



Health + Life Science Alliance
Heidelberg Mannheim

Alliance **Interinstitutional Postdoc Program 2026**

Guide for Applicants

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1. Program overview

The **Health + Life Science Alliance** strives to promote research and innovation through synergy – by bridging world-leading life science and biomedical research institutions and by bringing together a highly diverse range of disciplines and top researchers. Heidelberg University with its faculties of Medicine, Biosciences and Engineering Sciences, the University Hospital Heidelberg (UKHD) and the University Hospital Mannheim (UMM), the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), the Max-Planck-Institute for Medical Research (MPIImR), and the Central Institute for Mental Health (ZI Mannheim) have the common goal to develop the greater Heidelberg region into a world-leading innovation cluster by supporting cutting-edge research and promoting transfer of knowledge into new diagnostics and therapeutics. The participating research institutions are located at the heart of a highly dynamic urban economic and industrial area.

The Alliance offers Postdoctoral Positions to outstanding early career scientists (PhD), including clinician scientists (MD, MD/PhD), for bridging projects between at least two partner institutions. Through this interinstitutional program, we want you to excel in interdisciplinary research and provide you access to high-end technologies and state-of-the-art labs. Expertise across the institutions offer you the unique opportunity to gain insight into transfer of knowledge and development of new applications.

Do you want to work in a network of scientific excellence and transfer?

We look forward to your application!

We invite you to apply with your project based on the project outlines proposed by principle investigators (PIs) of the Alliance for this initiative. Alternatively, you are also welcome to submit your own project independent of the list of proposed outlines, which must also be supervised by at least two PIs at different Alliance institutions.

The Alliance funds basic science and applied research projects in the fields of cancer research, cardiovascular research, neuropsychiatric diseases, genomics, synthetic immunology, molecular engineering, medical technologies, and novel applications of AI approaches in health research and the life sciences.

The Rhein-Neckar region is not only renowned for being one of Germany's top life science and medical hubs, but also for its quality of life: You find a vibrant cultural life and attractive residential and shopping areas as well as a large and diverse international community. The region is one of the sunniest areas in Germany, and the stunning landscape invites nature lovers for recreation and outdoor sport activities. There is a good public transportation infrastructure and Heidelberg/Mannheim are well connected to several motorways and to Frankfurt International Airport.

The wide variety of schooling (including international schools) and day-care facilities ensures your family feels comfortable. Many initiatives and associations offer a good balance between work and live.

The postdoctoral program is funded through state funds approved by the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg.

2. Eligibility criteria

- **Outstanding** scientific activities
- **Early career researcher** (R2 stage, typically up to four years after the PhD or MD; 18 months can be added for the birth of a child.)
- **At a minimum one first author paper** (preprints and papers submitted but not accepted do not count)
- At the time of the submission deadline, applicants should **not have worked for more than four months as a postdoctoral researcher at the Alliance institutions (co-)supervising the project.**
- Applicants must complete a **PhD, MD/PhD or MD degree latest within four months** after the submission deadline.
- Completed application with all requested documents, all in **english** (see 4.2)

3. Funding

The Alliance provides funds for **two-year postdoctoral positions at Alliance institutions** with the earliest start date on August 1, 2026 and the latest start date on January 1, 2027.

Clinician scientists will receive 12 months of funding from the Alliance for the research project over a period of 24 months during the "Facharztausbildung"/specialist medical training. The clinical position during this time must be guaranteed by the employing hospital/PI where the "Facharztausbildung"/specialist medical training will be performed.

Fellows will be employed at the institution of the hosting PI who is the coordinator. The second supervisor is the collaboration partner.

Funding will be provided to the employing institution for a postdoctoral position, including social benefits. The remuneration is based on the DFG's personnel funding rates (TV-L or equivalent). Additional funding by host institutions can be used to cover actual salary expenses or to extend the position. Relocation costs and expenses for consumables are not covered by the Alliance. Hosting PIs are expected to provide funds for the research projects and further support.

Please note:

Fellows must report about the progress and highlights of their work after 12 months and at the end of the contract (1/2 page). They agree that (parts of) the short report will be publicly shared.

4. Application procedure

(1) Call opening and contact phase with Alliance PIs

Please check the website and download the list of **proposed project outlines, information sheet, Research Project Proposal Template and Support Letter** before you start.

All applicants must apply with their **own research project proposal** supervised by **at least two PIs at different Alliance institutions and must contact the Alliance PIs of their choice prior to applying**. Applicants require a **letter of support** from the Alliance PIs.

Applicants may choose from **innovative, interinstitutional project outlines** proposed by project leaders of the Alliance specifically for this call. Alternatively, applicants are also

welcome to define their own research project **independent from the proposed project outlines**, but also with at least two PIs at different Alliance institutions.

Please allow sufficient time for contacting the PIs and subsequently submitting your application. The application deadline (submission of complete application) is on March 31, 2026 at 5:00 pm CEST (strict).

Please contact the PIs of a project outline together in **one email**, refer to the Alliance postdoc call and attach your cover letter, CV including the publication list (with at least one first author publication), your research project idea, and the support letter template, so that they understand your request and can get a glimpse if your profile matches their labs. Your research project proposal does not need to be fully developed at this stage and can be finalized by the time of application submission, if the PIs sign a support letter.

The PIs will decide for themselves whether or not to invite you for an interview. If the PIs of the chosen project outline do not react or will not support you, you are free to contact the PIs of other projects that you are also interested in.

