

# University guidance actions linked to student diversity

## *Actuaciones de orientación universitaria vinculadas a la diversidad del estudiantado*

Yaiza Viñuela <sup>1\*</sup> 

Diego González-Rodríguez <sup>1</sup> 

Javier Vidal <sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universidad de León, Spain

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: [yaiza.vinuela.blazquez@unileon.es](mailto:yaiza.vinuela.blazquez@unileon.es)

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### ABSTRACT

University guidance services have become increasingly important due to legislative changes and the need to address an increasingly diverse student profile. Universities must provide individualised attention to promote academic success and student well-being. These actions are crucial for addressing students with diverse needs, such as disabilities or disorders, who need specialized personnel. The objective of this study was to understand individualised attention in Spanish public universities. To achieve this, a content analysis was conducted, selecting the sample through a multistage sampling method. The final sample for this study consisted of a total of 34 interviews with 41 experts from guidance services, 5 conducted jointly because there was more than one expert in the service, and 29 individual interviews, from n=26 public universities. The information collection technique was semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using the MAXQDA 2022 program. The results show that individual guidance interventions were mainly carried out through specific services, such as psychological counselling. The widespread use of tutoring as an institutional initiative to individually support students was also emphasized, with the teacher-tutor playing a crucial role. Universities have expanded actions aimed at addressing student diversity through

interviews and non-significant adaptations. Spanish public universities conduct support and guidance for students on an individualised basis, following a counselling-oriented guidance model focused on the comprehensive development of the student. Attention to students with disabilities or neurodevelopmental disorders is more widespread in comparison to other student diversities, and it may be appropriate to advance further in the development of these actions.

**Keywords:** counselling, university, guidance service, mentoring, tutoring, individual characteristics, mental health, ICT

## RESUMEN

Los servicios de orientación universitaria han ganado importancia debido a las transformaciones que se han producido a nivel legislativo y la necesidad de atender a un perfil de estudiante cada vez más diverso. Las universidades deben proporcionar atención individual para promover éxito académico y bienestar estudiantil. Estas actuaciones son fundamentales para atender a estudiantes de atención a la diversidad, como discapacidad o trastornos, siendo necesario la intervención de personal especializado. El objetivo de este estudio ha sido conocer las iniciativas de atención individual que se realizan en las universidades públicas españolas. Para ello, se ha realizado un análisis de contenido, seleccionándose la muestra mediante un muestreo polietápico. La muestra final de este estudio ha sido un total de 34 entrevistas a 41 expertos de los servicios de orientación, 5 realizadas de forma conjunta porque había más de un experto en el servicio, y 29 individuales, de n=26 universidades públicas. La técnica de recogida de información fue la entrevista semiestructurada, que se analizaron con el programa MAXQDA 2022. Los resultados muestran que las intervenciones de orientación individual se desarrollan principalmente mediante servicios específicos, como los de atención psicológica. También se destaca la generalización de la tutoría como iniciativa institucional para atender individualmente a los estudiantes, en la que el profesor-tutor tiene un papel fundamental. Se han extendido en las universidades las actuaciones destinadas a la atención del estudiantado de atención a la diversidad mediante entrevistas o adaptaciones no significativas. Las universidades públicas españolas realizan actuaciones de apoyo y orientación al estudiantado de forma individualizada, siendo un modelo de orientación centrado en el desarrollo integral del estudiante basado en el modelo de orientación *counselling*. La atención a estudiantes con discapacidad o trastornos del neurodesarrollo están más extendidas frente a otra diversidad estudiantil, pudiendo ser adecuado avanzar en el desarrollo de estas actuaciones.

**Palabras clave:** orientación, universidad, servicio de orientación, mentoría, tutoría, características individuales, salud mental, TIC

## INTRODUCTION

In the current European context, educational guidance activity is in line with the recommendations outlined in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) training model (Ehlers, 2020; Kindelan, 2021). This has led to reorganization of degree programs and changes in the teaching-learning process, granting students a more active, autonomous role by incorporating innovative methodologies that can engender new learning strategies from the students (Biasi et al., 2017; Sanagavarapu & Abraham, 2020; Tuero et al., 2018).

