



**Health + Life Science Alliance
Heidelberg Mannheim**

Alliance Interinstitutional Postdoctoral Program Call

Guide for Applicants

Application Deadline April 5, 2024

Table of Contents

1. Program overview	3
2. Eligibility criteria	4
3. Funding	4
4. Application procedure	4
4. Ethical considerations	7
5. Contact information	7
Appendix	7

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 Rhein-Neckar 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 junior scientists (PhD), including clinician scientists (MD, MD/PhD), for bridging projects between at least two partner institutions. Through this new 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 choose from many innovative, interinstitutional projects proposed by PIs of the Alliance for this initiative. Alternatively, you are also welcome to define your own research project with at least two PIs at two different Alliance partner 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 member institutions are all committed to support you with career training and coaching programs. The trainings include advanced soft-skill courses as well as career development courses tailored to your needs. Equal opportunity & diversity programs as well as mentoring and coaching are implemented at all participating institutions and supplemented by programs to bridge research and development with industry.

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)
- 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 6 months as a postdoctoral researcher at the Alliance institutions, which are co-hosting the project.
- Completed application with all requested documents (see 4.2)
- Applicants must have completed a PhD, MD/PhD or MD latest at the date of the recruitment.

3. Funding

Fellows are employed at the institution of the hosting principal investigator (PI) who is the coordinator. The second supervisor is the collaboration partner.

Funding is provided for a postdoctoral position, including social benefits. Additional funding by host institutions can be used to extend the position. Hosting PIs are expected to provide funds for the research projects and further support.

Please note:

Successful applicants are welcome to take up the post as soon as possible after the selection process (earliest start not before 1 August 2024). 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 the short report will be publicly shared.

4. Application procedure

The application process follows five steps:

(1) Hosting institution

You have two options to apply:

- Option A: You can choose from the list of proposed research projects offered by PIs of the Alliance partner institutions. Please check through the list of research projects and choose up to three projects that you are most interested in. Register on our website to receive the access token to open the project list (download pdf from our website).
- Option B: You can submit your own research idea, but you are requested to discuss your research proposal with at least two PIs of Alliance partner institutions before submitting the application to make sure that it fosters synergies between labs. The respective PIs have to sign a support letter.

You find the information about each institution's research focus on the official websites listed in the Appendix (page 7).

Please note: University hospitals and medical faculties of the same city are not considered as separate institutions for proposed research projects.

(2) Application

Applicants must prepare the following information.

- **Option A:** In case you apply for proposed projects, download the information sheet Option A where you enter the project(s) you are most interested in (up to 3 choices are possible), **OR**
- **Option B:** If you apply with your own project idea, you download the information sheet Option B, prepare your own **Project proposal** with at least two PIs at different Alliance institutions and let them sign a **Support letter**.
- Cover letter outlining your scientific interests and explaining why you are the right candidate with the right skills for the Alliance labs you want to work with. It should not exceed more than 1 DinaA4 page, Arial 11, 1.5 line space.

Attach to the Cover letter your CV, publication list with at least one publication as first author, PhD/MD certificate scan or a document that proves the planned date of the doctoral examination (scan), and two reference letters (as one single pdf, max. file size 8 MB). Please keep the order as specified here.

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

More information on Option B:

Prepare the Research proposal template which includes the following sections:

- 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)

Complete the proposal template and save as pdf.

Please get in contact with the respective Alliance PIs of your interest and let the PIs sign the Support Letter, save it as pdf.

You need the information sheets Option A or Option B, and the respective templates for the pdfs to enter the data via our online application form. You find the documents (for download) and the registration link on our [webpage](#).

Important notes:

Applications not using the provided templates or exceeding the page limits are ineligible and will not be evaluated.

Applications need to be submitted in English language.

(3) Evaluation of applications

A committee of experts will perform the evaluation of your application.

Each application will be independently evaluated by three selection committee members.

The evaluation criteria that are considered are:

- Academic performance of the applicant (weight 80%)
- Matching of research interest & skills of the applicant with the scientific topic of the research project(s) (selected from proposed list or own project) (weight 10%)
- Expected impact of the applicant's skills and interest on the development of new synergistic activities between Alliance institutions (weight 10%)

Applications are ranked to create a short-list of candidates invited for individual interviews with the PIs of their choice.

(4) PI contact phase

Applicants will be asked to arrange themselves (virtual) lab visits with the PIs of their choice(s) to discuss their scientific plans and to allow both, candidate and PIs, to evaluate the potential collaboration (matching process).

Applicants with a positive outcome of the matching process will be invited for interview with the selection committee panel. All other applicants will be informed that they were not successful.

(5) Panel interview (virtual via Zoom)

The applicants will give presentations about their past and future research interests to the panel, followed by a short interview session.

The aim of the interview is to evaluate the applicant based on her/his skill set and the potential to develop a successful scientific or biomedical research career.

The interview criteria are:

- Quality of presentation and academic excellence
- Performance of applicant in interview

After the panel interviews the results will be announced.

Schedule overview

Please note: The schedule is subject to change.

Dates	Description
April 5	Call closes
Apr-May	Evaluation of applications by selection committee
May	Invitation to contact PIs, if positively ranked by committee
May-Jun (4 weeks)	Contact phase with PIs
Jun	Invitation for interview with panel, if matching process was successful (virtual)
End of June	Panel interviews 14:00 – 18:00
Jun 28	Interviewed candidates are informed if considered for funding or not. Candidates should accept the offer within 2 weeks, if possible.

4. 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)

5. 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.