

Dear company representatives,

VIScon is back! After the first, very successful VIS convention in 2018, we are already planning the second one: a VIScon that will be even bigger, more colorful and most importantly, more diverse. It will take place from October 11th to 13th, 2019 in the CAB building at ETH Zurich. Like last year, VIScon consists of a three-day hackathon combined with a one-day symposium (on Saturday, the 12th).

The hackathon will grant the students an opportunity to build a real-world product, something which many students find lacking during their curriculum at ETH. Fifteen teams compete against each other in the hackathon while creating amazing apps aimed to improve the students' lives or aid the volunteers at VIS. Each idea will have a stakeholder in order to be able to get rapid feedback on their work from a client perspective. But given that it might be the first time they attempt such a project, having support from experienced software developers is an invaluable assistance.

We are therefore looking for mentors willing to either support teams throughout the entire weekend or provide their expertise on specific topics. In order to support teams adequately, we would be happy to have senior engineers with tech-independent experience on board.

Team mentors will support 3-4 teams over the course of the hackathon, assisting them in software design, implementation specifics and general questions. Additionally, they will be part of the jury at the end of the hackathon, evaluating the app of each team.

Topical mentors provide advice to the teams regarding specific predetermined topics. Unlike team mentors, topic mentors will not be part of the final jury and will only serve as external support for certain aspects of the software development lifecycle or problems the teams may face. Depending on their topic, they will be present at the hackathon only at the time during which the teams most likely face the problems.

Please note that we care a great deal about the teams' independence; mentors should exclusively play an advisory role aiding their teams. Some teams might need more assistance than others and we would like mentors to adjust their support based on the team's needs but never as far as actively working on the product.

This document is intended to give potential mentors an understanding about their part in the VIScon hackathon. If you have any questions about it or want to become a mentor, please don't hesitate to contact us at hackathon@vis.ethz.ch.

Of course, all mentors are invited to join the other activities at VIScon (e.g. the symposium) whenever they like. We look forward to welcoming you as VIScon mentors! **The Call for Mentors will be open until the beginning of September.**

Best regards,

Larissa Schrempp
Head of VIScon Hackathon

Hackathon Details

All teams will develop apps using the new VIS IT-infrastructure. Their final product must be some web application that can run inside a Docker container which will be deployed on the VIS Kubernetes cluster. For convenience we will provide a number of tools including, but not limited to, GitLab CI/CD, databases such as MariaDB, MongoDB and PostgreSQL, persistent storage (either S3-compatible or - if really needed - via a Linux file system) and APIs for authenticating users, sending notifications, etc.

To ensure the developed apps provide an added value to the students or the VIS, we will provide concrete ideas as well as problem statements for apps prior to the actual hackathon and assign teams to ideas based on their preferences during the opening ceremony. Each idea has a stakeholder, who takes a client role in the app's development. He or she will be giving feedback on the app's features and its usability throughout the hackathon. Teams will have the opportunity to present their own ideas during registration and, depending on their feasibility, we may draft requirements and assign a stakeholder to their idea.

We aim to have two separate types of teams for the hackathon, based on how the students register: either as a complete five person team or alone. In the team-based registration track, we aim to attract an established group of motivated people, who know each other and ideally have worked together before, for example on a project submission. In the single-registration track, students register by themselves and will be paired into groups based on their self-reported skills.

We will provide round-the-clock catering for all participants and mentors, consisting of soft drinks and snacks in addition to breakfast, lunch and dinner as shown on the timeline.