The Alliance does not cover for travel costs; unless you are on-site, the interview with the PIs will be online. If interests and expectations match, the PIs will complete the support letter for you that you need for the application.

You can only submit one application with one research project proposal and one support letter to the call.

You cannot apply without a support letter signed by Alliance PIs willing to (co)host you.

The Alliance institutions are DKFZ Heidelberg, EMBL Heidelberg, Heidelberg University with both Medical Faculties at Heidelberg and Mannheim, MPI for Medical Research and ZI. University hospitals and medical faculties of the same city are not considered as separate institutions for proposed research projects. You find the information about each institution's research focus on the official websites listed in the Appendix (page 7).

(2) Application submission

Applicants must prepare the following information for the application submission:

- Complete **information sheet** (download from website)
- **Research Project Proposal as pdf** (download template from website):
 - Project title and abstract (½ page)
 - Background and significance of the project (maximum ½ page)
 - Project main aims and impact (approximately ¼ page)
 - Project description (maximum 1 page including 1 figure)
 - Contributions of and to Alliance partner institutions. Please also specify what skills you will bring to the project and what new interdisciplinary skills you will gain by completing it (approximately ¼ page)
 - References (maximum ½ page)
- **Support Letter** signed by PIs from different Alliance institutions as pdf (download template from website)

- **Cover Letter** outlining your scientific interests and explaining why you are the right candidate with relevant skills and expertise for the Alliance labs you want to work with. It should not exceed more than 1 DinA4 page, Arial 11, 1.5 line space. Attach to the Cover letter your **CV with publication list with at least one publication as first author (peer reviewed, preprints and papers submitted but not accepted do not count)**, **PhD/MD certificate scan** or a document that proves the planned date of the doctoral examination latest within the next four months (scan), and **two reference letters**; all combined **as one single pdf, max. file size 8 MB**). Please keep the order as specified here.

Please do not attach the publications themselves. The reference letters must include the original letter heads and the signatures of the referees.

We recommend to use the international CV format (Personal information without portrait and birth date, Work experience (institutions and PIs) in reverse chronological order and **unbroken sequence up to the submission date**, Education and Training, Skills, Publications).

Important notes:

Applications not using the provided templates or exceeding the page limits are ineligible and will not be evaluated. All documents must be in English.

(3) Evaluation of applications

A committee of experts will perform the evaluation of your submitted application. Each application will be independently evaluated by three selection committee members.

The evaluation criteria that are considered are:

- Academic performance of the applicant
- Matching of research interest & skills of the applicant with the scientific topic of the research project
- Expected impact of the applicant's skills and interest on the development of new synergistic and innovative activities between Alliance institutions
- Appreciation of flexibility with regard to relocation, commitment to new research topics, and willingness to take risks

Applications are ranked to create a short-list of selected candidates. All applicants are informed about the outcome.

(4) Virtual mini-symposium of selected candidates with evaluators

There will be a virtual mini-symposium with the selected candidates and the evaluators to present and discuss the new Alliance postdoc projects.

(5) Schedule overview

Please note: The schedule is subject to change.

Dates	Description
March 31, 5 pm CEST	Call closes
April - May	Evaluation of applications by selection committee

May	Send out rejections and acceptances
June	Virtual mini-symposium of selected candidates with evaluators

(6) Ethical considerations

Projects requiring ethical approvals must have these in place prior to a fellow beginning the project. The activities excluded from funding are activities that:

- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes, or
- intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
- intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer, or
- lead to the destruction of human embryos (for example, for obtaining stem cells)

(7) Contact information

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Appendix

Heidelberg University (Uni HD) and Medical Faculties Campus Heidelberg and Campus Mannheim (UMM)

- Currently 9 collaborative research centers in the life sciences and medicine
- Seven research centers and excellent biomedical research
- Broad core technology infrastructure

<https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/research-profile/fields-of-focus/field-of-focus-i/institutions>

<https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/coretech>

https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/de/einrichtungen/fakultaeten/institute-und-seminare-der-fakultaeten?data_table--18127--filter-2=medizin

<https://www.umm.uni-heidelberg.de/medical-faculty-mannheim/research/>

<https://www.umm.uni-heidelberg.de/core-facilities/cfpm/>

German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ)

- Largest European Cancer Research Center with more than 3.000 employees
- National Center for Tumor diseases (NCT) with Heidelberg University Hospital
- KITZ: Hopp-Children Tumor Center Heidelberg with Heidelberg University and Heidelberg University Hospital
- Broad core technology infrastructure

<https://www.dkfz.de/en/forschung/index.html>

European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)

- Europe's inter-governmental research entity for life sciences with 27 member states
- Six European sites, two sites in Germany
- 2.000 employees, 900 thereof in Heidelberg
- Broad core technology infrastructure

<https://www.embl.org/sites/heidelberg/#research>
<https://www.embl.org/sites/heidelberg/#services>

Central Institute of Mental Health (ZI)

- Largest research center for psychiatry and psychotherapy in Germany
- More than 1.300 employees

<https://www.zi-mannheim.de/en/research/departments-research-groups-institutes.html>

Max-Planck Institute for Medical Research (MPI mF)

- Four departments
- More than 200 employees

<https://www.mr.mpg.de/research/departments>
<https://www.mr.mpg.de/research/groups>

Heidelberg University Hospital (UKHD) and Mannheim University Hospital (UMM)

- Beds: 1.988 (HD), 1.352 (MA)
- Employees: 13.700 (HD), 4.900 (MA)

<https://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/>

Disclaimer: This guide has no legal value in itself. The information contained within may not be used as a ground for appeals.