These changes are also linked to transformations in the university guidance process. Guidance is the activity undertaken to provide students with continuous, systematic, planned, organised assistance, considering the three dimensions: academic, professional and personal (Güvendir, 2018; Pantoja-Vallejo et al., 2020). Guidance Services play a fundamental role in supporting students who need help planning their academic and professional endeavors (Biasi et al., 2017; Garzuzi, 2019).

European universities have specific services to address the three guidance dimensions, as outlined by the European Commission (2022). The academic dimension is addressed through tutorials tailored to meet students' individual needs (Álvarez-Pérez et al., 2023; *Ley Orgánica 2/2023, de 22 de marzo, del Sistema Universitario* [LOSU], 2023); Martínez Clares et al., 2019), as well as by providing new students with services to help them adapt. The professional dimension is addressed through professional Guidance Services responsible for advising on degree choices and job-seeking on graduation. The personal dimension is generally dealt with through provision of psychological support services, catering to students with personal issues or specific needs.

In Spain, this activity is regulated by legislation. *Article 3* of the University System Act [LOSU] stipulates that the academic dimension must be addressed through tutorials. *Articles 22* and *43* specify that universities must have specific services to address the professional dimension. *Article 43* also states that universities must provide students with psychological and psycho-pedagogical support, as well as mental and emotional health care. In addition, the decree law—Real Decreto 1791/2010—approving the University Student Statute outlines in *Chapter II, Article 4*, and *Chapter V*, that all student needs must be met, including the right to tutoring as a measure for helping the transition to university.

With the changes brought about by the LOSU (2023), guidance actions must be updated in order to promote students' academic and professional success. Technological resources are key to the transformation of universities (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021). This is because they promote accessibility to services and make it easier to adapt to individual student needs (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021; Inglis &

Cart, 2018). The most commonly used resources are email, intelligent tutoring using intelligence, and social networks such as Facebook and WhatsApp (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021; Inglis & Cart, 2018; Suárez Lantarón et al., 2021).

In order to promote individual academic success, universities should offer individualized guidance, understood providing actions that are tailored to each student's need during their university career (Infenthaler & Yau, 2020). In this regard, activity focused on the personal dimension to enhance student well-being could lead to improvements in the individual's progress at university, as personal factors affect academic performance (Mason, 2021; Sanagavarapu & Abraham, 2020; Martínez Clares et al., 2019). Therefore, it is worth highlighting counselling as a guidance model, as it provides support and guidance for overall student development from Guidance Services (Hyun et al., 2007; López-Gómez et al., 2020).

Any individualized attention should address the whole range of student diversity, paying special attention to those with a disability, pathology, or specific problem. For students with disabilities, there is a focus on mentoring and attention aimed at the development of academic skills, such as learning strategies (Alulima & Chiluisa, 2022; Stanwood & Mittiga, 2022). In contrast, students with pathologies need attention focused on interpersonal counselling—in addition to academic support—to help them achieve greater educational success (Cardinot & Flynn, 2022; Davis et al., 2021). This means that universities need to have staff with specialized training that enables them to address both student needs and the challenges students may encounter during their academic careers (Bishop, 2016).

In summary, Guidance Services have become more important at universities thanks to changes in higher education policies. The need to adapt to new student demands sometimes requires personalized attention to ensure that students succeed (Sanagavarapu & Abraham, 2020; Zorec et al., 2022). All of this has led to a need for constant change and improvement to meet current demands. Furthermore, incorporating technological resources has improved the system by facilitating access to guidance interventions (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021; Kettunen et al., 2020).

Considering this, the general objective of this study is to understand the individual support initiatives undertaken in Spanish public universities. The interesting lies in the necessity for effective Student Support and Outreach Offices (Guidance Services) to provide individualized attention to promote students' academic success (Infenthaler & Yau, 2020). This overarching goal is pursued via four specific objectives linked to research questions: a) to use Guidance Services to analyze the concerns and needs of diverse student profiles, what concerns do students have?; b) to identify existing interventions aimed at individualized attention for any student profiles, do Guidance Services provide individualized interventions?;

c) to understand how Guidance Services use technological resources, do they use technological resources for individual guidance?; and d) to understand what those in charge of Guidance Services see as the future of individualized attention.

