

The IMMUFELLOW Guide for Applicants

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of the Guide for Applicants	3
2. Background information on the IMMUFELLOW programme	3
2.1 Aims and purpose of the IMMUFELLOW programme	3
2.2 University of Turku	4
2.3 Åbo Akademi University	5
2.4 Legislation, UTU policies and MSCA requirements applied during selection and upon recruitment.....	6
3. Application and selection schedule.....	6
4. The IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researcher fellowship	7
4.1 Eligibility criteria and application requirements.....	7
4.1.1 The eligibility criteria for applicants.....	7
4.1.2 The requirements for applicants	8
4.2 Role and tasks of IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researchers.....	9
4.3 Working conditions and salary	10
4.4 Supervisors and Mentors	11
4.5 Secondments.....	12
4.6 List of main training activities and what the programme offers	13
5. How to apply?	14
5.1 Step 1, Summary of Eligibility and Application Requirements	15
5.2 Step 2, Learn about applying, identify a research theme and develop a research idea.....	16
5.3 Step 3, Contact potential host and acquire letter of support	17
5.4 Step 4, Prepare the application documents	17
5.4.1 Detailed instructions for the mandatory attachment documents	19
5.5 Step 5, Submission of application	21
6. Evaluation and selection process.....	22
6.1. Informing applicants.....	22
6.2 Processing and reviewing of applications.....	22
6.2.1 Process stages and organized bodies involved	22
6.2.2 Eligibility check.....	23
6.2.3 External Evaluation and Ethical Issues Check	23
6.2.4 Evaluation Criteria for researcher selection.....	25
6.2.5 Scoring and threshold	26
6.2.6 Ranking production, ties and reserve listing	27
6.3. Appeals and Redress	28
6.4 Results of the Call	28
7. Additional information and contacts	29
7.1 IMMUFELLOW staff.....	29
8. Appendix 1: A checklist for applicants	30

Table of Abbreviations:

DMP	Data Management Plan	postdoc(s)	postdoctoral researcher(s)
DORA	Declaration on Research Assessment	RC	Redress Committee
EGDC	Ethics, Gender, and Diversity Committee	SB	Supervisory Board
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable	SC	Selection Committee
IMMUFELLOW	Interdisciplinary and Intersectoral Research Fellowship Programme for Future Leaders in Immunology	SSH	social sciences and humanities
IMT	IMMUFELLOW Management Team	TIC	Turku Immunology Centre
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions	UTU	University of Turku
PCDP	Personal Career Development Plan	ÅAU	Åbo Akademi University

1. Purpose of the Guide for Applicants

The purpose of this guide is to provide applicants with an overview of the IMMUFELLOW programme and the role, eligibility and requirements of an IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researcher, practical information on how to apply and schedule, in addition to a description of the evaluation and selection process and appeals. For the purpose of applying to the postdoc position, this guide should be read in conjunction with the IMMUFELLOW Call for Applications. If you require further information about the IMMUFELLOW programme, please see section 7 of this guide for contact details.

2. Background information on the IMMUFELLOW programme

2.1 Aims and purpose of the IMMUFELLOW programme

Interdisciplinary and Intersectoral Research Fellowship Programme for Future Leaders in Immunology (IMMUFELLOW) is an innovative postdoctoral training initiative of the University of Turku (UTU) and Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU) in Turku, Finland, that is jointly funded by the European Union's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND action.

Immune-related diseases, such as infections, autoimmune diseases, immunodeficiencies, atherosclerosis, and cancer, are increasing in prevalence and pose major societal and economic challenges. Research in immunology covers a wide spectrum from basic mechanisms of immune regulation to applied fields such as vaccine and diagnostic development, immunotherapy, and transplantation. It also includes computational and bioinformatics approaches, large scale data analysis, and health economics to evaluate the impact of immune mediated diseases, and interventions on patients and society. IMMUFELLOW aims to train experts and leaders in the broad field of immunology who will advance research to address the needs in the prevention and treatment of immune-mediated diseases. Its goals are breakthrough innovations, scientific renewal, and, accelerating the diverse career development of talented researchers.

IMMUFELLOW supports the bottom-up development of excellent early- and mid-career stage academics through the provision of three years of funding, enabling them to carry out self-designed research projects. This offers outstanding postdoctoral researchers the opportunity to design and lead innovative immunology related research projects of the highest quality.

