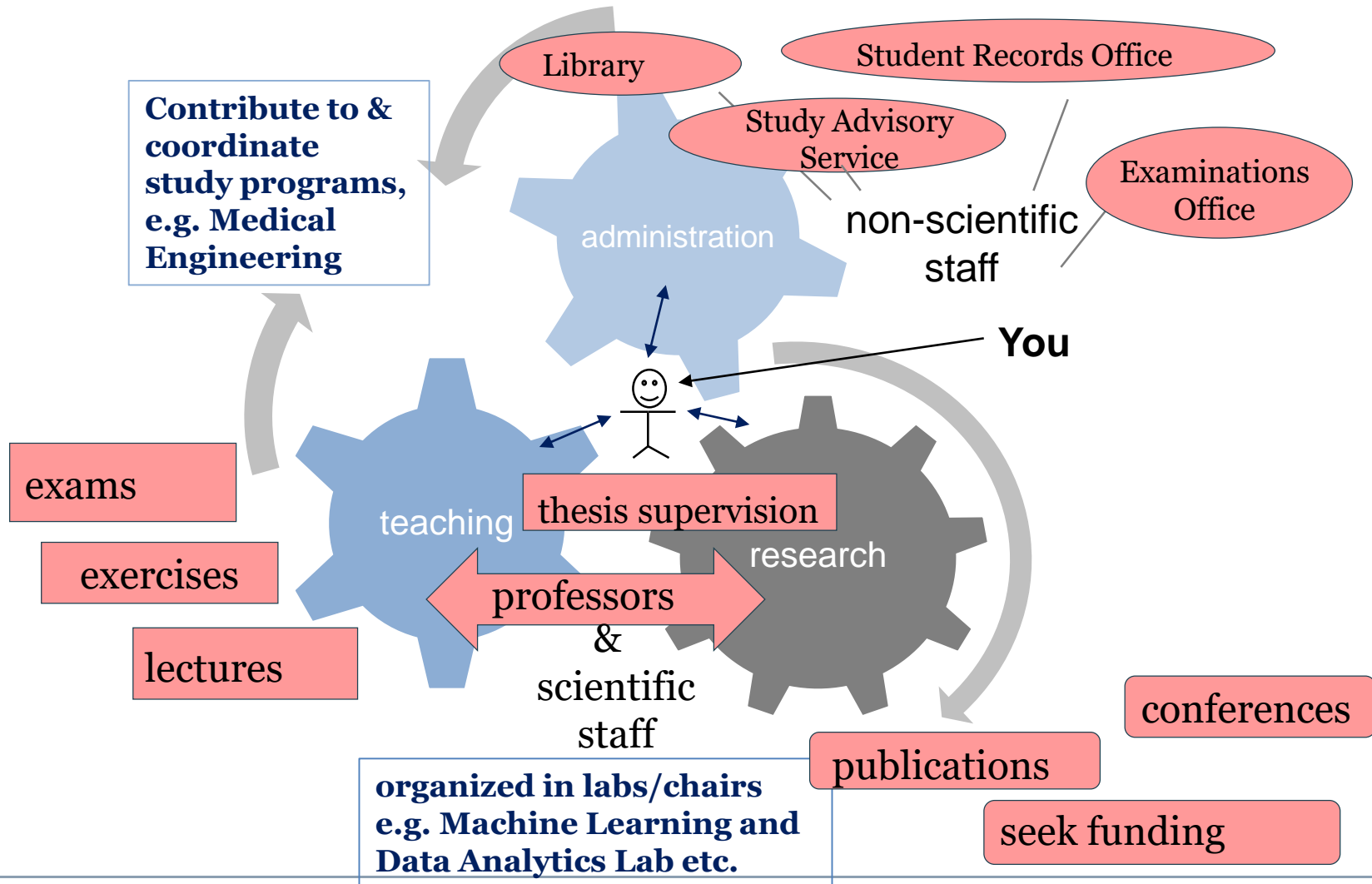


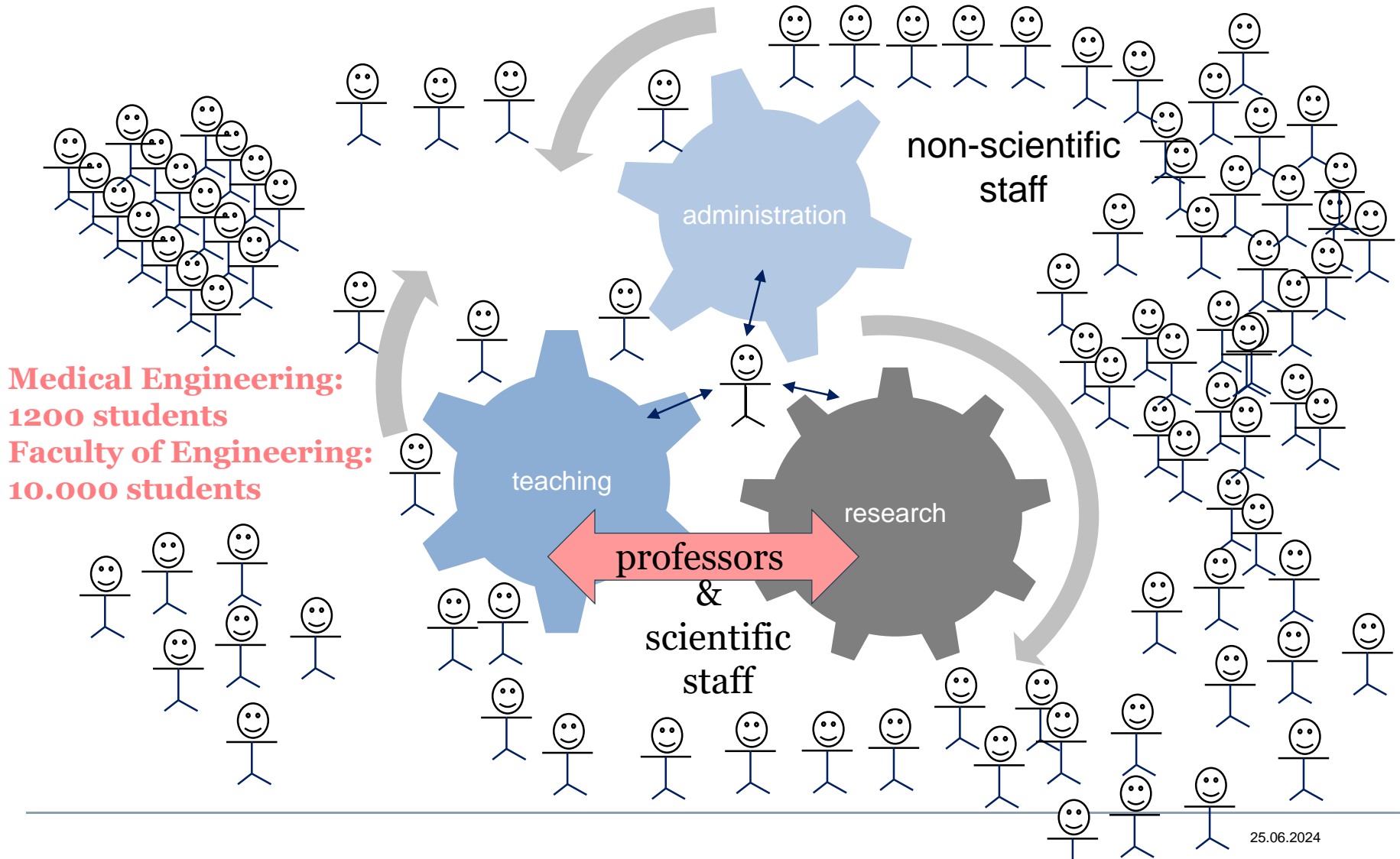
How to find a final thesis

Networking Night Medical Engineering, SS 24
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The general context: research at university



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From the beginning of your studies

- From day one, do not only focus on passing exams and earning credits.
- Ask yourself regularly:
 - Which courses do I find interesting - and why?
 - Which lecturer's teaching style and personality do I enjoy? What is their chair/lab called? Is it a big lab (= theses will be supervised by PhD students) or a small lab (theses may be supervised by the professor themselves)?
 - In which fields am I lacking knowledge? → Intentionally choose courses that will help you fill those gaps!
 - Which tasks/topics am I good at?
 - Which topics would I like to know more about?

