

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ride.v14i27.1686>

*Artículos científicos*

## **La tutoría académica universitaria en tiempos de covid-19: oferta y promoción de los servicios educativos y apoyos institucionales**

***University academic tutoring in times of pandemic: offer and promotion of educational services and institutional support***

***Acompanhamento acadêmico universitário em tempos de covid-19: oferta e promoção de serviços educativos e apoios institucionais***

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### **Resumen**

Con la pandemia por covid-19, las instituciones de educación superior (IES) en México enfrentaron retos mayúsculos que las obligaron a emprender acciones creativas e innovadoras para reorganizar sus funciones sustantivas de docencia, investigación, vinculación y extensión. En este contexto, la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC) emitió un Plan de Continuidad Académica con directrices dirigidas al trabajo remoto y al abordaje de los procesos y servicios académico administrativo. En esta línea de mandato, la Facultad de Pedagogía e Innovación Educativa (FPIE), institución formadora de docentes, diseñó y aplicó estrategias como la tutoría para no detener los aprendizajes y apoyar el seguimiento del trayecto formativo del tutorado. Esta investigación, por tanto, tiene por objetivo describir la tutoría académica llevada a cabo en tiempos de covid-19, en especial en lo relacionado con los servicios y apoyos institucionales que oferta y promociona la universidad. Para ello, se utilizó un método mixto, donde participaron 12 docentes tutores a los cuales se aplicó un cuestionario que describe el perfil del sujeto y una entrevista estructurada que agrupó tres grandes dimensiones para una mejor interpretación del discurso: a) conocimiento institucional, b) seguimiento académico y c) medios de comunicación. Los resultados demuestran una tutoría que diversificó sus estrategias de difusión y atención, pues empleó

herramientas de comunicación sincrónica y asincrónica; además, el trabajo tutorial intensificó su carácter formativo, informativo y orientador en la difusión y seguimiento de los servicios educativos y apoyos institucionales. Por tanto, se concluye que los nuevos escenarios y contextos educativos provocados por la pandemia han obligado a las universidades a reconfigurar la tutoría hacia otros esquemas de conceptualización, funcionamiento, instrumentación y evaluación.

**Palabras clave:** covid-19, tutoría académica, tutor, educación superior.

## Abstract

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Higher Education Institutions (IES) in Mexico faced major challenges, undertook creative and innovative actions to reorganize their substantive functions of teaching, research, outreach and extension. In this context, the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) issued an Academic Continuity Plan with guidelines for remote work and the approach to academic-administrative processes and services. Under this line of mandate, the Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Innovation (FPIE), a teacher training institution, launches initiatives to not stop learning, where the tutoring carried out tasks of dissemination and monitoring of the formative journey of the tutored. This research aims to describe the academic tutoring experienced in times of COVID-19, in relation to the institutional services and supports offered and promoted by the university. A mixed method was used, 12 tutor teachers participated, a questionnaire was applied that describes the subject's profile and a structured interview that grouped three large dimensions for a better interpretation of the discourse: a) institutional knowledge, b) academic follow-up and c) means of communication. A tutorial was found that diversified its dissemination and attention strategies, by using synchronous and asynchronous communication tools; the tutorial work intensified its formative, informative and guiding nature in the dissemination and monitoring of educational services and institutional support. It is concluded that, the new scenarios and educational contexts caused by the pandemic, universities are obliged to reconfigure and evolve tutoring towards other conceptualization, operation, instrumentation and evaluation schemes.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, academic tutoring, tutor, higher education.

## Resumo

Com a pandemia de covid-19, as instituições de ensino superior (IES) no México enfrentaram grandes desafios que as forçaram a empreender ações criativas e inovadoras para reorganizar as suas funções substantivas de ensino, investigação, extensão e extensão. Nesse contexto, a Universidade Autônoma da Baixa Califórnia (UABC) emitiu um Plano de Continuidade Acadêmica com diretrizes voltadas ao trabalho remoto e abordando processos e serviços acadêmico-administrativos. Nesta linha de mandato, a Faculdade de Pedagogia e Inovação Educativa (FPIE), instituição de formação de professores, desenhou e aplicou estratégias como a tutoria para não parar de aprender e para apoiar o acompanhamento do percurso formativo do tutor. Esta pesquisa, portanto, tem como objetivo descrever a tutoria acadêmica realizada em tempos de covid-19, especialmente em relação aos serviços e apoios institucionais oferecidos e promovidos pela universidade. Para isso, utilizou-se um método misto, onde participaram 12 professores tutores, aos quais foram aplicados um questionário descrevendo o perfil do sujeito e uma entrevista estruturada que agrupou três grandes dimensões para uma melhor interpretação do discurso: a) conhecimento institucional, b) acompanhamento acadêmico e c) mídia. Os resultados demonstram uma tutoria que diversificou suas estratégias de divulgação e atenção, uma vez que utilizou ferramentas de comunicação síncrona e assíncrona; Além disso, o trabalho tutorial intensificou o seu caráter formativo, informativo e orientador na divulgação e acompanhamento dos serviços educativos e apoios institucionais. Conclui-se, portanto, que os novos cenários e contextos educacionais provocados pela pandemia obrigaram as universidades a reconfigurar a tutoria em direção a outros esquemas de conceituação, funcionamento, instrumentação e avaliação.