## METHOD

A qualitative study was carried out using content analysis, which is one of the main analyses used in this type of design (Cohen et al., 2018).

### Population and sample

The population was n=50 public universities identified through the Spanish Government's register of universities (RUCT). The distance learning Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) was excluded, as it does not offer in-person courses, as were Universidad Menéndez Pelayo and Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, because they do not offer degrees. The final population was n=47 Spanish public universities. The study did not include private universities because they have different characteristics (Klafke et al., 2020).

The sample was selected by cluster sampling. In the first stage, we contacted Guidance Services experts via email through the "*Servicios de Información y Orientación de las universidades españolas*" [*Spanish University Information and Guidance Services*] (SIUO) working group. This produced a sample of n=4 universities, resulting in a total of 6 interviews and 10 participants. In the second stage, we contacted remaining universities' Vice-Rectorates for Students by e-mail. This produced a sample of n=22 universities, with a total of 28 interviews and 31 participants. That meant a total sample of 34 interviews, involving 41 experts from Guidance Services and diversity services/units/offices and equivalents (SSD), from n=26 Spanish public universities. Between one and five experts from each university participated.

The socio-demographic profile of the 41 participants by gender was 68% female and 32% male. Their experience ranged from 1 to 10 years (34%), 10 to 20 years (42%), 20 to 30 years (22%), and 30 to 40 years (2%). Their academic background by area was: educational psychology (54%), social and legal sciences (22%), humanities (17%), and other areas (7%). Finally, participants' affiliations with the university were Technical, Management, Administration, and Services (71%), Teaching and Research (27%), and staff from outside the university (2%).

## Procedure

The following information was recorded in Excel: a) university, b) university acronyms; c) Guidance Services; d) expert data; and e) email address. This information was used to contact participants via email and request an interview, outlining the relevant aspects of interest:

1. Individualized support interventions aimed at students.
2. Individualized support interventions aimed at students with diverse needs.

Interviews were conducted between January and July 2023. They lasted from 30 to 50 minutes and were conducted online. Three researchers with expertise in the topic conducted the interviews. To ensure validity and reliability, the criteria from Cohen et al. (2018) were considered: a) joint training of researchers in initial interviews; b) consistent follow-up of the interview process and sequence; and c) audio recording and note-taking for subsequent transcription.

The interviews were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, six interviews were conducted with experts in university guidance belonging to Guidance Services to obtain an overview of the topic of interest. This stage helped outline the central theme of the interviews: individualized guidance. In the second phase, 28 experts were interviewed. Five of the 34 interviews were group interviews, while 29 were individual interviews. Group interviews were conducted when the service had more than one expert on the topic to be discussed.

## Instrument

Data was collected using the semi-structured interview technique. The interview script was created in three stages. The first stage involved reviewing official reports, legislation, and scientific articles to narrow down the topic. Based on that documentation, in the second stage, the needs were identified and the interview script was developed. In the third stage, the interview script was reviewed by two experts to ensure its suitability. Based on their recommendations, we refined and clarified the questions in the initial script, especially those related to students with diverse needs. Consequently, the initial script was restructured, and the initial 19 topics in five blocks was reduced to six topics in four blocks (Table 1). The interview questions were organized starting with general topics and gradually introducing more specific issues (Cohen et al., 2018). The aim of the interviews was to gather information on individual support interventions for all students, specifically those aimed at students with diverse needs.

**Table 1**  
*Interview script*

<b>Block</b>	<b>Content</b>
1. Needs	1. Students' concerns or needs.
2. Individual guidance	2. Performances for providing personalized guidance for whole students
	3. University programs or services to address specific needs: — Students with neurodevelopmental disorders. — Students with physical or sensory disabilities. — Students with high abilities. — Students with socio-economic/personal circumstances.
3. Technological resources in guidance	4. Process for students with diverse needs when there is a diagnosis, and when there is no diagnosis.
4. Future vision	5. What technological resources are used for guidance?
	6. What is necessary to improve individual guidance?

