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**Promoting Knowledge Cross-fertilization  
between Academic Roles through Third Mission**

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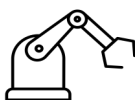
**UNIVERSITÀ  
DI TORINO**

**Session "Enhancing Student Engagement"**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**Florence**

## THIRD MISSION

Vocation of Higher Education Institutions to generate multidimensional value **for** and **with society**, mobilizing academic expertise as research products, teaching content and other know-hows, on different levels of involvement for stakeholders, from transmissive (from university to society) to **co-creative** (society/university alliance), with a cross-disciplinary and responsible approach



Technology  
Transfer



Cultural Heritage



Public Engagement



Production of Public Goods



Continuing Education



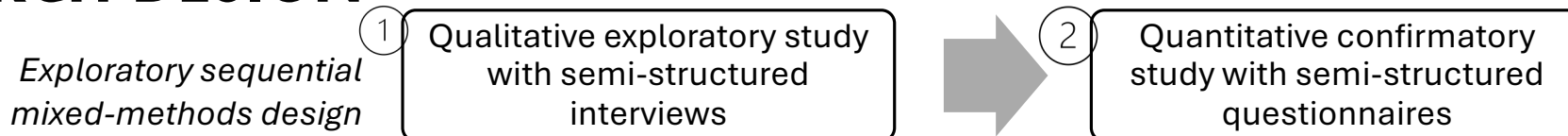
Clinical Trials



Open Science

# RESEARCH DESIGN

STRATEGY, TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS



QUESTION

Which synergies exist between Third Mission and the other institutional missions? Are there any missions that are prevalent?

↓  
*Content analysis with NVivo 15*

↓  
*Coding of text fields and analysis of frequencies distributions*

HYPOTHESIS

The performance of missions is subject to imbalances to the detriment of Third Mission and in favour of other institutional missions, while synergies between missions are rare.

OBJECTIVE

To understand the experiences of faculty members, focusing particularly on synergies between research and Third Mission

	POPULATION	SAMPLING TECHNIQUE	SAMPLE SIZE
1 <sup>st</sup> study	Faculty members of University of Turin	Non-probabilistic for representative elements	27 respondents
2 <sup>nd</sup> study	Faculty members of 12 Italian and international universities	Non-probabilistic convenience and snowball	304 respondents

## SELECTED FINDINGS

❖ Importance of **inside-academia collaboration** in allowing faculty members to conduct Third Mission alongside teaching and research

*“... without collaboration I would have zero activity of Third Mission right now” (16-RT)*

*“... the importance of having a working group that divides tasks between members (...) nobody can follow everything well, the risk is to do everything bad.” (15-PO)*

Benefits differ according to which subjects are involved:

- faculty members who are peers
- senior and junior faculty members
- faculty members and students

## SELECTED FINDINGS: Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange

❖ Peer-to-peer, also **cross-disciplinary**, knowledge exchange

a) between acquainted colleagues

b) between colleagues who met each other because of Third Mission

→ collaboration as both an **enabler for, and fallout of**, Third Mission

→ Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange occurring due to Third Mission can be productive in **exploring a line of research in greater depth** and/or in **creating research groups for international grants**

*“... I collaborate extensively with the Energy Department. Precisely because I met some of these professors during my Third Mission activities.” (09-RA)*

## SELECTED FINDINGS: Junior-senior knowledge exchange (I)

❖ Senior faculty members are lacking:

- **time**, because of teaching commitments and organizational-managerial tasks
- some of the **skills required** for Third Mission initiatives

❖ Junior faculty members have:

- competences in outreach and **effective communication skills**, use of digital tools and **audio-video** equipment, **social media** expertise
- training needs concerning **faculty life and career development**

## SELECTED FINDINGS: Junior-senior knowledge exchange (II)

❖ Knowledge exchange consists in:

- **Generation gap** as a **reflective** resource: advices of seniors, “fresh ideas” of juniors
- Possibility to transpose into academic courses, as **teaching tools, software and devices used in Third Mission** by juniors