**Save these pieces of information on your phone/computer. →
When the end of your studies approaches, you already know
where to start looking for a thesis!**

At the beginning of your penultimate semester

- Check whether you meet all the requirements to start your thesis in your ultimate semester:
 - bachelor's program:
 - GOP has to be passed.
 - You have acquired at least 110 credits.
 - master's program:
 - All mandatory modules have to be passed.
 - You have acquired at least 75 credits.
- Start looking on the websites of your favorite labs (section “research“/“thesis“/“student projects“ or similar) which theses are on offer and which topics they cover. Ask yourself: Would I have the required knowledge to work on such a topic?
 - **If the answer is „no“, use you penultimate semester to take lectures offered by those labs! They are the best preparation for a thesis at the same lab.**

At the end of your penultimate semester

Look for your thesis topic! The best approach, i.e. *personal contact*:

- Attend courses on-site and regularly (especially smaller ones, in which you can build a personal relationship with your lecturers, e.g. seminars, Research Lab projects or less frequented "special interest" lectures). Be active in the course meetings, show that you are prepared, and ask questions. Approach your professor after class and inquire about options for a final thesis.
- Always approach potential supervisors with a friendly and collaborative attitude. As a student, you are not entitled to carry out your thesis at a specific lab or with a specific professor, hence you cannot demand anybody's supervision. Instead, you should show why you are a good thesis candidate for a determined supervisor.

At the end of your penultimate semester

Look for your thesis topic! The second best approach, i.e. *via email*:

- You'll have to send out a bunch of emails to members of different labs before you receive a (positive) reply. This is not a rejection of you as a person. Our staff is very busy and receives hundreds of emails per day.
- Keep your email short and concise (3 - 5 sentences). Our staff appreciates it if you are respectful with their time. Long emails will not be read.
- Don't send generic emails (NEVER chatGPT-generated emails). The recipient will realize that you didn't put any effort into them.
- Show that you are familiar with the person's research work (actually do some research on their work!) and that you are motivated to work on a topic from their research area. Be as specific as possible and avoid empty statements.
- Show that you have some experience with the subject in question (e.g. mention corresponding lectures or projects you have completed).

At the end of your penultimate semester

The second best approach, i.e. *via email*:

- Communication style: Start with a greeting, end with a thank you and sign the email with your complete name, the name of your study program and the semester you are in. Avoid spelling mistakes and proofread your email before you send it. Your email should be easy to read for the recipient.
- If you have a good grade average, it can help to submit a current Campo overview together with your email. If you cannot prove good grades, it is advisable to apply without a grade overview but to invest even more time and energy in writing an impeccable email and in showing your knowledge of the subject and your motivation.
- Inform yourself about the most important public/religious holidays in Germany and don't send your email during those holidays. You should also consider that most staff members take a longer summer holiday and/or attend international conferences during the months of August/September.

Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

Inadequate communication style:

- Expressing your admiration for a person or to flatter them might be perceived as fake or manipulative and cause negative emotions. Example: Instead of writing “I admire your ground-breaking research in the field of x” it is better to keep it low-key and subject-related: “I have read your paper on “x” and found your approach for “y” very interesting”.
- When doing your research for the thesis, you are expected to be proactive and come up with your own ideas and solutions. Your supervisor will not tell you exactly what to do, but only point you in the right direction. When you have an interview with a supervisor, you should present as a person who has their own ideas and a hands-on attitude.

International students: You don't know which kind of communication style is considered adequate in this context in Germany? → **Take one of the workshops in intercultural communication which are offered regularly (and for free!) by the Study Service Center of the Faculty of Engineering.**

Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

You do not know yourself well enough (yet):

- Instead of concentrating on which lab/professor you would like to work with due to their reputation (e.g. "I must work with Prof. X because they are a big name in their field!") you should look at your Campo grade overview and determine which subjects you are actually good at.
 - It is advisable to look for a thesis topic in the areas which you had good grades in, as this strategy is most likely to result in a successful thesis project for you.
- Focus on the subject areas you have the most solid knowledge in and build on this knowledge with your thesis project.**

Frequently asked questions

Can I propose my own topic to a supervisor?

- You can, but there is not guarantee that it will be accepted. Try to identify whose expertise aligns most with the research task that you have in mind.
- When you approach the supervisor, make sure your proposal is well-prepared (i.e. you have already done some research about it, looked into the relevant literature etc.)

Can I do my thesis in collaboration with an industry partner?

- In principle, yes, but you have to find a suitable FAU professor who is willing to supervise it.
- Chances are very low if the professor doesn't have any connection with the company yet.
- Your chances are better if you inquire which industry collaborations already exist at your favorite FAU lab. Your supervisor needs to see you as a reliable and competent thesis candidate to connect you with a trusted industry partner!

Thank you for your attention!
Questions?