**Palavras-chave:** covid-19, tutoria acadêmica, tutor, ensino superior.

**Fecha Recepción:** Mayo 2023

**Fecha Aceptación:** Noviembre 2023

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## Introduction

The health contingency triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on higher education institutions, as it has fundamentally transformed “the contexts of curriculum implementation” (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020, p. 4). In this new reality, technology-based educational platforms have become essential allies to provide distance learning conditions and promote the development of professional skills in students. In fact, the need to adapt to the Covid-19 contingency led educational institutions to digitize educational

processes and services (including tutoring) and to promote their online offering and promotion (Vales *et al.*, 2009).

In this pandemic context, the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) has responded to health demands and indications from national and international organizations, which is why it has prioritized social and physical distancing to preserve public health. In response, the UABC has developed an innovative document known as *The Academic Continuity Plan*, which establishes guidelines for a completely online education offering, which has required that all academic functions be moved to an emerging virtual modality.

However, as the pandemic has continued and affected various areas of social life, the plan had to be updated more recently (on May 25, 2022) in order to successfully conclude the 2020-1 school year (January -June). This update of the aforementioned document specifically addresses the academic, administrative and non-face-to-face educational services activities that will continue to be carried out online.

Subsequently, on July 19, 2021, the UABC issued a statement with new provisions for the start of academic activities, programs, services and institutional supports corresponding to the 2021-2 school period (August-December). The purpose of this statement was to inform students, academic, administrative and service staff, as well as parents and society in general about the provisions planned for that school period, when some educational services and institutions began to gradually transition towards blended modalities, since, despite the lessons learned, some student care processes continued to be offered in digital format.

Following the institutional instructions related to the *Academic Continuity Plan*, during the 2020-1 and 2020-2 semesters, the FPIE implemented a series of internal criteria and measures for its organization. For example, it established a pedagogical-technological model that served as the guiding axis of the distance teaching and learning process, and it was determined that academic and administrative activities should remain online. To achieve this, guidelines were issued that included keeping spaces for collective use closed, allowing the teaching staff to continue working in virtual mode and communicating with the faculty through email, telephone and social networks. The alignment of teaching work with its substantive functions and teacher education and training in technologies for *blackboard* teaching were also emphasized. During the subsequent school periods, 2021-1 and 2021-2, the internal provisions issued by the FPIE to the teaching and student community were in accordance with the institutional actions published by the university on its information portal.

This reality of physical distancing, the academic tutoring service acquired a fundamental role in the educational process by facilitating the monitoring of the student's educational journey. However, the tutors, in addition to their teaching functions, had to develop additional skills in ICT-mediated communication, so that they could guide the tutors on academic, psychosocial and socio-emotional issues, and maintain constant communication with other areas. competent to provide comprehensive support to students.

Therefore, it is vitally important to assess the experiences and aspects related to academic tutoring experienced during the school periods affected by the pandemic. Specifically, the effort must be focused on those aspects linked to the dissemination and promotion of educational services and institutional supports, that is, rescuing the voice of the tutors and collecting their testimonies about the tutorial action is essential. This will allow, in the short or medium term, to identify areas of opportunity related to the learning of tutorial functions and propose new guidelines that strengthen institutional university tutoring. Furthermore, innovation in significant ideas and strategies is essential to address curricular issues, monitoring, accompaniment and evaluation of the impact of tutoring on student training to provide more effective, optimized and relevant academic assistance.

Based on the previous reflections, this research seeks to analyze and understand various elements that influenced academic tutoring in times of health contingency, which directly or indirectly impacted the educational process and student performance. Likewise, the study delves into an understanding of the processes of university tutoring, the variables that affect its exercise and what factors should be considered for an organized, structured and planned tutorial action. The scope of the research, therefore, focuses on improving the quality of the institutional educational process and contributing to the creation of flexible conditions and mechanisms that strengthen the conceptual bases of tutoring, its practice, implementation and evaluation.

In summary, the objective of this study is to describe the perception of tutors in relation to academic tutoring in times of pandemic. With this, we seek to know their experiences and testimonies about their tutorial action, particularly with regard to the offer and promotion of educational services and institutional supports during the 2020-1 to 2021-2 school periods. The purpose is to generate proposals for change and innovations in the organization and operation processes of tutoring in the Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Innovation.

## **The training process from a humanistic approach**

In the educational model based on the humanistic perspective, the student is considered the center of the pedagogical task. In this regard, Aizpuru Cruces (2008) points out the following

[The student is] a being with initiative, with the need to grow, self-determined, active and capable of solving problems, he is an active participant throughout the learning process, [while the teacher] is a facilitator of the self-realization capacity of his students. students; encourages self-directed activities, self-learning, cooperative spirit and creativity. [As for the learning process], the human being must be studied as a whole, although with its own personality or structured core, in constant development, and immersed in a social context (p. 39).

On the other hand, humanistic psychology (De la Cruz Flores, 2017) indicates that intrapersonal and interpersonal work between tutors and students allows the development of skills for social interaction and provides tools for personal balance and self-realization of the individual. In addition, it contributes to the comprehensive formation of the student's personality by creating environments of coexistence, empathy, collaboration, responsibility and respect in the classroom, which allows them to achieve their personal and professional goals.

This humanistic approach, which is also found in the UABC educational model (UABC, 2018), is based on guiding principles that focus on the mission, vision and educational philosophy, focused on the key actors of the educational process. Furthermore, it is “philosophically and pedagogically based on humanism, which highlights the conception of the human being as an integral person; [as well as] constructivism, which promotes active, student-centered learning; and education throughout life” (p. 33).