IMMUFELLOW will build on UTU's/ÅAU's excellence in leadership development, advanced education models, and beyond state-of-the-art immunological research ecosystem and infrastructure. IMMUFELLOW offers a structured postdoctoral programme that integrates science, technology, and entrepreneurship. IMMUFELLOW prioritises interdisciplinary and intersectoral research, by emphasising both, academic excellence and real-world, cross-sector experience, in line with the European Charter and Code of Conduct. Programme offers a unique blend of academic excellence, industry engagement, and entrepreneurial training through support and dedicated intersectoral mentoring, access to exceptional training opportunities, and monthly seminars/networking events, and hands-on experience in corporate settings, along with education on regulatory standards/good practices in diagnostics, drug development, and manufacturing.

IMMUFELLOW is recruiting a total of twenty-two (22) postdoctoral researchers during the programme period 2025–2030. In the second Application Call round, up to eleven (11) fellowship positions for a three-year period starting in April/May 2027 will be open. IMMUFELLOW postdocs will be selected through an international application round, and applications from projects based in immunology to any department of UTU or ÅAU are welcomed. Nine (9) of these job positions are to filled at UTU and two (2) at ÅAU. The selection of successful applicants is based on transparent external evaluation and academic excellence.

Please note that IMMUFELLOW is co-funded by the European Union's MSCA action. However, the views and opinions expressed here are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the MSCA programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

2.2 University of Turku

The University of Turku, founded in 1920 and located in southwestern of Finland is one of the country's leading multidisciplinary and research-intensive universities. UTU has approximately 3,400 staff members, a total of 22,547 students, of whom 6,797 are pursuing a Master's degree, 9,062 are pursuing a Bachelor's degree and 2,213 are postgraduate students (of whom 2,194 are pursuing a Doctorate and 19 are pursuing a Licentiate degree). Known for its strong international profile and entrepreneurial spirit, it provides a vibrant environment for high quality research, education, and innovation. UTU has 8 research faculties (Science, Technology, Medicine, Social Sciences, Law, Education, Humanities and Turku School of Economics) and 2 independent Units; Turku PET Centre and Turku Bioscience Centre.

It holds the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research award for implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter and Code). UTU collaborates with numerous partners in different fields and supports researcher start-ups and secondments through the UTU's Research Affairs Unit (Innovation Services and a Technology Transfer Office) and partner enterprise organisations.

UTU is a modern and international university, well-equipped to operate at a high standard. The university's main campus is located in the near centre of Turku and covers most of the university's research and teaching facilities. UTU provides its researchers with access to high-quality research infrastructure, equipment and services (administrative, technical and human resources), including a EURAXESS Service Centre managing international mobility.

UTU forms part of Health Campus Turku, a multidisciplinary, intersectoral knowledge cluster for medicine, social and health care and technology, which also comprises Åbo Akademi, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku University Central Hospital, Business Turku and Novia University of Applied Sciences. National and regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3), specifically focusing on the Life Science, and Health Tech sectors are highlighted in the Southwest Finland region's Smart Specialisation Strategy. This strategy prioritizes advancements in biotechnology, health technologies, and medical innovation, fostering regional growth and collaboration in these key industries. As a key profile area at UTU, immunology has driven the creation of the National Drug Development Center and the Turku Immunology Centre (TIC), both headquartered in Turku, enhancing collaboration between researchers, industry and clinicians. The region, home to over 100 life science companies, has developed 21 of 22 Finnish-originated approved medicines.

UTU is a national leader in immunological research and education, distinguished by its integration of basic and clinical immunology and successful translation of research into business and clinical applications. IMMUFELLOW programme will leverage UTU's interdisciplinary research environment, highlighted by its record of invention disclosures, patent applications, and start-ups, including technology transfers to Orion Pharma and PerkinElmer. Furthermore, UTU coordinates the Research Council of Finland flagship Innovation Ecosystem Based on the Immune System (InFLAMES), one of 14 national research flagships.