Block One, linked to student needs, was designed to introduce the topic of interest to the interviewees. Block two focused on personalized guidance. It was created following consultation of previous research that mentions a heterogeneous intake profile in universities, such as students with educational support needs or socio-educational disadvantages (Davis et al., 2021; Stanwood & Mittiga, 2022). In the present study, diversity was understood as any student profile requiring specific attention tailored to the individual's temporary or permanent needs, adhering to the principles of inclusion in current legislation (LOSU, 2023). Within this diversity, there are also profiles of students starting university with a pre-existing diagnosis, such as dyslexia or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

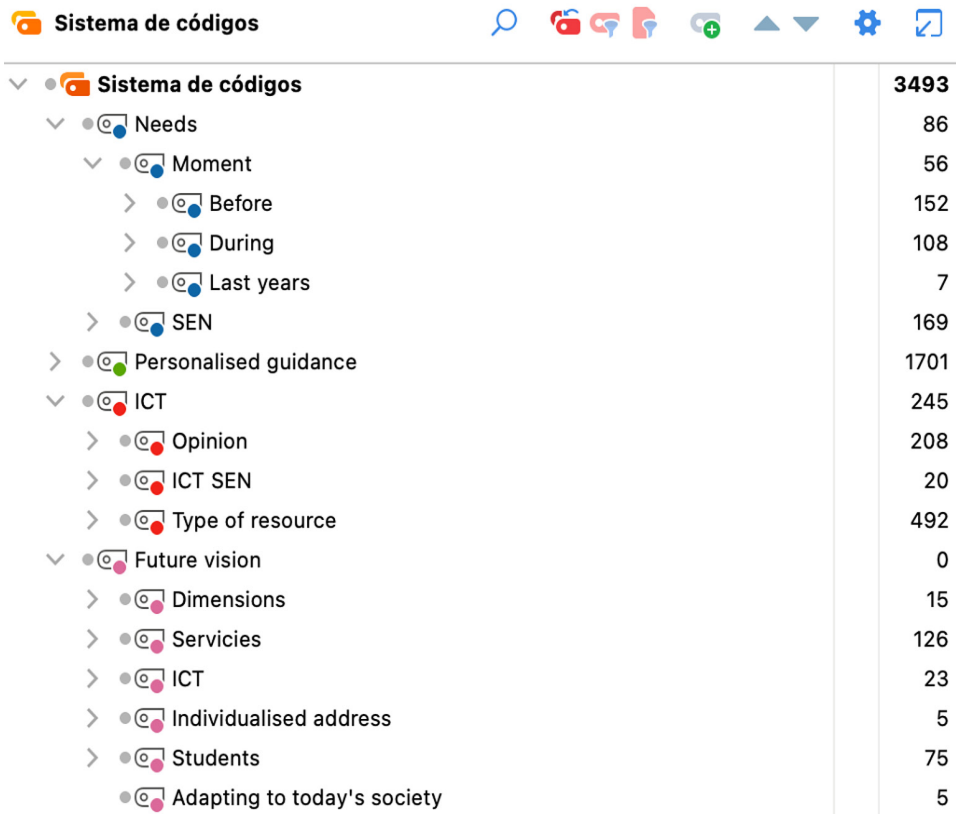
Block Three focused on technological resources for guidance. It was created with reference to previous research to understand the resources implemented in Guidance Services (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021; Inglis & Cart, 2018; Suárez Lantarón et al., 2021). These resources were classified based on the resource-centric model and the relationship-centric model established by Watts (2001). The resource-centric model is linked to the characteristics and functions of technological resources to provide access to information, services, and tools for the guidance process (Watts, 2001). The relationship-centric model notes technological resources as facilitators of interaction among the parties involved in the guidance process (Watts, 2001).

Lastly, Block Four addresses future perspectives, tackling aspects such as the needs from different Guidance Services to improve personalized attention interventions and where guidance should be heading to promote student success.