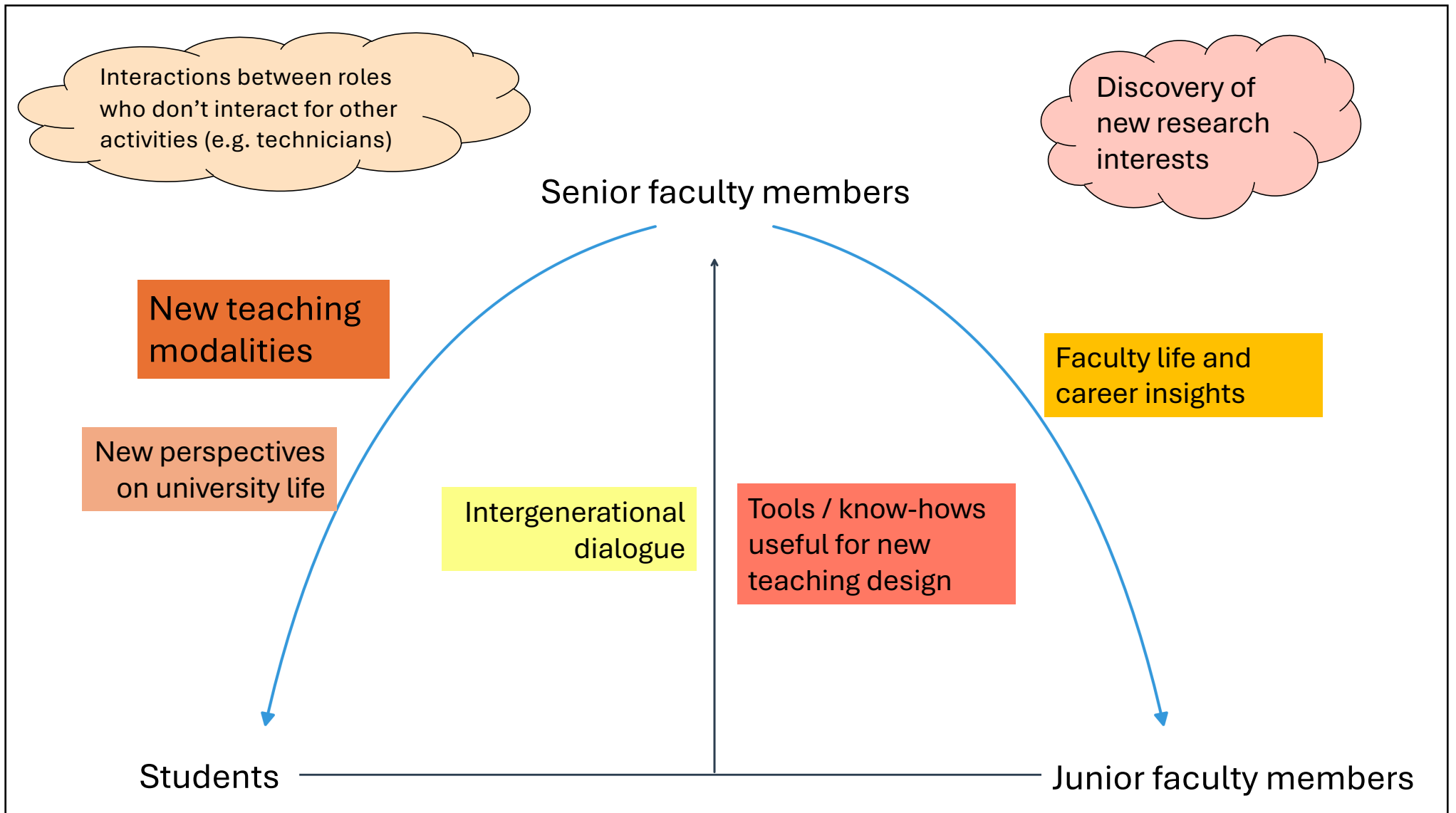
*“... communication, use of social media, use of various software programs, which, even when used in lessons, become a wonderful way to reach students more effectively...” (07-PA)*