InFLAMES provides a unique platform for the development of new drugs and diagnostics for immune mediated diseases. The InFLAMES flagship project, a collaborative project of over 400 researchers from UTU and ÅAU, is an example of interdisciplinary excellence by integrating different fields, such as biomedicine, chemistry, clinical medicine, diagnostics and drug development and health economics, into immunology research. The IMMUFELLOW programme benefits from the extensive expertise and collaborative environment offered by the InFLAMES and TIC initiatives. Together, these networks include: 84 principal investigators (PIs), 15 Visiting Professors, 3 Professors of Practice, and over 100 postdocs. In addition, InFLAMES has established over 150 industry collaborations, secured several patents, and launched multiple start-up companies benefiting both, academic and industry participants.

2.3 Åbo Akademi University

Åbo Akademi University, founded in 1918, is a Swedish-language multidisciplinary academic university with campuses in both Turku and Vaasa (southwestern and western Finland). ÅAU

has two research faculties (Human and Social Sciences, Science and Engineering) with 1 100 employees, 5100 undergraduate students and 800 post-graduate students. ÅAU holds the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research award for implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Due to ÅAU's unique role in providing education in Swedish in Finland and through cross-border collaboration, it serves as the gateway to Finland for the Nordic countries.

ÅAU jointly hosts the advanced core facility Turku Bioscience Centre together with UTU and the national research institute Turku PET Centre with UTU and the Turku University Central Hospital. Both centres provide researchers in the Turku region with world-class research infrastructure in the field of biology and medicine. ÅAU is a member of the knowledge cluster Health Campus Turku together with UTU, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku University Central Hospital, Business Turku and Novia University of Applied Sciences and conducts related research under the strategic research profile Solutions for Health with close ties to the local biomedical and pharmaceutical ecosystem.

Research themes within the profile include biomedical imaging, drug development and pharmaceutical sciences, organic chemistry and biochemistry, structural biology and bioinformatics, cell and molecular biology, materials research as well as health science, psychology, and information technology. The InFLAMES Research Flagship (Innovation Ecosystem Based on the Immune System) is a joint effort of UTU and ÅAU, with ÅAU having a strong focus on advanced research technologies and model systems facilitating immunological research. Life science and molecular medicine research at ÅAU and UTU is additionally supported and coordinated by the umbrella organization Biocity Turku.

2.4 Legislation, UTU policies and MSCA requirements applied during selection and upon recruitment

All applicants and selected IMMUFELLOW postdocs must comply with national and local legislation. As part of the MSCA COFUND action, IMMUFELLOW programme is committed to the principles of Open Science, in line with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) principles. Successful applicants will be required to adhere to these principles (see below for University and MSCA policies on this). UTU/ÅAU maintains comprehensive Open Science, equality, ethics and intellectual property rights (IPR) policies.

3. Application and selection schedule

This is preliminary timetable, and changes are possible. Follow the www.immufellow.fi website for possible changes and clarifications.

Table 1. Schedule

Phase	Time	Notification to Applicants
2 nd Call open	11 August 2026 – 19 October, 2026	Applicants receive confirmation of the application submission
Eligibility check	After the Call deadline	All applicants will receive feedback on their eligibility via email during week 45
Evaluation & Selection Process	November 2026 – March 2027	-
Results	March 2027	Applicants will be notified of acceptance decisions in March 2027. Reserve applicants will receive an update on their status and ranking by email. Final results will be published on the programme website no later than May 2027.
Start of the Fellowship	April/May 2027	-
End of the Fellowship	April/May 2030 (36 months in total)	-

4. The IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researcher fellowship

IMMUFELLOW programme will fund 22 Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoc fellowships over the duration of the programme (2025–2030). Each fellowship will last for three years. During the fellowship, the IMMUFELLOW postdoc will carry out a research project, participate in training and career development activities, and possibly undertake a secondment at a partner organisation. In this Call for Applications, nine job positions are to be filled at UTU and two at ÅAU. All positions are located either at UTU or ÅAU in Finland.

4.1 Eligibility criteria and application requirements

4.1.1 The eligibility criteria for applicants

- Applicants must possess a doctoral degree at the date of the Call deadline (19 October 2026).
 - In cases where the researcher has successfully and unconditionally (no further requirements/corrections that need to be addressed) defended their doctoral thesis but haven't yet received the formal degree, the person is still eligible to apply. Then the applicant must provide confirmation from the University where the PhD was undertaken that the PhD has been successfully completed and that no additional work is required. Please note that by the time the employment contract is signed, the doctoral certificate must be delivered to the University.
- Applicants must have completed their doctoral degree no more than ten (10) years before the Call deadline (excluding any declared career breaks, such as parental leave or military service).

