting</li> <li>3. Uncertainty in the tutor's disposition</li> <li>4. No snacks consumed</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connectivity problems</li> <li>2. Lack of adequate equipment</li> <li>3. Environmental distractions</li> <li>4. Apathy and discouragement</li> <li>5. Low participation</li> <li>6. No interaction with peers</li> <li>7. Incidental occurrences</li> </ol>

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Table 2 shows the disadvantages of on-site group tutoring: if the student was not at the university, he/she had to travel to attend tutoring sessions, generating economic expenses; food could not be consumed during tutoring hours. If it was virtual, the disadvantages were: sometimes the student did not have good connection or adequate equipment to attend the tutorials; there were distractions in the place where he/she attended the tutorials; he/she felt apathy and discouragement when he/she was in the house, so sometimes he/she did not connect to them; there was little student participation and no peer interaction; by chance, for example during a storm, he/she was left without electricity and it was impossible to attend the tutorials

**Table 3** Advantages of individual on-site and virtual tutoring

Individual tutoring	
Presential	Virtual
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interaction with the tutor</li> <li>2. More confidence (being face-to-face with the tutor).</li> <li>3. Counseling for AFIS, social service, internships, scholarships and student mobility.</li> <li>4. More personal question resolution</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Punctuality</li> <li>2. Asynchronous communication</li> <li>3. More accessible AFIS reception</li> <li>4. Personal questions</li> <li>5. Connectivity from any device</li> <li>6. Personal counseling more accessible from WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams and institutional e-mail.</li> </ol>

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Table 3 shows the advantages of on-site individual tutoring: students interacted more with the tutor, building trust between tutor and student, to express their doubts about AFIS, social services, professional internships, scholarships and student mobility, or any other topic or event of interest. In the virtual one-to-one tutorials, the advantage was that the sessions started on time; if there was any doubt, it was enough to let the tutor know by text message via WhatsApp or Teams, as well as by email at a time other than the scheduled tutorial time, as long as it was within the tutor's schedule.

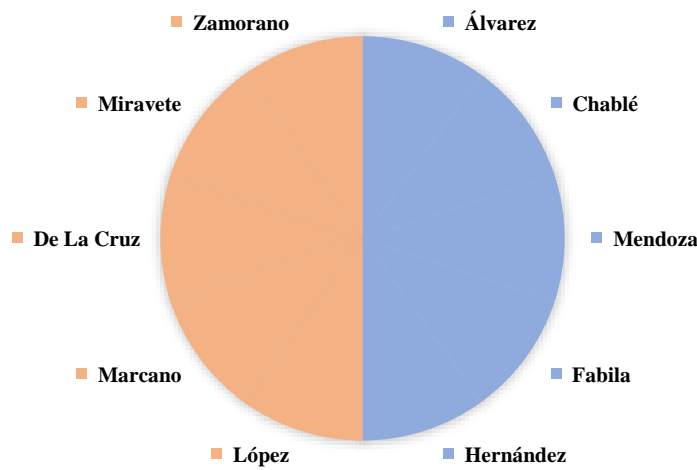
**Table 4** Disadvantages of individual on-site and virtual tutoring

Individual tutoring	
Presential	Virtual
1. Unpunctuality	1. Not being able to see the tutor face-to-face.
2. Uncertainty in the guardian's disposition	2. No interaction with the tutor
	3. Apathy and discouragement
	4. Unfortunate cases

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 4 shows the disadvantages of individual tutoring in the on-site mode: the students arrived late, they felt uncertain about the tutor's willingness to express their doubts. While the disadvantages of virtual tutoring were that sometimes there were few interactions between the tutor and the student, and there was apathy and discouragement in establishing communication with the tutor.