❖ Knowledge exchange leads to:

- Opportunity for seniors to **gain confidence in the capability of juniors** to take on responsibilities and tackle challenging tasks: direct involvement, not only in the execution but also **design and supervision** of activities

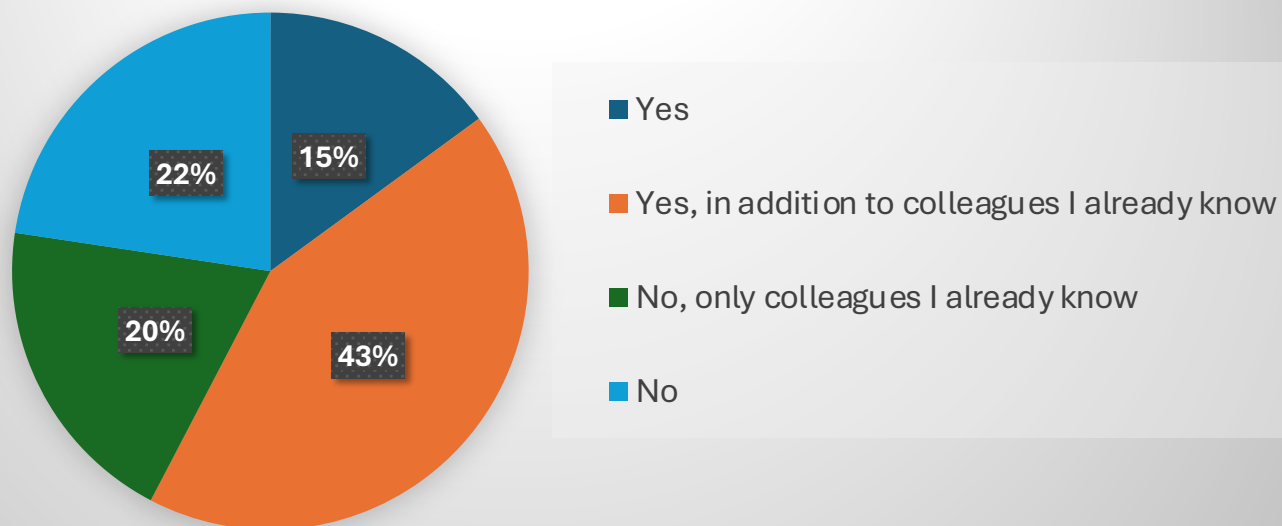
## SELECTED FINDINGS: teacher-student knowledge exchange

- ❖ Participation in Third Mission can bring to students:
  - **active learning** experiences in relation to educational objectives:
    - construct knowledge in new dynamic settings extra-moenia
    - mobilize informally-acquired competences in academic tasks
  - a new perspective on **how university can be lived**
  - effects on planning **career choices**
  
- ❖ Participation of students in Third Mission can bring to university teachers:
  - a source of **reflection to review their own teaching** on the basis of new needs and profiles