This philosophy, through the components of curricular flexibility, comprehensive training and credit system, places tutoring as a vital element in the student's educational process. Along these lines, the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (Anuies) (2000) conceptualizes tutoring as the accompaniment of the tutor throughout their adaptation to the university environment and their academic follow-up, from their entry to the conclusion of their studies.



## Education in the emerging scenarios of covid-19

According to information published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “more than 1.2 billion students at all levels of education, around the world, had stopped having classes.” in person at school. Of them, more than 160 million were students from Latin America and the Caribbean” (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020, p. 1). This situation highlighted the existing gaps in access to technology, as well as the challenges and opportunities for global education.

In Mexico, Anuies (2021) presented a report on the national survey of students in relation to their academic training during the pandemic, in which it provides a complete characterization of the subjects surveyed and includes relevant recommendations that can be taken advantage of from academic tutoring. These suggestions cover the generation of support and accompaniment mechanisms for those at a socioeconomic disadvantage, the evaluation and attention of lagging learning to achieve the objectives of the educational program, the focus on issues of physical and emotional health and gender violence, as well as processes monitoring progress and achievements in student training.

In addition, the covid-19 health emergency impacted the structures of the educational institutions responsible for the training of education professionals in Mexico. According to UNESCO (2021) in its document *Teacher trainers in six Latin American countries*, these actors play a strategic role in strengthening an educational system. “The trainers and their work constitute pedagogical models of great impact on the way in which teachers in the training stage will perform when exercising their profession” (p. 11). This is because they have an integrative vision, disciplinary competencies, tacit knowledge and professional practice that are key factors in the transfer of quality in their educational practice.

## Tutoring against covid-19

The university academic tutoring service in times of social and physical distancing due to covid-19 was adapted according to the needs of the institution and the students, for which the possibilities offered by ICT were taken advantage of to provide virtual tutoring. This decision to continue the tutorial action in virtuality was made because during the pandemic physical and physiological discomfort arose in the students, such as psychosomatic symptoms, sleeping problems, tension, social dysfunction in daily activity and depression (González- Jaimes *et al.* , 2021), factors that affected the academic performance and human development of the student.

According to Yucra -Mamani (2021), in the virtual environment tutoring plays a formative, informative and guiding role, but at the same time it demands from tutors a profile that includes counseling, guidance and psychological support skills to solve their problems. academic and personal problems, which, logically, also requires skills in digital competencies to improve their work.

In fact, in a study carried out by Ponce Ceballos *et al.* (2022) with 5,300 UABC students on the assessment of academic tutoring in school periods of confinement, the authors conclude that it is essential to have defined during times of contingency the operation, monitoring, continuity, scheduling and effective communication for the work of the mentoring in their different areas of action. This includes having a clear, precise and concrete continuity plan in the institutional guidelines to ensure the continuity of the educational process, the development of preventive diagnoses for training actions along the way, monitoring mechanisms for the detection of emotional health and disadvantage conditions. , and finally, adapt the technological conditions according to the needs and possibilities of the tutoring actors.

## Method

A mixed approach was used. The quantitative one was in charge of compiling the profile and characteristics of the tutors, their training and their tutorial work during the school cycles affected by the pandemic, while in the qualitative one an FPIE tutoring instrument was used to list the programs and services institutional with the purpose of disseminating and monitoring tutoring during the school year. For this reason, a phenomenological design was chosen, which “seeks to understand people's experiences of a phenomenon or multiple perspectives of it” (Hernández *et al.*, 2014, p. 471).

The study subjects who participated in the research consisted of a sample of 12 teachers with tutoring hours. In this case, the objective was to obtain “richness, depth and quality of information, not quantity or standardization” (Hernández *et al.*, 2010, p. 397).

For this, two different techniques were used: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview in order to explore and deepen (Lebart *et al.*, 2000) on the tutorial action during the period of confinement due to covid-19 in the school periods 2020-1 to 2021-2. The questionnaire consisted of seven closed questions and one open question, while the interview was based on the academic tutoring instrument used at the FPIE and included 23 aspects related to the programs, services and institutional supports offered and promoted by



the university. Through descriptive questions and answers, the joint construction of meanings in relation to the topic was facilitated (Janesick, 1998, cited by Hernández *et al.*, 2010), which in this case focused on the tutor's focus on tutorial practice during the pandemic. Both instruments were validated by qualified experts in the area of educational research, specifically in academic tutoring (López Fernández *et al.*, 2019), who evaluated the degree to which the concept in question was measured.

The application of the questionnaire and the interviews was scheduled through Google Meet with the 12 tutors on a specific day and time, between the months of November and December 2022. Before answering the questionnaire, recording permission was obtained from each tutor. Then, the interview was carried out and each subject was asked to focus their responses on three scenarios of the tutorial action: a) their knowledge to facilitate the dissemination of the offer of educational services; b) the monitoring strategy, in terms of training orientation and updating of educational services; and c) the means of communication used to provide educational services.

The data collected from the questionnaire were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS 20.0 *software*. To reflect on the contents of the interviews, the recordings of each subject were transcribed and a comparative analysis of the material was carried out to interrelate the information collected. Finally, the results were written, classified into three study dimensions with ordered categories related to the three scenarios of tutorial practice specified by the researcher.