**Graph 1** Gender of tutees



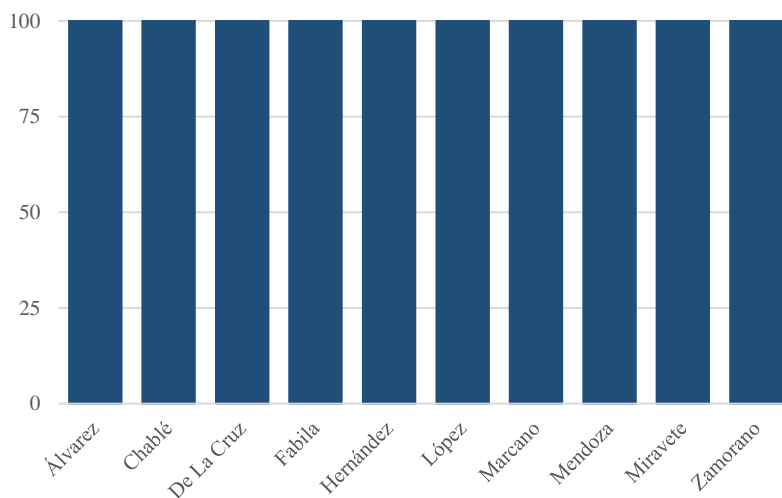
Source: Own Elaboration

Graph 1 shows the gender of the ten participating tutors. The salmon color represents women and the blue color represents men, so it can be seen that there are five women and five men.

*AFIS Accreditation*

The results are shown in terms of AFIS accreditations by the ten tutees.

**Graph 2** Accredited AFIS

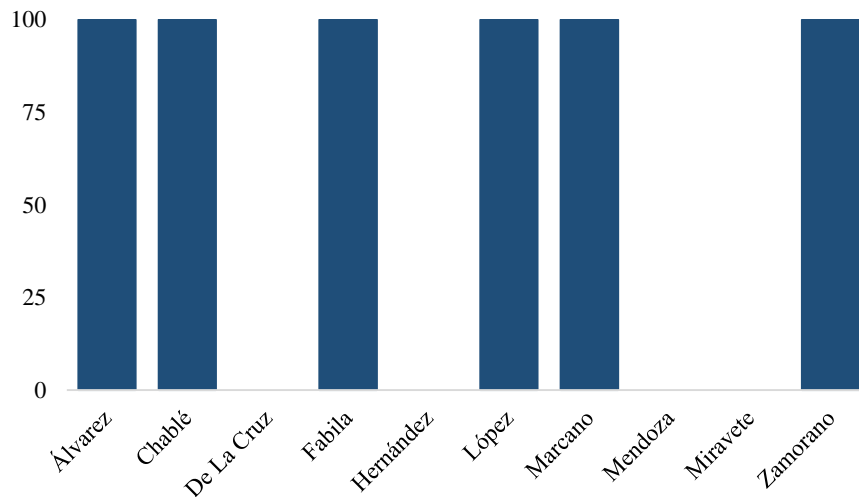


Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Kardex, downloaded through the student's portal of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen

Graph 2 shows the results of the AFIS accreditation of the ten tutored students, which reflects the release of 128 hours, equivalent to 8 credits.

It is worth mentioning that these AFIS were released in the fifth (De La Cruz, López and Miravete), sixth (Álvarez, Mendoza and Hernández), seventh (Marcano, Zamorano and Fabila) and eighth (Chablé) semesters, which makes it possible for them to focus only on their remaining subjects, professional practices and social service (see graph 3, regarding social service). The accreditation of AFI's can be released from the 4th to 6th semester, so that by the 7th semester the student must have covered the 8 credits of AFIS and continue successfully its curricular map, favoring the academic performance.

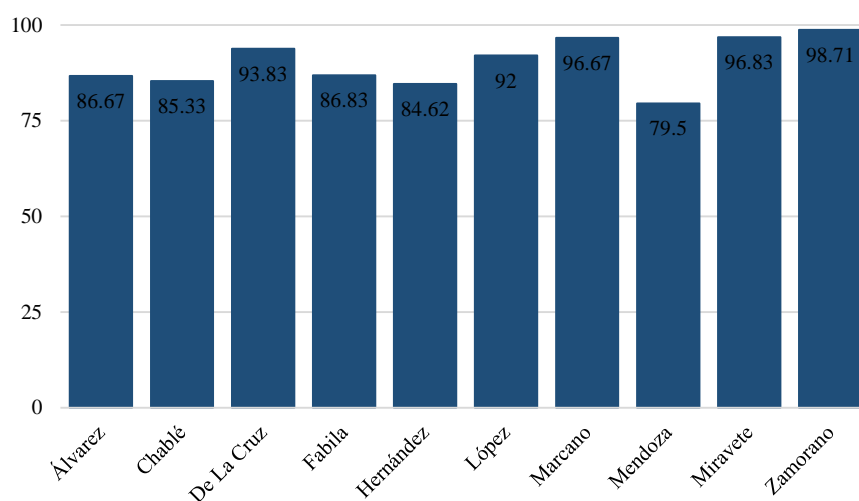
**Graph 3 Social Service**



*Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Kardex, downloaded through the student's portal of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen*