## Analysis

MAXQDA 2022 software was used to analyse the interviews by creating categories and codes through content analysis. Categories were created based on the interview blocks, using a horizontal coding strategy—analysing the same question comprehensively across all interviews. This was done to maximise result homogeneity for each item. A total of 4 general categories and 685 codes were created, encoding a total of 3,493 segments (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
*Categories*



Category	Count
Sistema de códigos	3493
Needs	86
Moment	56
Before	152
During	108
Last years	7
SEN	169
Personalised guidance	1701
ICT	245
Opinion	208
ICT SEN	20
Type of resource	492
Future vision	0
Dimensions	15
Servicios	126
ICT	23
Individualised address	5
Students	75
Adapting to today's society	5



After content analysis, the frequency of occurrence of the different codes was calculated.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the results is structured into four sections: 1) student concerns or needs; 2) individual support interventions and who intervenes; 3) technological resources for individual guidance; and 4) future perspectives. The results presented below are those mentioned in five or more interviews ( $n \geq 5$ ) to ensure representativeness of the sample. The description of the tables will focus on aspects mentioned in at least four interviews in the collected subcategories.

### Students concerns or needs

From the Guidance Service, the students' concerns or needs were presented according to their area of work, and the following types of students were mentioned: a) pre-university students ( $n=16$ ), b) first years ( $n=12$ ); and c) student with diverse needs ( $n=25$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
*Student concerns*

Type of student	Concerns category	n	Subcategory of concerns	n
Pre-university students	Choice	9	Vocational choice	8
			Career prospects	4
			Subjects	2
			Vocational training or university	1
			Combining programme degrees	1
	Administrative	9		
	Access	8		
First years	Programme degree	7	Failure	6
			Subjects	1
	University functioning	5	Administrative	4
Student with diverse needs	How will they be dealt with	12		
	Academic	11		
	Psychological	9		
	Integration	6		

Firstly, the identified needs of pre-university students focus on three aspects: 1) choice (n=9), primarily highlighting vocational choice (n=8) and career prospects (n=4); 2) administrative matters (n=9), related to pre-registration or enrolment; and 3) access concerns (n=8), such as cut-off grades for specific degrees and enquiries about the university entrance exam.

Secondly, students in the first years of their courses have concerns that are more closely linked to aspects related to their degree program (n=7). There is notable concern about failure (n=6), understood as the fear of having chosen the wrong degree or having to change their degree course. This is generally associated with administrative aspects such as transferring academic records, meaning: “...they want to know if they make a mistake in choosing their course, what possibilities there are to change” (ID06).

Another concern is the functioning of the university (n=5), such as whether there are services to help find accommodation or how to access university services.

Thirdly, the concerns of students requiring diverse support focus on the nature of their support at university (n=12), i.e., “...if they will be supported, if they will have guidance” (ID07); and academic questions (n=11) for example, about

methodological adaptations such as “Attention in the classroom by teachers, how they will feel inside the classroom” (ID29), scholarships, and choice of courses. Other concerns detected by the support services include psychological needs (n=9), sometimes due to specific events, and integration needs (n=6) with their university peer group.

### Individualised attention activity

The interviewees mentioned Guidance Services’ individual attention activities aimed at all students (n=33) and specific actions for students requiring diversity support (n=33). All of them are voluntary in nature (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Individualized attention activity*

Activity	n	Activity Category	n	Subcategory	n	Service	
Generals	33	Tutoring	24	Specific tutoring for students with diverse needs	5		
		Mentoring	21	Specific mentoring for students with diverse needs	12		
Specific actions for diversity support	33	With diagnosis	31	Non-significant adaptations	24		
				Follow-up	14		
				Guidance	15		
		Without diagnosis	26	Advising on minor non-significant adaptations	7		
		Interview/counselling sessions	29	Psychological care interview/counselling sessions	29	Referral	22
				Interview from GGSS	20	Clinic	7
Referral	23						
Specific programmes	12						

Both tutorials and mentorships serve as general actions for all students. Tutorials (n=24) aim to provide personalized attention, with the level of teacher-tutor involvement being crucial. Some faculties offer specific tutorials for students requiring diverse support (n=5) with assigned tutors: *“In some faculties, there is a specific tutor for students with specific educational needs or disabilities, who provides follow-up and acts as a mediator with the service”* (ID28). Mentorships (n=21) are conducted by senior students to guide new students, with the implementation of this strategy varying between different parts of the university. Mentors receive training and guidance *“...to apply it in their functions”* (ID33), as well as support from the teacher-tutor, who may oversee *“seven to eight mentor students”* (ID29). Some universities have implemented specific mentorships for students requiring diverse support (n=12). In these cases, *“The mentor can be a good role model to follow because they usually connect the new student with someone who has a similar profile to theirs”* (ID23), which can have a positive impact on the new student’s self-concept.