- Only for special reasons, such as maternity, paternity or parental leave, compulsory national service, time spent not working in research or a long-term sick leave (these are not counted towards research experience), can more than ten (10) years have passed since completing the degree. Applicants, who wish to plead special reasons in their application, should highlight this in their curriculum vitae (CV).
- Applicants **must meet the MSCA Mobility Rule Requirements**. This means that they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Finland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the Call deadline.
 - *Please note: documentation verifying compliance with the mobility rule will be collected from selected fellows for the whole 36-month period.*

There are **no restrictions on the applicant's age or nationality**.

Any application which fails to meet these criteria without justification will be deemed to be ineligible and will not be sent on to external review.

4.1.2 The requirements for applicants

- Complete applications with all required documents in English submitted by the Call deadline.
- The research must be immunology related.
 - Applicants may select any research topic and approach to immunology, including basic, translational, and clinical immunology, diagnostics, drug development, and health economics, provided it reflects the core research strengths of UTU or ÅAU.
- Adherence to UTU's or ÅAU's ethical standards and local laws is required, along with a commitment to 1,612 annual working hours based on a collective labour agreement.
- The positions are based at UTU or ÅAU campuses, and successful applicants must reside in Finland.
- Research or training outside the recruiting organization is capped at 12 months per MSCA rules.
 - To align with the MSCA Mobility Rule, IMMUFELLOW postdocs should not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the Call deadline in the country hosting their secondment(s).
 - Secondments must occur between months 3 and 35 of the fellowship, with IMMUFELLOW postdoc allowed a maximum of 12 months for conducting research or training away from their recruiting institute whether UTU or ÅAU. Such work must be related to their IMMUFELLOW project and must be approved by the IMMUFELLOW Director.
- Strong commitment to the host university's policies on equal opportunities ([UTU](#), [ÅAU](#)) and to [Open Science principles](#), ([UTU](#), [ÅAU](#)), including free access to peer-reviewed

- publications, and adherence to [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable\) data management](#), is mandatory.
- Comply with UTU or ÅAU policies (including those on research ethics [UTU/ÅAU](#)) and local law.
 - Comply with the '[Do No Significant Harm](#)' principle, [the European Green Deal](#), [the Agenda 2030 guidelines](#), and [the Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI](#).
 - Applicants must adhere to the Act on the Right in Inventions made at Higher Education Institutions (369/2006) and the 'Guideline for Inventions' (UTU) or the 'Regulations on Inventions' (ÅAU) that covers the management of patentable inventions, processes for documentation, disclosure, classification, university rights, inventor obligations, confidentiality, commercialisation, inventor compensations, and dispute resolution.

4.2 Role and tasks of IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researchers

The main task of IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researchers is to carry out an internationally excellent research project over a three-year period, during which the results of the project should be disseminated in a number of ways, such as peer reviewed articles, books, book chapters, newspaper articles, conference papers, public dissemination events etc. IMMUFELLOW positions require a full-time commitment, which means 1,612 working hours per year. The positions are located at one of the campuses of the UTU or ÅAU and IMMUFELLOW postdocs are required to be a resident in Finland. IMMUFELLOW postdocs may spend up to twelve months working outside UTU or ÅAU, and the secondments must occur between months 3 and 35 of the fellowship. Such work must be related to their IMMUFELLOW project and must be approved by the Director of IMMUFELLOW.

IMMUFELLOW postdocs have limited work obligations beyond conducting research. In addition to their own research project, IMMUFELLOW postdocs are expected to be actively committed to interdisciplinary working, knowledge transfer, mobility and training activities, reflecting UTU's and ÅAU's commitment to developing a vibrant IMMUFELLOW community. Their participation in regular IMMUFELLOW meetings and events will be essential and contribute to the programme's academic, intellectual, and social dynamics. They are required to take part in a mentoring scheme that emphasises personal and professional development and, upon recruitment, to develop and maintain a Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP) in accordance with EURAXESS guidelines and to submit with the application a detailed Data Management Plan (DMP) that complies with the FAIR principles. In line with MSCA COFUND best practices, IMMUFELLOW postdocs will be further required to develop and maintain a detailed DMP using the Open Research Data Pilot template. Furthermore, the handling of personal data also carries legal obligations, as described in the EU GDPR, Finnish Data Protection Act, UTU's Data Protection policy, and ÅAU's Open Science policy.