## Results

According to the analysis of the first instrument, of the 12 tutors, 8 are female and 4 are male; 58% are over 48 years old, 33% are between 40-47 years old and the rest are between 32-39 years old. Regarding seniority with tutor functions, 42% stated that they were equal to or greater than 15 years, with the same percentage one tutor was greater than 11 years and only one tutor registered seven years. Regarding the training stage that they currently attend, 42% are from the professional stage (7-8 semester), 33% from the common core (1-3 semester) and 25% from the disciplinary stage (4-6 semester).

When asked “What type of support did you provide to tutors in times of pandemic?”, the majority agree that the re-enrollment process was the most requested service, 92% indicate requests about the academic situation in the different subjects and academic commitments and 92% on academic procedures and procedures (table 1).

**Table 1.** Type of support provided to tutors in times of contingency

Tutorial practice support services	F	%	Total
About the academic situation in the different subjects and academic commitments.	eleven	92%	12
About academic procedures and procedures.	eleven	92%	12
About the needs associated with distance classes.	10	83%	12
On personal issues related to the effects of the health contingency.	10	83%	12
About your state of emotional health.	7	58%	12
About your state of physical health.	5	42%	12
Questions about the auction or re-registration process.	12	100%	12
Information on events or activities promoted by the institution and/or FPIE.	10	83%	12
Procedures and dissemination of scholarships.	10	83%	12
Attention by Psychological First Aid Meet	1	8%	12

Source: self made

When asking the tutors about the tools used in the pandemic to develop tutoring in individual or group sessions, 83% communicated through the institutional means (UABC email), 75% used the Google Meet platform and 58% Blackboard (table 2).

**Table 2.** Tools used in pandemic for tutoring sessions

Tool	F	%	Total
blackboard	7	58%	12
Uabc mail	10	83%	12
Google Meet	9	75%	12
Classroom	5	42%	12
WhatsApp	6	fifty %	12
Facebook	5	42%	12
hangout	1	8%	12

Source: self made

In the last question, tutors were asked to indicate three teacher training courses offered by the UABC or FPIE that they had taken during the pandemic. In this regard, 6 tutors mentioned the self-directed courses recommended by the Center for Open and Distance Education (CEAD) to improve their teaching performance and acquire digital skills in using the Blackboard platform; 3 registered courses related to the evaluation and creation of questions for the evaluation of graduates at the undergraduate level, 3 mentioned digital skills courses, and 2 learning evaluation. Additionally, one tutor reported having taken a course on developing learning units, and another mentioned a course on publishing high-impact journals.

In the second instrument, a discourse analysis of the interviews was carried out and they were framed in three study dimensions: institutional knowledge, academic monitoring and media (table 3) with their identified categories.

For the purposes of this study, partial results are presented organized by each dimension and supported with some textual quotes from the interviews. The quotes were selected with the purpose of addressing the objectives and providing evidence on the experience of academic tutoring during the covid-19 pandemic (table 3).

**Table 3.** Dimensions and categories of academic tutoring in times of covid-19

Dimensions	Categories	Description
Institutional knowledge	Diffusion	It refers to the tutor's knowledge of the educational services and institutional supports offered in times of health contingency due to covid-19, such that it equips them and allows dissemination and promotion to the tutored.
Academic monitoring	Formative	It refers to the guidance training follow-up provided by the tutor, in relation to the educational services and institutional supports offered, which may impact individually and in groups, facilitate, hinder or abandon university studies in times of health contingency due to covid-19.
	Informed	It refers to the updated informed monitoring of the tutor, in relation to the educational services and institutional supports offered, which may affect the individual and group, facilitate, hinder or abandon university studies in times of health contingency due to covid-19.
Media	Instances of tutoring	It refers to the tutor's knowledge of the instances of the organization chart that compete and contribute to tutoring, in terms of the educational services and institutional supports offered, which could facilitate, hinder or abandon university studies in times of health contingency due to covid-19.
	Technological means and resources	Refers to the various means and technological resources used to communicate the offer, promotion or condition of educational services and institutional supports in times of pandemic, trying to influence the individual and group, shared knowledge, which could facilitate, hinder or abandon the university studies in times of health contingency due to covid-19.

Source: self made

On March 14, 2020, the UABC activated its contingency care plan for covid-19 and published two important notices: the suspension of mass events and the activation of the Academic Continuity Plan. The latter consisted of the suspension of face-to-face classes and the continuation of the educational process at home. When asking the tutors about said plan, the following was obtained:

In the *institutional knowledge dimension*

I remember that the academic continuity plan forced us to abruptly go from in-person classes to virtual classes [...] when you already knew that it was going to be virtual and there was no possibility of being in person, so, the first scenario I do remember that we adjusted as best we could and They also told

us not to burden the students with activities, to be very empathetic with the situation (tutor 6).

Induction courses at the institution have always been offered in person. This is a semiannual task assumed by the Educational Guidance Departments of each academic unit. With the onset of the pandemic, it was completely migrated to distance courses under the Blackboard institutional platform. When asking the tutors about the induction courses, the following was obtained in the *Academic Monitoring dimension*:

The courses were directed by the CEAD [...] something that had already been done by the CEAD [...] about two or three years ago, we had done a simulation to work on this distance induction course. When the pandemic arrived, that system was already ready, so, it was implemented and they gave training to all the counselors throughout the university and they asked our instructors that we had already selected, who would participate in that training, it was for a month, and it was a course self-directed (tutor 7).

