

ACTIVATE – Application Guidelines

The application for the Advanced Clinician Scientist Program for Immunology, Vascular Immunology, Tumor Immunology and Neuroimmunology “**ACTIVATE**” has to be written in English and includes:

1. A concise research program outlining scientific and clinical goals, with milestones for six years of funding.
2. A CV, including education, clinical experience, research achievements (complete publication list and record of acquired third-party funding), and leadership roles.
3. Personal statement reflecting on motivation, leadership qualities, and vision for contribution to the field.
4. A letter of support from the senior mentor of the scientific department including access to laboratory space and infrastructure. In addition, the fellow’s status as an independent group leader must be ensured.
5. A letter of support from the senior mentor of the clinical department ensuring support for clinical career development.
6. A commitment letter from the director of the clinical department ensuring 50% protected research time.

Selection Process

The University Medical Center (UMC) Mainz is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Applications from individuals of all backgrounds, particularly those from underrepresented groups, are warmly encouraged.

Positions will be open to both internal and external candidates.

The Selection of **ACTIVATE** Fellows involves a **two-stage selection process**:

1. Applications will be preselected by the Steering Committee of the Research Center for Immunotherapy and will then be reviewed by the Clinician Scientist Selection Board (CSSB), including four internal (UMC, JGU) basic and clinician scientists and two external clinician scientists. Applications are scored based on: alignment with immunology and program goals (20%); research excellence and innovation (30%); secured third-party funding (20%); publication impact and relevance (15%); leadership potential and team orientation (15%).
2. Based on application rankings, short-listed candidates will be invited to interviews with the CSSB. Interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible, with video conference options for external candidates. The UMC Mainz equal opportunity officer for scientific employees will participate in the interviews.

Interview Process

Part A: During the interview, candidates will:

- Present a summary of their research proposal.
- Outline their previous accomplishments and future career strategy.
- Describe their anticipated integration into the clinical and research structures of UMC.

Part B: In addition, candidates are given a case involving a complex clinical problem in immunology. They are tasked to propose a multi-disciplinary research approach, emphasizing collaboration and innovation. Evaluation focuses on problem-solving skills, clarity of thought, and ability to integrate clinical and research perspectives.

Interviews are scored on: research presentation (30%); case study performance (20%); depth of immunological knowledge (20%); communication skills (15%); teamwork-oriented approach (15%).

Part C: Panel assessment of personal skills and team compatibility.

- Behavioral interview: Focused on teamwork, conflict resolution, leadership, and adaptability.
- Role-playing scenarios: Simulations where candidates engage with hypothetical team challenges in collaborative research projects.

Evaluation by a multi-disciplinary panel: CSSB and organizational psychologists by following criteria: leadership and collaboration (30%); conflict resolution and adaptability (30%); communication and interpersonal skills (40%).

What ACTIVATE offers:

12 ACS positions are available over a four-year period from 2027 to 2030. The recruitment of the four cohorts, each consisting of three positions, will take place in the preceding year. Positions are initially approved for three years. After a successful interim evaluation, the position may be renewed for an additional three-year funding period.

Protected Research Time

ACTIVATE Fellows are expected to dedicate at least 50% of their time to research, though greater flexibility is prioritized in the early years to accelerate their career development. Total funding is € 135,000 per year, which includes the 50% research position. The remaining funds can be utilized strategically for: advancing an independent research program, securing third-party funding, hiring and retaining staff, or building national and international collaborations. Fellows are appointed as **TRANSMED Principal Investigators** with **independent group leader status**, receiving dedicated laboratory and office space alongside prioritized access to specialized infrastructure, technologies, and core facilities.