All IMMUFELLOW postdocs may choose to undertake teaching activities (including the supervision of master's and PhD theses) up to a maximum of 5% of their annual workload of 1,612 hours and may engage, with up to 5% of their total work time, in other academic and administrative duties. This structured approach ensures a balanced workload, allowing focus on research while enhancing expertise.

All UTU/ÅAU employment contracts fall under Finnish law and are governed by Finland's Employment Contracts Act (55/2001). IMMUFELLOW postdocs therefore benefit from the same extensive statutory rights (e.g. to equality, holiday, trade union membership, unemployment and social security benefits) and obligations as all other employees in Finland. As part of the MSCA COFUND programme, IMMUFELLOW is committed to the principles of Open Science, in line with the FAIR principle and successful applicants will be required to obey these principles. IMMUFELLOW postdocs must also adhere to Finnish law and UTU/ÅAU policies in areas such as equality, research ethics and Open Science, and comply with all Horizon Europe requirements applicable to MSCA COFUND fellowships (e.g. concerning mobility and Open Science). IMMUFELLOW researchers will be offered a legally compliant working environment with balanced professional obligations with opportunities for career growth, where the universities' dedication to promoting education, free science, and high-quality multidisciplinary research is promoted.

4.3 Working conditions and salary

UTU and ÅAU offers the IMMUFELLOW postdoc an exciting opportunity to freely pursue and develop their own research concepts. The IMMUFELLOW programme stands out for its comprehensive working conditions, including nationally negotiated benefits such as vacation pay, limited working hours, occupational private health insurance, and earnings-related pension plans. In UTU and ÅAU well-being are prioritised by offering, for example, occupational health care-services. Both universities also offer a wide range of services to support the IMMUFELLOW postdoc's work and professional development. UTU and ÅAU help you build a competitive career profile through an inspiring work environment and community by investing in well-being at work and promote work-life balance, for example by offering flexible working hours, and comprehensive well-being, and support services.

Finnish parental leave conditions, among Europe's most generous, offer parents approximately half a year's leave. Finland offers a range of generously subsidized childcare options and child home care allowances to support parents caring for children at home. In Finland, free education is offered to all school-age children. Children relocating from abroad will receive the same high-quality, free education as Finnish citizens, including free school lunches and healthcare. As a unique feature of the IMMUFELLOW programme, researchers will be eligible to apply for up to €20,000 in seed funding offered by InFLAMES to demonstrate the feasibility of innovative ideas. The funding decisions will be based on the evaluation of invention disclosures carried out by the UTU/ÅAU innovation services.

UTU/ÅAU also provides researchers with a range of efficient support services including: a Research Affairs Unit, including Innovation Services and a Technology Transfer Office; IT Helpdesks, offering online and in-person support; Legal Affairs service; Research Ethics support; Library Services, with dedicated support for Open Access; a Research Funding Unit offering expert pre-award and post-award support on national and international funding. UTU/ÅAU Human Resources carries out UTU's/ÅAU's duties as an employer. They coordinate staff development and training through a Career Services unit, mentoring programmes, secondment schemes and partnerships. They also offer a range of services, including a Work Well-being Unit, an International Office administering international programmes and partnerships, facilitating research mobility (e.g. residence permits, working abroad and emigration), a EURAXESS Service Centre, a University Communications office, offering support with the media and public engagement, as well as a Financial Services unit.

The salaries of IMMUFELLOW postdocs are determined within the university salary system for teaching and research personnel based on a national collective agreement. The individual salary component ranges from a minimum of 6% to a maximum of 50% of the task-specific salary. The salary for a IMMUFELLOW postdoc corresponds to a requirement level 6 for teaching and research personnel and the pre-estimated personal performance percentage of 17% (current gross salary around 4500 € per month), and is subject to any potential yearly increases determined by the collective agreement. Progress in the researcher's personal performance can be taken into account when determining the salary during employment. Salary and allowances are taxable. The estimated net starting salary is approximately €3,050 per month, excluding allowances.