There are also specific actions (n=33) to support students requiring diverse support. There are non-significant adaptations (n=24) to assist those with a diagnosis (n=31), such as visual impairment or ADHD, among others. These are proposed by SSD or by the psycho-pedagogical guidance service, considering reasonable personalised adjustments in the academic dimension based on student needs: *“... someone with ADHD for teaching guidelines, Final Degree Project...”* (ID17). The teaching staff play a crucial role as *“...they are responsible for implementing these adaptations in the classroom”* (ID15). Additionally, students requiring diverse support (n=14) are monitored by relevant Guidance Services, such as the SSD, and by the teacher-tutor from the university. This allows evaluation of adaptations and provides continuous support in specific cases because sometimes *“...they need more intensive support and weekly supervision is carried out”* (ID20), as in the case of students with physical or sensory disabilities. Students without a diagnosis (n=26) receive guidance (n=15) on where to seek assistance and minor non-significant methodological adaptations (n=7): *“In the case of elite athletes or foreign students, adaptations are made, such as changing the exam date”* (ID29).

To address both student profiles (with and without a diagnosis), interviews are conducted as a technique for gathering information (n=29). These are carried out by Guidance Services, especially the SSD. Any student can request an interview, but the purpose varies depending on the student’s profile. For those with a diagnosis, it serves to plan the support they will need throughout their academic career. However, for students who do not have a diagnosis, *“The personal interview is very important for identifying needs...”* (ID21). Therefore, in both cases, the interview serves to support and guide the student, as well as to refer them (n=23) to specific services or to public health services for diagnosis.

In addition, interviews—as well as counselling sessions—are used to address student mental health, as the incidence of mental health issues has increased according to the psychological support service (n=29). This support is provided in two ways: 1) some universities assess students' needs from the service and refer them to external offices they have agreements with or to the public health system (n=22) so that *"...they receive treatment"* (ID26); 2) other universities have on-campus clinics (n=7) that diagnose, provide treatment, and offer counselling, such as *"In the case of students without a diagnosis, if the issue is emotional or psychological, they are referred to the psychological care clinic where they undergo therapy..."* (ID28).

Some universities have specific programs (n=12) aimed at the entire student population without the need for a medical diagnosis, only requiring enrolment. These are general in nature and not only provide guidance on administrative aspects such as partial enrolment or scholarships, but also support students with specific socio-economic or personal circumstances, without a possible diagnosis, such as those combining study and work or facing financial problems. Therefore, *"It is important that they exist because if this program were to close, there would be people left unattended"* (ID34).

### Technological resources for individual guidance

All of those interviewed mentioned the use of technological resources to inform and guide students. In some cases merely describing it, in other cases giving their opinion of it. In the latter case, they indicated that technological resources were a suitable complement to face-to-face guidance because it allows remote guidance in cases where it is not possible for students to attend the service or when the campus is very large (n=16): *"Technological resources can be an appropriate tool to complement guidance in a face-to-face manner, as there are times when it cannot be done otherwise"* (ID29).

However, in 11 interviews, face-to-face guidance was described as more appropriate than using technological resources: *"To carry out personalized work, it is better to work face-to-face than with technological resources"* (ID18). This is because individual guidance requires interaction between the expert and the student to establish bonds, as well as an atmosphere of trust and closeness that facilitates communication between both parties.

Additionally, technological resources allow Guidance Services to be visible (n=17) and promote communication (n=5), both for coordination between different services and for communication with students. In all the interviews, technological resources for disseminating information were mentioned, and 2 of the interviews indicated that they are more suitable only as a means of information.