Timeline of the hackathon

| Time | Description |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Friday, 11th October | |
| 13:00 | Doors open, participant check-in |
| 15:00-15:30 | Opening ceremony |
| 15:30-16:15 | Idea pitches |
| 16:15-17:45 | Teams vote for ideas |
| 17:45-18:00 | Brief round of mentor introduction |
| 18:00 | Assignment of the ideas, hackathon start |
| 19:00-21:00 | First team mentoring sessions |
| Around 20:00 | Dinner |
| Saturday, 12th October | |
| 07:00-10:00 | Breakfast buffet |
| 12:00-13:00 | Lunch |
| 14:00-16:00 | Half-time meeting of mentors and teams, about 15 minutes per team |
| Around 20:00 | Dinner |
| Sunday, 13th October | |
| 07:00-10:00 | Breakfast buffet |
| 12:00 | Hackathon end |
| 12:15-13:30 | Pitches including a showcase in front of the jury, lunch |
| 13:45-15:00 | Closing ceremony: best teams pitch their product in front of everybody, jury decides on final winner from all finalists, award ceremony |

Team Mentoring

Team mentors will be present at the hackathon every day, although only a few hours each day. Their job is to assist their teams throughout the weekend, giving advice wherever the team requires it and gain some understanding of the teams work. It is important for us to let the teams work freely, choosing their technologies independently from their mentor's experience.

Shortly after starting the hackathon, every team will receive an opportunity to discuss the initial plan for their app together with their mentor.

Saturday, starting in the early afternoon, there will be a short half-time meeting between each team and their mentor, in which they will discuss the current state of their app and how to proceed from there. Goal of said meeting is to ensure that the team is on a good track to finish their app in the following twenty hours. During the halftime meeting the stakeholder for every problem will also be present for questions and feedback.

After the hackathon ends the teams will be split into two groups and all teams will hold a short final pitch of their product (including a showcase) in front of a jury. The jury will include the team's mentors as well as stakeholders and active VIS members. These will elect a first, second and third winner from their group, taking into account the aforementioned presentation. The selected teams will then again present their product at the closing ceremony and the two juries will elect a final winner from both hackathon groups.

Timeline for Team Mentors

| Time | Description |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Friday, 11th October | |
| Until 17:30 | Arrival |
| 17:45-18:00 | Short introduction of the mentors to the hackathon teams |
| 18:00-19:00 | Mentor briefing by the organizational committee |
| 19:00-21:00 | Actual mentoring |
| Saturday, 12th October | |
| 13:45 | Arrival |
| 14:00-16:00 | Half-time meeting of mentors and teams, about one hour per mentor |
| Sunday, 13th October | |
| 12:00 | Arrival |
| 12:15-13:30 | Pitches containing a showcase in front of a jury including mentors |
| 13:45-15:00 | Closing ceremony: best teams pitch their product in front of everybody, jury decides on final winner from all finalists, award ceremony |

It would be desirable if the mentors could also be around during other times, e.g. on Saturday evening, to be able to support their teams. However, we know that this might not be possible and thus is not mandatory.

Topical Mentoring

Topical mentors will only be present at the hackathon at a specific time, based on their provided expertise. Below is a short listing of topics deemed useful for the hackathon participants. Since there is a myriad of topics relevant to the hackathon teams, **we are very open to your suggestions for topics.**

Examples for topical mentors

| Topic/Profession | Time | Description |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Senior software architect | Fri, 11th ~20:00 | Support the teams during the initial design of their application. It is expected that mentors have a clear knowledge on how to structure applications but it is not expected that they are expert in every technology that might be used. |
| Database engineer | Fri, 11th ~22:00 or Sat, 12th ~09:00 | Provide feedback on the DB setup, best practices for interaction with the DBMS or DBMS used. The teams will be able to work with PostgreSQL, MySQL or MongoDB. It would be helpful if the mentors have a fundamental understanding and some experience with those technologies. |
| UI/UX designer | Sat, 12th ~19:00 | The user experience is one of the topics that can profit incredibly from expertise and ruin an otherwise technical advanced application. A mentor should support the teams by giving them feedback and possible improvements to their UX or UI. |

Topical mentors are expected to be present at least two hours in order to give the teams enough time and opportunity to benefit from their expertise. Teams will be able to register for short sessions with them, in which they discuss concrete problems or next steps. Of course the topical mentors are welcomed to stay longer, giving the teams more time for questions, or to enjoy the hackathon and the symposium.