Recruited IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral researchers will be granted a mobility allowance of €100 per month, if they are eligible, and a family allowance of €100 euros month, if they are eligible (fellows who are married or have a formal status equivalent to marriage, or have dependent children), as per the MSCA guidelines. Family allowance eligibility can be updated during employment if the following criteria are met: spouse, partner in a legally recognized relationship, or dependent children supported by the researcher. In addition, the fellows are entitled to annual travel costs (up to €1,200 per year), research costs (up to €5,000 per year for justified expenses), training costs (up to €1,200 per year) and opportunities for innovation funding (up to €10,000 over three (3) years for innovation activities, e.g. proof of concept, separate from the InFLAMES seed funding).

Please read more about UTU and ÅAU as an employer from our 'Come work with us!' ([UTU](#), [ÅAU](#)) pages. The primary workplace is UTU or ÅAU in Turku, and the position is subject to a six-month probationary period.

4.4 Supervisors and Mentors

The Director of the IMMUFELLOW programme will oversee confirmation of specifics of each IMMUFELLOW postdoc, including the selection of supervisors, mentors, and secondments, as

well as completion of PCDPs and dissemination plans. Each IMMUFELLOW postdoc researcher receives personalized career guidance and training through a comprehensive mentoring model aligned with the European Charter for Researchers. Researchers applying to IMMUFELLOW programme will be required to choose a host department at UTU or ÅAU in their application. Upon acceptance into the programme, an academic supervisor, typically from the chosen UTU or ÅAU department, will be assigned. Additionally, researchers from associated partners are committed to supporting IMMUFELLOW postdocs. Given this extensive pool of experienced professionals, there is a robust and sustainable foundation for providing high-quality supervision and mentorship to IMMUFELLOW postdocs. The primary role of this supervisor is managerial, acting as the direct superior of the IMMUFELLOW postdoc and offering additional academic guidance for their research projects and career. Formal meetings with UTU/ÅAU supervisors will be held to formalize PCDPs and undertake annual reviews of performance and progress. Supervisors must have at least five years of post-PhD experience. Any alterations to supervision arrangements will require approval from either the IMMUFELLOW postdoc's faculty or the IMMUFELLOW Supervisory Board, depending on the nature of the change.

IMMUFELLOW postdocs are required to take part in a mentoring scheme. Each fellow is supported by a dedicated mentoring team consisting of a PI, a representative outside academia, and a co-supervisor from the secondment laboratory in Finland or abroad, providing tailored career guidance. Progress is monitored through individual development plans and semi-annual reports, ensuring continuous feedback and alignment of training with career goals.

4.5 Secondments

IMMUFELLOW postdocs will be encouraged to expand their interactions both horizontally, across various academic disciplines and networks, and vertically by engaging with national and international non-academic sectors through. Following their selection, IMMUFELLOW postdocs, in collaboration with their academic supervisor(s) and with the support of UTU or ÅAU, and associated partner networks, should arrange one or more secondments at external organizations, subject to approval by IMMUFELLOW. IMMUFELLOW's associated partners are available to provide support or offer secondments. The programme director, along with legal and financial experts, will ensure that each secondment organization meets the requirements (infrastructure, services, HR, equality plan, IPR, etc.).

The secondment supervisors from non-academic sectors should possess at least 5 years of managerial expertise. Secondment supervisors must be authorized to represent their organization. To align with the MSCA Mobility Rule, IMMUFELLOW researchers should not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the Call deadline in the country hosting their secondment(s). The primary purpose of these secondments is to establish connections for IMMUFELLOW postdocs to access additional resources and introduce an international and/or intersectoral dimension that is relevant, feasible, and beneficial to both

the researcher and their project. Secondments must be implemented between Month 3 and Month 35 of the fellowship, with IMMUFELLOW postdocs allowed a maximum of 12 months for conducting research or training away from their recruiting institute whether UTU or ÅAU. IMMUFELLOW programme, academic supervisor(s) and mentor(s) will remain in regular contact with IMMUFELLOW postdocs during their secondment (e.g. via email and pre-scheduled meetings).

IMMUFELLOW's Board will require potential secondment hosts to demonstrate that their organization's infrastructure and capacity are suitable to support the proposed research and that working conditions comply with the policies of UTU, ÅAU, and MSCA, including non-discrimination practices. Additionally, the host organization will assign a secondment supervisor to oversee the IMMUFELLOW postdocs. The IMMUFELLOW postdocs will carry out secondments as agreed in the PCDP and deliver a secondment report accepted by the secondment supervisor. Secondment supervisors will also be invited to contribute to the IMMUFELLOW postdocs PCDP process, by providing a list of their available training courses and learning resources, by helping IMMUFELLOW postdocs assess their own training requirements, and by guiding their development plans. They will also confirm the feasibility of aspects of the PCDP that relate to the secondment, and provide a brief report of the Fellow's progress to their academic supervisor upon completion of the secondment. Secondment supervisors will be invited to provide ongoing support throughout the secondment and the remainder of the project.