Graph 3 shows the release of the Social Service of six of the ten students. The Social Service can be taken after having completed 70% of the subjects of the curriculum map; the students Álvarez, Chablé, Fabila, López, Marcano and Zamorano have already released their social service, unlike the four students (De La Cruz, Hernández, Mendoza and Miravete) in the 7th semester, who have not yet reached 70%. Below is a chart of the subjects that each student has passed, as well as those that they are taking and those that they have yet to take.

**Graph 4 Academic performance - previous semester average**

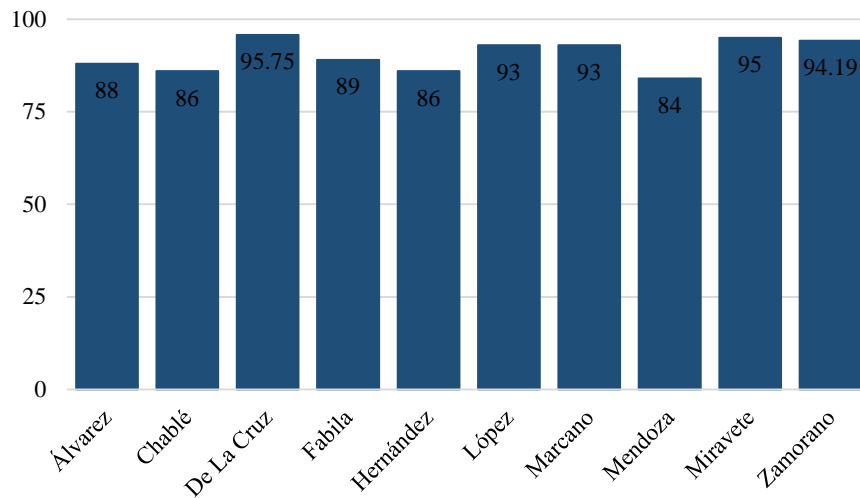


*Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Kardex, downloaded through the student's portal of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen*

Graph 4 shows the average of each student obtained in the semester immediately prior to the one they are studying. Álvarez, Chablé, Fabila, López, Marcano and Zamorano, in their eighth semester, took 6, 6, 6, 6, 3, 3, 3, 6 subjects, respectively, and obtained an average of 86.67, 85.33, 86.83, 92, 96.67 and 98.71, respectively.

De La Cruz, Hernandez, Mendoza and Miravete in their sixth semester, took 7, 8, 8, 8 and 6 subjects, respectively, obtaining an average of 93.83, 84.62, 79.5 and 96.83, respectively. Most of the students demonstrated good academic performance in the January-June 2022 period.

**Graph 5** Academic performance - general average

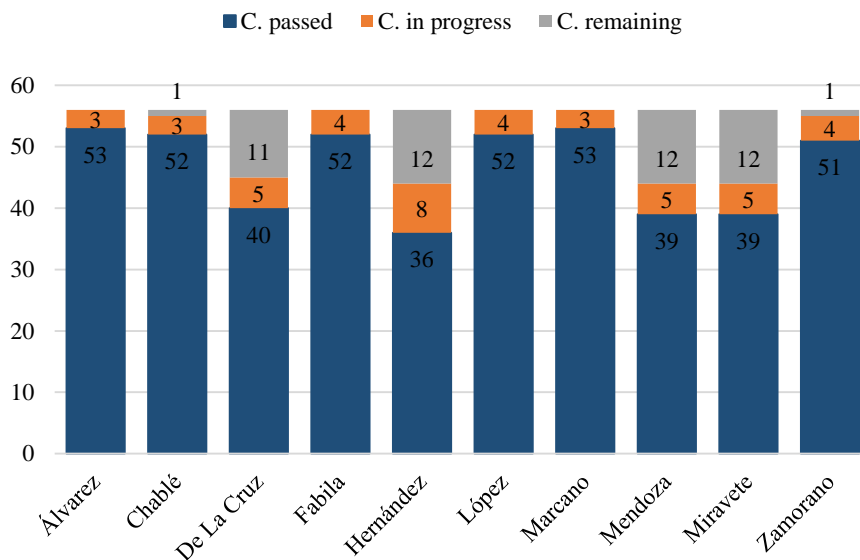


Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Kardex, downloaded through the student's portal of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen

Graph 5 shows the general average of each student, that is, the average that they have accumulated so far in their academic career. Álvarez has an overall average of 88.00, Chablé 86.00, Fabila 89.00, López 93.00, Marcano 93.00 and Zamorano 94.16, all of whom are ninth semester students. On the other hand, the seventh semester students have a general average so far of: De La Cruz 95.75, Hernandez 86.00, Mendoza 84.00 and Miravete 95.00.