Technological resources allow students to access information (n=9) and Guidance Services (n=5). However, it can lead to problems such as anxiety (n=4) or frustration (n=3), because *“...they are accustomed to the immediacy provided by digital technologies”* (ID19), often resorting to multiple contact channels to get instant responses from the same service.

Looking at the technological resources used by Guidance Services (Table 5), framed by the resource-centred model, what stand out are the use of websites (n=11), platforms (n=11), video (n=6), and apps (n=5). From the relationship-centred model, email (n=21) is included, with the observation that students do not commonly use it (n=13): *“Its use still exists, but what happens with this medium is that students don’t read it”* (ID08). This might, among other factors, be because students do not have the habit of using email, or because they are suffering information overload.

Another commonly-used resource is social media (n=21), with Instagram (n=12), Twitter (n=10), and Facebook (n=7) being the most prominent, particularly for disseminating information. Students also use these platforms to communicate with Guidance Services, who respond to their queries or refer them to specific services when necessary. For instance: *“Through Twitter, questions are answered within 24 hours. There’s a team that handles responding to tweets, and everything gets answered”* (ID04).

Guidance Services guide students using video conferencing (n=12) for interviews and follow-ups: *“Ultimately, with video conferencing, the face-to-face interaction is still maintained for conducting interviews”* (ID27). Finally, student guidance also involves telephone assistance (n=10) as a means of information and guidance, as well as chatbots (n=8) to provide information, particularly administrative information.

**Table 5**  
*Technological resources for information and guidance*

Model	Resource category	n	Resource subcategory	n
Resource-centred	Website	11		
	Platform	11		
	Videos	6		
	App	5		
Relationshipio-centred	Instant messaging system	21	E-mail	21
			Telegram	1
	Social media	21	Instagram	12
			Twitter	10
			Facebook	7
			WhatsApp	3
			TikTok	2
			LinkedIn	1
	Videoconference	12		
	Telephone	10		
Chatbots	8			

### Future perspectives on individual guidance

When the interviews addressed the future of individual guidance, what came up were aspects concerning services (n=31), students (n=25), and technological resources (n=12) (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
*Perspective for the future of personalised guidance*

Aspect	n	Improvement category	n	Improvement subcategory	n
Services	31	Resources	24	Human	21
				Economic	11
		Coordination	15		
Students	25	Diverse student	18	Advancing diversity	11
				Psychological care	6
				Training	5
		Generic	10	Communication and engagement	10
Technological resources	12	Adapting to current society	11		

Firstly, interviewees noted that more resources are required (n=24), both in terms of human (n=21) and financial resources (n=11), to enhance the quality and individualized attention Guidance Services provides to students. Increasing these resources would enable more awareness and prevention initiatives. Additionally, there needs to be improved coordination (n=15) between services through *“common spaces or platforms to ensure that services are interconnected”* (ID22).

Secondly, interviewees also noted aspects for improvement related to the different student profiles. On one hand, for students with diverse needs (n=18), there is a need to improve diversity (n=11) and psychological support (n=6). This requires better individualised attention and a more visible profile of the diverse student population at university to *“identify and implement necessary plans”* (ID30). There is also a need for more teacher and student training (n=5) so they can address various student profiles and normalize diversity: *“Teacher training should focus on more specific attention in the classrooms”* (ID24). In addition, more generally, interviewees noted (n=10) that there needs to be better communication with students and engagement from Guidance Services (n=10) to create a bond of trust between the two parties and encourage students to seek services when needed.

Thirdly, there is a need to improve the use of technological resources (n=11). This means using the resources that students already use (n=12), giving them an active role and ensuring human intervention. Interviewees noted that using technological



resources allows for *“the detection of needs through the use of social networks in which students are the ones who generate content”* (ID01).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of our study highlight that the main needs of students are in the academic and personal dimensions. The needs in the academic dimension are around choosing a course and the support available during their university career. In the personal dimension, the needs are around integration and psychological issues. These results are consistent with Tindle et al. (2023), who reported that student concerns were linked to academic aspects, such as support in university progression, and personal aspects, such as mental health.