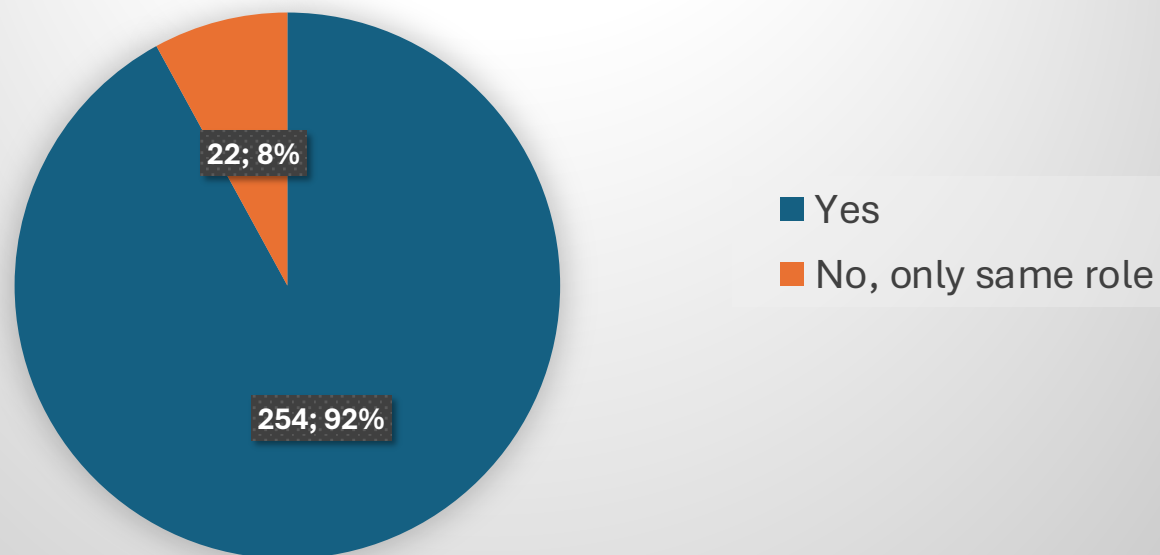
## SELECTED FINDINGS: Quantitative results (I)

Establishing contacts with academic colleagues through Third Mission  
[274 respondents]



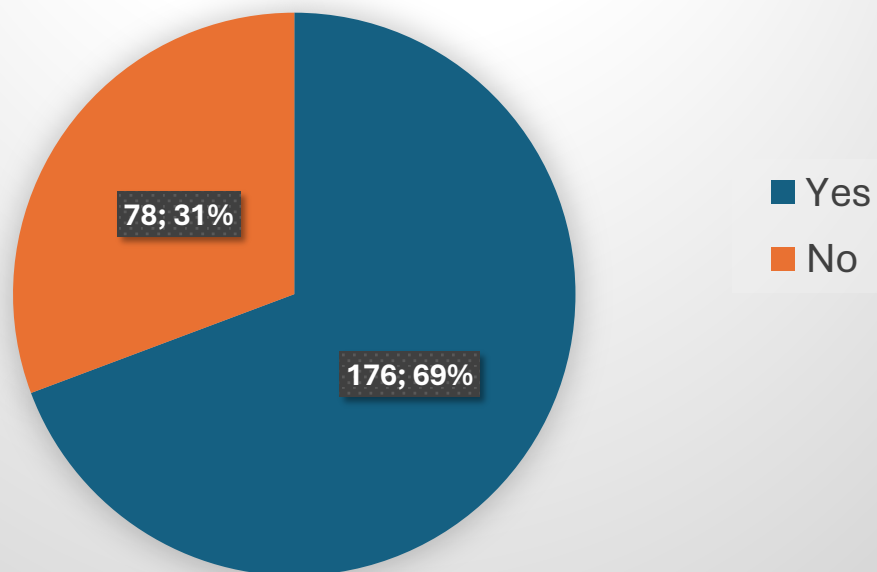
## SELECTED FINDINGS: Quantitative results (II)

Carrying out Third Mission with people in different academic roles



## SELECTED FINDINGS: Quantitative results (III)

The contact with faculty members in different roles, eventually including students, gave tools that were useful for teaching and research



## CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ Third Mission proves to be a **channel of learning**, for all actors involved, junior as well as senior:
  - New research alliances and opportunities can be discovered
  - New teaching modalities are both implemented and experienced
  - New insights for future teaching are suggested and reflected upon
  - Informal training and mentorships on faculty life and career are established
  
- ❖ Inside-academia collaboration represents a **crucial lever to make the most of intersections between the three missions**, valorising the heterogeneity of academic communities

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