The educational programs and services offered by the university were forced to transfer their in-person offerings to other means of technological support to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous access. For example, the offer of the foreign language was a face-to-face modality in most academic units, but with the confinement the pedagogical schemes for its teaching were offered virtually. When asking the tutors about the foreign language courses, in the dimensions *Academic monitoring* and *Media*, the following were obtained:

They were offered completely online, in fact, it was the first time in the pandemic that they were offered completely online and teachers who were trained in the modality were obtained and the three virtual levels were offered (tutor 9).

Since 2011, the Institutional Tutoring System (SIT) was launched at the university, a technological tool aimed at the use of tutors, mainly for academic monitoring work. In times of contingency school periods, this platform became relevant in the tutorial action for efficient and effective virtual support for the re-enrollment process, or synchronous or asynchronous tutoring sessions. When asking the tutors about the functionality of the Institutional Tutoring System (SIT), in the *Academic Monitoring dimension* the following was obtained:

Review the history or kardex and answer a self-evaluation, consult the list of my students prior to giving the group tutoring session, which we have scheduled twice a semester at the faculty, we also schedule it as group tutoring so that there is a record of it (tutor 6).

Every semester the university holds the UABC raffles, which offer a variety of participation options for the entire university community. These have their technological platform for the dissemination and promotion of these raffles; In addition, they offer the possibility of purchasing and paying online. In times of pandemic, statements were published to clarify doubts and other means of communication such as Facebook, Messenger and email were also used. It was not until 2021-1 when the first digital draw was launched through a UABC draw application, which made it the first public university to offer it. When asking the tutors about the UABC raffle tickets, in the dimension *Institutional knowledge, academic follow-up and media*, the following were obtained:

The virtual groups were requested to be promoted by the faculty [...] In the group tutoring, I always invited them to participate by selling tickets, but I do remember the great concern of the faculty because the participation was very low even though They used this APP, the digital tickets, but there was not much participation on the part of the students (tutor 11).

The university, in its general guidelines for the operation of academic tutoring (UABC, 2012), places the student at the center of the educational process. Through tutoring, a teaching tutor is responsible for accompanying and providing precise academic monitoring during university studies, using various modalities of attention, either individually or in groups. Given the challenging context of the pandemic, tutoring explored virtual alternatives and began a stage of synchronous and asynchronous communication through collaboration tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Classroom, social networks, among others. This allowed tutors to interact and communicate effectively. When the tutors were asked about the individual tutoring sessions or the tutoring weeks, in the dimension of *Academic Monitoring and Media*, the following were obtained:

Meet were used. The individual sessions were specific questions to support them in their assignment, since they had failed several subjects and brought several doubts regarding the assignment of how to prepare it (tutor 11).

Before the pandemic, the university offered student exchange programs in person with other national or international institutions that had agreements. However, due to the



Covid-19 contingency, in-person exchanges were suspended, as some universities stopped receiving students. It was not until the 2021-1 semester that the first call for a student exchange with virtual mobility features was launched. In this modality, distance disciplinary pedagogical training strategies were established, offered by other universities that operate completely online. When the tutors were asked about student mobility, in the dimension *Institutional knowledge, academic monitoring and media*, the following were obtained:

My students did not participate, but mobility had an increase due to the fact that it was virtual [...] because it was virtual, since the lock on economic issues was removed. So, at the UABC level, it was something very good, several students took advantage [...] I read testimonies in Gaceta that said that for them it was something unattainable to carry out an academic mobility and when they opened the door, that it was virtual, they did it and they were able to take subjects at other universities (tutor 11).

In the educational institution, library services, whether in their physical or digital format, are constantly updating and expanding their bibliographic collection in various areas of knowledge, with a focus on supporting teaching and research tasks. At the beginning of the covid-19 contingency, the UABC Library closed its physical doors; However, it gradually adapted its library services to offer them virtually. When the tutors were asked about Library Services, within the dimension of *Institutional Knowledge and Media*, the following were obtained:

E-books were promoted, I also disseminated or commented to the students on the use of library services, on all electronic resources, articles, books, a very important repository that they have electronically, I disseminated it and commented on it with my students (tutor 4).

The UABC Foundation calls are designed to offer scholarships, stays and technological equipment. These are published semiannually with the purpose of providing opportunities to the undergraduate student community to transform their lives and their environment for the benefit of society. Since the implementation of the Academic Contingency Plan, the dissemination of these calls has been more actively promoted through webinars *and* other digital media. When consulting the tutors about the UABC Foundation calls, within the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge* and *Academic Monitoring*, the following were obtained:

I knew of two categories, *UABC Foundation* and *Alas*. The call was uploaded at the time in Classroom. The one about *Providing Access*, the one about computers, I spread the word about it, at the time the kids were not encouraged and just until this semester (2022), I know of one who has already applied for the call [...] So, what I'm trying to do, is to sell them the idea, for example, during that period of the pandemic, one of my tutors is my intern here in the department, I wanted to convince her to apply and she was afraid, that is, "I'm going to get into debt", so, I I was trying to explain the benefits...How can you encourage her? Like his parents told him no, that they were better off looking for another way to buy a computer (tutor 11).