We found that universities undertake individualised support interventions through initiatives addressing both the academic and personal dimensions. Tutorials and mentorships stand out among these initiatives as key forms of student support, while interviews were also highlighted, although they focus more on diagnosis and support planning.

Tutorials are widespread interventions and essential for providing individualised attention based on each student’s specific needs. This requires a high level of involvement from the tutor and the student to help overcome potential obstacles at university (Klug & Peralta, 2019; Martínez Clares et al., 2019). Along these lines, mentorship programmes are being developed as additional support that fosters creation of trust and bonds between students, which means it is considered good practice (Dunajeva, 2023; Radlick & Mevatne, 2023). Although tutorials and mentorships specifically for students with diverse needs are not widespread, they should be considered for two reasons. Firstly, because tutors would have specific tools and training to address the needs of diverse students (European Commission, 2022; Lorenzo-Lledó et al., 2017; Maldonado, 2018). And secondly, because the presence of trained mentors would encourage realistic academic goals and promote the inclusion of students with diverse needs (Cardinot & Flynn, 2022; Locke et al., 2023).

Interviews are a widespread intervention in Guidance Services, especially within Student Diversity and psychological support services. In Student Diversity Services, they are primarily used to tailor non-significant adaptations, with teaching staff playing a key role in implementation (Cotán et al., 2021). Interviews are also used in psychological support services for prevention or referral to other services for treatment, and are essential for addressing mental health issues, especially given the increasing prevalence in universities (Dessauvagie et al., 2022; Jang et al., 2019).

In a more general sense, we found that universities had better developed interventions aimed at students with diverse needs—particularly those with physical or sensory disabilities or neurodevelopmental/psychological disorders—than interventions aimed at students with challenging socio-economic/personal circumstances or high abilities. Although universities are taking action for undiagnosed students, there is a need for more because these students face more personal challenges that affect their academic performance (Manson, 2021; Sanagavarapu & Abraham, 2020).

Furthermore, our results underscore the need for new ways for Guidance Services to provide guidance and information to students, moving towards digitisation through the use of visual tools. This way, students will be able to use these resources according to their specific needs at any given moment (Clancey & Hoffman, 2021). All of this means that more human and financial resources are needed as a key action to promote the provision of individualised attention. Increasing these resources would have a positive impact on the quality of guidance because it would allow staff to dedicate more time to each student and perform more interventions that are tailored to each student's reality, fostering the development of an inclusive university (Álvarez-Pérez et al., 2023; Infenthaler & Yau, 2020; Sanagavarapu & Abraham, 2020; Zorec et al., 2022).

In conclusion, university support and guidance systems are implementing personalised support interventions for all students, particularly focused on the academic and personal dimensions. However, the professional dimension is also taken into consideration when providing guidance to students regarding their choice of university degree. Moreover, by identifying the diverse needs of students, including those in the realm of diversity support, it will be possible to better tailor guidance actions to each student and enhance academic success.

Guidance Services are essential in the provision of individualised guidance for identifying and addressing student needs. They are responsible for planning the academic itinerary on a personalised basis, with the interventions for diagnosed students being more advanced. Individualised support is progressing in line with LOSU (2023), which places special emphasis on student diversity. Additionally, through the implementation of tutorials and mentorships, individual support is offered in both the academic and personal dimensions, promoting integration within the university environment. This counselling-oriented guidance approach enhances students' academic and personal well-being, improving their self-esteem and academic performance.

The use of technological resources is widespread for providing information and guidance to students. However, it is necessary to strike a balance between using technology and face-to-face interaction in the guidance process. Therefore, implementation of any technological resources should consider both the advantages,

such as enhancing accessibility to services, and disadvantages, such as the lack of an appropriate environment for fostering individual attention.

Improving individualised support interventions needs more resources to cover more activity, especially preventive action, and to ensure that all student diversity is addressed. Therefore, it is crucial to continue progressing in these actions in order to achieve an inclusive university.

The main limitation of this study is that students were not interviewed to determine whether the individualised guidance interventions mentioned by Guidance Services met their actual needs. Therefore, one future line of research will be to examine students' needs to determine whether they are addressed by the interventions Guidance Services provide.

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