DATA CHALLENGE WEEK

Introduction

The postmaster PDEng Program Data Science has its own, unique way of assessing and educating students. The program has implemented Data Challenge Weeks, in which applicants and students cooperate in teams challenged by Big Data Sets provided by one of the industrial partners of the program. By observing and coaching, this week is an assessment for the applicants and an intense way of learning for the students of the program. Data Challenge Weeks can be regarded as a high pressure project in which both the process (how?) and the result (what?) count. Data Challenge Weeks are organized twice a year in the months September/October and April/ May.

Organization

In a Data Challenge Week, six groups of five or six students work on data sets from a host company; each group has a group leader, a senior student; each group is composed of applicants and students. An important aspect in the Data Challenge Week is the involvement of the students of the program in the preparation phase. The group leaders of the teams have the task to identify and specify themes from the provided data set, one theme per team. Each team focuses on the theme as distinguished by the group leader. The goal of doing this is twofold. First, the group leaders get familiar with the full data set before the start of the Data Challenge Week. Second, they identify the themes, so that group work can be organized more efficiently. Third, identification of themes is a challenging task that is relevant in their future projects and jobs. The other students are prepared for their tasks as a member of the team as part of their professional development skill training.

Social event

The Data Challenge Week is also a social event. During the week, teams live in bungalows, where they have to work, eat, sleep, and socialize. The bungalows are located in a holiday park with in the evening enough possibilities for leisure and pleasure. The week starts with about 16 individual applicants who are invited by the program, and a group of 16 students of the program. They become one group that manages to create a social structure in the bungalow park and a working atmosphere, six teams accepting each other's roles.

Schedule

The week starts on a Friday and ends the Friday thereafter. On the first Friday, in Marienbürg, s' Hertogenbosch, the group leaders introduce the themes that they distinguished from the provided data set. After this introduction, the teams are formed and the group leaves for the bungalow park. From Friday afternoon till Wednesday morning the groups work in the bungalow park. They are visited, observed, and supported by the program manager, coach, and other staff members of JADS during these days. The final presentations, given by the applicants, take place at Marienbürg where the industrial host, program management and other staff from JADS is present. Wednesday evening, there is a closing diner for all who contributed to the Data Challenge Week success. Thursday and Friday are reserved for application interviews. They take place at the bungalow park. Directly after the interview the application committee informs the applicant whether or not he/she is allowed to enter the program. For non-EU applicants it takes about three months to get a visa, resident and work permits.