The UABC Educational Model includes professional internships as one of the learning modalities options with the objective that students acquire extracurricular experiences that enrich their discipline, in addition to obtaining credits (UABC, 2018). When the pandemic began, most external institutions that offer school or professional internships suspended in-person activities. Even during the contingency period, the UABC made the decision to completely suspend this modality in all areas of knowledge. However, some institutions allowed students to participate in virtual internships. By consulting the tutors about professional practices, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge* and *Academic Monitoring*, the following were obtained:

The internship manager did us the favor of sharing all the information about how the procedure was going to be [...] so that we could accompany them, and it was through this session with the managers that they saw how the case was going to be handled [...] of a student, it was due to a very complex family condition, the truth is that he even forgot that he had to notify someone that he was no longer attending the internship, he had the internship pending, but he did an excellent research job this semester, he is seeing exclusively carrying out practices (tutor 1).

Likewise, the UABC educational model includes Community and Professional Social Service as an option in the learning modalities, which allows students to develop specific skills in their discipline and obtain credits (UABC, 2018). To achieve this, the institution has a technological platform that encompasses all community and professional social service programs. At the beginning of the health activation, the migration to a new technological system was taking place, which led to the suspension of some programs by academics. Other

programs adapted their activities for the virtual modality, while some took advantage of the situation to update their programs. By consulting the tutors about the Community and Professional Social Service, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring and Media*, the following were obtained:

He communicated through the tutors. They had programs regarding food supplies or ticket sales, so as not to expose the students, and when this food collection was done to cover community social service, they were asked to take it to a certain place and then there was a lot of security. I am not very well aware of professional social service; I think it was done remotely (tutor 7).

The UABC scholarship calls represent institutional support offered by the university and are available in digital format. These cover a variety of categories, including registration and re-registration payments, compensation, research, bonding, average, artistic, sports, economic, among others. During the contingency and social and physical distancing, these calls were distributed in digital format to each academic unit for subsequent dissemination to the student community through their official channels, in addition to institutional media. When consulting the tutors about the UABC scholarships, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring and Media*, the following were obtained:

He channeled them towards psycho-pedagogical advice for scholarship applications. There was a lot of dissemination and support. Sometimes the Psychopedagogical Department, through the Directorate and Subdirectorate, even sent us flyers saying: Do you want a machine scholarship? Do you want a food scholarship? Do you want a registration scholarship? [...] because we knew that the economic part of many of the families was precarious [...] the companies had fired many people (tutor 2).

One of the benefits that the university offers its student community is Optional Insurance, which, according to its portal, provides coverage for illnesses and maternity as long as students are active. During the pandemic, academic units were urged to work on disseminating and raising awareness among students about the importance of activating this institutional support in case it is required for procedures related to school or professional practices, both inside and outside the university. university. When consulting the tutors about the Facultative Insurance, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring and Media*, the following were obtained:

You start from the induction course, you talk to them and tell them the same procedure, from the coordination of tutors to the tutors and the tutors to the tutees. They were given an example of where to enter, they are given the page, they take you step by step until they give you the format that you have to print and take to the institution (tutor 7).

The university has a School Statute (2021) that includes a series of articles of a regulatory and mandatory nature for all authorities, officials, academic and administrative staff, students, graduates and applicants of the university. During the time of the pandemic, the institution demonstrated its vulnerability, awareness and institutional strategy to not interrupt the educational process. From the beginning and until the end of the confinement period established by the institution, this document was essential to understand and evaluate some of the educational processes in the new virtual and hybrid environments. When consulting the tutors about the School Statute, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge* and *Academic Monitoring*, the following were obtained:

In general, they mentioned a lot the statute for attendance, whether in class or assignments to be delivered, to cover the attendance that, since it was not in person, now had to be through the work that they will demonstrate [...] but that they also had care that these deliveries complied with what was required in each activity, because not only to comply, since they were going to have attendance, but there were also other elements to be fulfilled [...] to obtain the score they expected (tutor 4)

The school calendar is an academic support tool that the institution uses to plan all the activities of the school year. At the beginning of the contingency plan, the 2020-1 school calendar had already been published, but, with the notice of the update of the academic continuity plan to May 25, 2020, it suffered last-minute date adjustments. This was due to the fact that the university authorities adapted the school calendar according to the health conditions prevailing in the state and the statements issued by the Ministry of Health. When consulting the tutors about the school calendar, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge* and *Academic Monitoring*, the following were obtained:

In general, important dates are taken, whether to unsubscribe, ordinary and extraordinary. I am not sure if in 2021, when this modification was made and this extension period was generated, it also spread, particularly with my groups and the students who were in this situation (tutor 5).

The university offers an institutional service to all its potential students and graduates through the UABC Single Job Exchange. This platform has three means of access to register and publish vacancies: the UABC Job Board, OCC-Worldwide Network and other recruitment programs. Despite the confinement due to covid-19, this service continued to operate. The academic units were responsible for developing their own mechanisms for disseminating and registering potential graduating students, as well as graduates of their educational programs on these recruitment platforms. When consulting the tutors about the UABC Job Board, in the *Academic Monitoring dimension the following* were obtained:

The faculty did not provide enough promotion to share it; The job pool was very scarce and limited, what I see is that it is connected to a pool called OCC [...] well it is very well known by many, because they have been doing the promotion for years, especially in the areas of maquiladoras, here in the city (tutor 3).

The UABC has a Graphic Identity Manual that establishes the regulations for the use of its symbols, graphic concept and institutional stationery. In this sense, the academic units work on the projection of the digital and visual image of their electronic pages, trying to integrate content that reflects the school dynamics, the organization and the academic environment that characterizes the educational community. Therefore, one of the first lessons learned during the health contingency period was to ensure that the websites were updated and became the official means to disseminate all information related to covid-19 and its effects on the university community. By consulting the tutors on the academic unit's website, in the dimensions of *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring and Media, the following* were obtained:

If it worked, because this information was first not shared and then it appeared on the page, so we downloaded it to the students and if they did not understand, they went to the page (tutor 7).