This average is reflected by the number of subjects each student has taken and the grades they have obtained by passing the subjects, which are presented in graph 6.

**Graph 6** Courses passed, in progress, and remaining subjects



Source: Own elaboration with data obtained from the Kardex, downloaded through the student's portal of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen



Graph 6 shows the subjects that the students have passed, as well as those that they are taking in their current semester and those that they have yet to pass. The International Business education program consists of 56 subjects, apart from Social Service and Professional Internships. As shown in this graph, of the 9th semester students, Chablé and Zamorano only have one course to take, unlike Álvarez, Fabila, López and Marcano, who do not have any more courses to take after passing the courses they are taking; as shown in graph 2 above, they have already completed their social service, but are still missing their professional internships. As for the 7th semester students (De La Cruz, Hernández, Mendoza and Miravete), it can be seen that they have only a few subjects left to take, in addition to their social service and professional internships.

## Conclusions

According to Ariza and Ocampo (2004), a correct and timely tutorial accompaniment contributes to the integral formation of the student, generates effective gains in the learning of the disciplines, seeks to strengthen the students' abilities as well as their weaknesses and guides the participants in the effective and appropriate use of the opportunities.

In the example presented in this article, it can be seen that in the case of the ten students, they had constant tutorial support throughout their years in higher education. From the beginning, they were given an orientation that introduced and familiarised them with the functioning of the Universidad Autonoma del Carmen.

Since the beginning of 2020, all academic institutions have found it necessary to adapt to a virtual system in order to continue their activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the continuity of tutorial support. According to Herrera, et al. (2022), "in virtual education due to the pandemic, the figure of the tutor is reaffirmed as necessary to orient, guide and support the student in their trajectory, it has an academic and personal impact, for some students it is the link between virtual education and the real environment of their educational institution". As shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, tutoring, both individual and group, was beneficial and detrimental in different ways.

However, the advantages and disadvantages in both modalities generated a great impact on the academic performance of the students, since the strategies of each of their tutors were functional and allowed them to continue with the orientation and to cover the needs of the students in the virtual environment.

According to the research, it can be analysed that the individual and group tutoring contributes to the accompaniment and the academic performance of the tutored students, ensuring, for example, the release of the AFIS (Graph 2) in the appropriate semesters to be able to continue with the program of the curricular map in a coherent way to the appropriate semester to which they are advancing, the release of the social service (Graph 3) at the right time so that it does not cause delays in the graduation and obtaining the degree.

In the case of the ten tutored students, it can be seen that, despite the different circumstances they have gone through in their university career, thanks to the good tutorial support, their academic performance has not been negatively affected, since five of the ten tutored students had a good average in the last semester (Graph 4), which was carried out in the virtual modality, the rest of the tutored students obtained a regular performance, the general average (Graph 5), which includes the semesters before and during the pandemic, as well as a good progress in the subjects taken according to the semester they are in (Graph 6).

With the aim of ensuring that group and/or individual tutoring, both on-site and virtual, can continue to be satisfactory for the good development of the tutored students during their academic career, it is suggested:

- Continue to implement virtual tutoring even if the student returns completely to presential classes in order to reduce the economic expenses of the students with respect to transportation.
- Continue to implement group tutoring in a presential manner so that students continue to have more interaction with their tutors and classmates.

- Conduct group and/or individual tutorials in a hybrid way, that is, both presential and virtual, in case some students are unable to attend in presential manner due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Carry out individual tutorials online if the doubts are not so extensive or difficult to understand; otherwise it is better to carry out individual tutorials in a presential manner, since there would be the possibility of a better understanding and communication between tutor and student.
- Introducing new strategies or techniques so that students have more confidence and therefore better access to their tutors, and therefore better guidance and a successful academic career path.

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