The Educational Guidance Departments in each academic unit play a strategic role in the training of students throughout their university career, participating in various informative, training and guidance activities of great importance at the institutional level. During confinement, these departments continued to function, which was essential for the care of the school community. Depending on their access and intervention capabilities, as well as their organizational characteristics, they carried out effective actions to promote physical and mental health, in addition to implementing strategies and activities that



contributed to the socio-emotional well-being of our students. By consulting the tutors about the services provided by the Department of Educational Guidance, in the dimensions *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring* and *Media*, the following were obtained:

It has always been very supportive, directing the students, especially if there is any situation or difficulties with the teachers [...] it seems to me that the orientation was a very good means, to mediate, to attend to and try to redirect the situations that were arising in the tutorial (tutor 4).

The UABC Educational Model (2018) includes the Program of Optional Comprehensive Training Activities (known as CARNET) as a credit option. This is a document that validates any activity related to academic events in other languages, academic events in Spanish, cultural and sports activities and other activities that complement the student's comprehensive training. Most of these activities used to be carried out in person. However, during the time of social distancing, especially in the period 2020-1 (March-June), this service was suspended. However, each academic unit advanced at its own pace and began to develop activities with CARNET recognition, taking advantage of the advantages of information and communication technologies in vulnerable situations and contexts, such as the pandemic. By consulting the tutors about the Complementary Activities of Comprehensive Training with value in credits (CARNET), in the dimensions *Institutional Knowledge, Academic Monitoring* and *Media*, the following were obtained:

If activities with Carnet value were carried out, the academic unit did generate them. I remember that as much as possible we sought to give it continuity. There were some conferences that were aimed at students and most likely used the famous card seal [...] but I do remember activities for students in virtual conference mode (tutor 6).

The educational institution continuously promotes cultural and sports activities for its university community with the purpose of improving the quality of life in different aspects of human development. Due to the emergency generated by the pandemic, during the 2020-1 semester, the implementation of in-person activities of this type was completely suspended in order to prioritize the physical and mental health of students. Despite this global health crisis, in the 2020-2 semester some academic units faced the challenge of making the most of technologies by offering online academic opportunities for students to continue their comprehensive training through optional cultural and sports activities. By consulting the



tutors about the cultural and sports activities at UABC, in the dimension's *Institutional knowledge, Academic monitoring and Media, the following* were obtained:

Cultural and sports activities were done virtually. The cultural activities had a very good strategy, as did all the others. They learned and we learned at the same time, even the sports ones did it virtually. Then they recorded videos of how to do the exercises, for example, the sports ones, the cultural ones. There were also virtual painting classes [...] Of course, it was also communicated to the students (tutor 9).

For several years, the university has kept its re-enrollment system updated, a technological platform that manages the academic and administrative processes required by university students on a semester basis. In this sense, in the most critical semesters of the pandemic (2020-1 and 2020-2), this tool did not have to change to a digital format. However, it was essential to guarantee the synchronization of the re-enrollment processes with the assignment and activation of subjects in the Institutional Tutoring System for students. By consulting the tutors about the re-enrollment process, in the dimension's *Institutional knowledge, Academic monitoring and Media, the following* were obtained:

I provided them with the format, they delivered it via institutional mail and they were captured. Normally there was no problem, maybe we were just in contact with them a lot in case they had any problems with the registration [...]

Those who could not register went to adjustments and the process was the same, via email communication and via Facebook the notifications (tutor 9)

The UABC Educational Model (UABC, 2018) establishes that intersemester courses are part of the learning modalities with credit value, since they offer complementary subjects that are included in the study plan and allow students to advance in their path. academic. Fortunately, the institution was prepared and equipped to offer these courses online. In fact, the Blackboard educational platform already contained subjects designed to be taught during intersemester courses, either in blended mode or completely online. When consulting the tutors about the intersemester courses, in the dimension's *Institutional knowledge, Academic monitoring and Media, the following* were obtained:

The courses that were offered in person were adapted to the virtual modality. There were fewer offers, because there were also teachers who were going to teach the intersemesters, who did not have the training, but they were offered, but few were offered. The first time the intersemester courses intersected with

this extension period, I remember very well this semester that was extended, then some were just finishing the semester and others were already starting the intersemester, it was kind of complicated (tutor 9).

Finally, the university, through the Research Center for Digital Learning (CIAD), previously known as the Center for Open and Distance Education (CEAD), coordinates the institutional platform Blackboard. Due to the health contingency, this platform migrated all undergraduate and graduate study plans and programs, preparing them for their online offering. CIAD played a fundamental role as an institutional entity to ensure the continuity of university education by harnessing the potential of technologies to provide virtual education. When consulting tutors about distance classes on Blackboard, in the *Academic Monitoring dimension* the following were obtained:

Shared tutorial videos for specific technical questions. I only had a couple of times when they told me that a teacher had them more or less neglected, or that suddenly they were half lost, but the invitation was to first come to an agreement with the teacher or to report it. The problems were more about availability of time, clarity in instructions or materials. Also, if they did not have enough access to the Internet or the equipment to carry out the activities, they should try to more or less reach an agreement with the teachers, thinking that even in the first year the indication was totally flexibility, that is, very flexible with the students with delivery times (tutor 5).

## Discussion

This research was characterized by framing university academic tutoring in times of pandemic and its relationship with institutional knowledge, monitoring and the means of communication used by the tutor to promote educational services and institutional supports.

One of the limitations of the study was placing the tutor in the school cycles during the pandemic and recovering their memories transformed into valuable experiences to describe and evaluate their tutorial work in the context of academic tutoring in times of pandemic. During isolation and mandatory social distancing, as mentioned by ECLAC-UNESCO (2020), educational services around the world were forced to close, and both teachers and students had to make the transition from in-person to virtual teaching. to safeguard health and prevent contagion.

With the pandemic caused by Covid-19, the fundamental functions of teachers required a reconfiguration of their academic work. Tutoring, as Díaz Roldán (2021) points out, became a crucial element to maintain and guarantee quality education for students, who needed the guidance of a tutor, mentor or guide to provide them with didactic guidance.

All of the above shows that we must continue working on the integration of technology in education. In this regard, Rappoport *et al.* (2020) emphasizes that the continuity of teaching in times of pandemic “will depend on possible indications or agreements promoted by the management team, the technological resources that students have at home (devices and internet connectivity), the educational stage and the digital competences of teachers and students” (p. 11). In short, these technological means and resources are essential for the tutor, since they constitute effective tools to keep detailed monitoring of the students' training process. However, most tutors faced limitations related to their personal equipment and level of digital skills.

Even so, virtuality became a tool that allowed us to evaluate the digital skills necessary in an increasingly globalized and technological world. In this sense, the authors Castro-Durán *et al.* (2022) highlight certain key competencies for a trainer of trainers in times of contingency, which include experience in the school system, active research, creation of learning communities, strengthening professional identity, promoting the use of ICT, continuous reflection on their practices, constantly updating development and interpersonal skills, as well as an understanding of diversity.

In addition, the experience of the pandemic challenged tutors to continue with their educational work, who had to adapt to the new reality for planning academic and tutoring activities. Therefore, Patarroyo López *et al.* (2022) emphasize the importance of collecting experiences and best educational practices in a pandemic, which requires moving from a traditional approach to a more integrative and interdisciplinary one. This implies the use of the collective knowledge generated to transform institutional structures and school contexts in search of a more equitable, intercultural and inclusive education.

Likewise, the psychological and emotional effects experienced by the tutors during the pandemic impacted their learning process. This led HEIs to develop education strategies adapted to new scenarios and emerging contexts, as well as online psycho-pedagogical intervention programs aimed at students in situations of social, economic and emotional vulnerability. As mentioned by Cuadra Martínez *et al.* (2020), it was crucial to “implement

and validate effective psychological interventions for these groups, even more so in the context of a pandemic emergency” (p. 1149).

However, for teachers who were not familiar with the technologies, this pandemic marked their first experience in distance teaching or online learning. The majority were surprised by this change, and some had little time to train and adapt to this new modality (Viñas, 2021). Therefore, tutors had to react to unexpected situations by designing learning environments to automate certain academic and administrative activities related to tutoring. This led teachers to develop information literacy skills to access the technological world and, in this way, integrate ICT into the teaching-learning process (Ortega-Porras and Oyanedel-Bernal, 2022).

## Conclusions

These educational scenarios and contexts derived from the pandemic give academic tutoring a unique role in the university. The contingency that led to isolation and confinement made the figure of the tutor teacher become a strategic actor for the emerging virtual tutorial action. Despite the conditions of the pandemic, both tutors and tutees collaborated in designing and establishing means of communication that, despite the precariousness and technological vulnerability in homes or workplaces, allowed the educational process to continue.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the gradual transition of educational services and institutional supports to virtuality forced the institution to look for the best technological platform and digital resources for its implementation. These spaced adjustments were reflected in the opinions of the tutors regarding the means and technological resources used for the dissemination, monitoring and resolution of procedures and procedures required for educational services in virtual mode. Therefore, it is essential to learn from these experiences and consider a reconfiguration of tutoring in its internal processes and modalities of care, related to training and the educational journey. This implies approaching academic work from various perspectives and areas of action in tutoring.

Furthermore, it is crucial to act in a plural way and address the various areas of influence of mentoring. It is not just about seeing the process in a general way, but rather analyzing its components from a comprehensive perspective, considering the interrelation and organizational and curricular connection. This includes training and continuous updating in both academic and administrative aspects and in topics related to the socio-emotional work

of both actors. Likewise, it involves dissemination and promotion in all training stages affected by tutoring, as well as the design of an informative and training follow-up route that is aligned with knowledge of the guidelines, regulations and norms established by the institution.

Finally, the results obtained with this work highlight the importance of preparing academics with training in digital skills, since this allows them to respond effectively in health emergency contexts. In addition, it enables them to identify the academic, personal, psychological and emotional effects on virtuality caused by the pandemic. In short, through tutoring they can help minimize the risks of abandonment, delay and failure in university studies.

### **Future lines of research**

- In confinement scenarios due to a pandemic or disasters associated with natural phenomena, work must be done to identify digital media and resources for tutoring in virtual and hybrid environments for the early detection of physical, psychological and academic risk factors that facilitate or hinder training. academic and professional of the student.
- From the pandemic confinement scenarios, educational experiences of the teaching practice-tutoring binomial must be collected to generate curricular structures or schemes for teacher training and updating for interdisciplinary educational mentoring.

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