4.6 List of main training activities and what the programme offers

IMMUFELLOW training programme consists of three summer schools and two winter meetings, as well as mandatory participation in an orientation week, the themes of which are integration, networking, administrative procedures, and ethics. In addition to mentoring and career development programs, an entrepreneurship training for IMMUFELLOW postdocs is provided. The IMMUFELLOW programme allows the postdocs actively participate in tailoring their educational journey by identifying and selecting trainings and workshops to be included to them enhance their career development. All IMMUFELLOW postdocs must create both, DMP (first version when applying) and PCDP (first version once selected) and regularly update the documents with the guidance from their supervisors and mentors. This approach allows IMMUFELLOW postdocs to seek opportunities beyond standard academic pathways and regular reviews of these documents ensure remaining aligned with personal and professional goals and fostering a holistic approach to career development. The PCDP will be created during the IMMUFELLOW onboarding week under the guidance of supervisors and mentors. The PCDP processes will provide ERs with a comprehensive toolkit for ongoing career development and support.

In addition, IMMUFELLOW postdocs will be offered access to a variety of training options by UTU, ÅAU, IMMUFELLOW associated partners, and industrial partners of the [InFLAMES](#) ecosystem. IMMUFELLOW postdocs will be invited to join the [Postdocs in InFLAMES \(PiF\)](#) network, organizing social and professional development seminars and events. IMMUFELLOW postdocs will receive robust support and mentoring, access to exceptional training opportunities, and also have the chance to engage in monthly InFLAMES seminars featuring networking events and to participate InFLAMES' other educational initiatives, including practical courses.

The IMMUFELLOW programme offers:

1. Comprehensive Support & Mentoring
 - Dedicated intersectoral mentoring team
 - Personalized guidance throughout the fellowship
 - Emphasis on both academic and non-academic career development
2. Exceptional Training Opportunities
 - Access to cutting-edge research training
 - Monthly seminars and networking events
 - Exposure to industry standards and best practices
3. Sector-Wide Involvement
 - Opportunities to engage with corporate partners
 - Training in regulatory standards, diagnostics, drug development, and manufacturing
 - Hands-on experience beyond the academic environment
4. Entrepreneurial & Professional Skills
 - Development of entrepreneurial thinking
 - Training in business, innovation, and leadership
 - Preparation for diverse career paths across sectors

5. How to apply?

General information about the applying process and application submission

Apply through our online recruitment systems ([TalentAdore](#) for UTU and [LAURA](#) for ÅAU).

In summary, the IMMUFELLOW application process can be described in five steps:



These steps are described in detail below. Please do not hesitate to contact IMMUFELLOW staff at immufellow@utu.fi, if you require any further clarification.

Legislation, UTU/ÅA policies and MSCA requirements are applied during selection and upon recruitment. All personal data collected will be processed securely for application evaluation only. When processing applicant documents, UTU/ÅAU fully complies with all relevant legislations and application and assessment documents are treated confidentially and stored on a secure server with access limited to authorized personnel only. UTU/ÅAU ensures data privacy and will not share information without consent according to UTU's/ÅAU's privacy policy.

5.1 Step 1, Summary of Eligibility and Application Requirements

Please see section 4.1 above for more detailed information, if necessary.

- Applicants must have a doctoral degree by the application deadline, and the degree must have been awarded no more than 10 years before the application deadline.
- Applicants must meet the MSCA Mobility Rule Requirement, and research or training outside the recruiting organisation, is capped at 12 months per MSCA rules.
- The research subject must be immunology related and reflecting the core research strengths of UTU or ÅAU.
- Adherence to the Act on the Right in Inventions made at Higher Education Institutions (369/2006) and UTU's or ÅAU's policies, including those on research ethics, and compliance of local laws is required, along with a commitment to 1,612 annual working hours based on a collective labour agreement.
- Adherence to the principles of [Open Science](#), provision of immediate Open Access (free of charge, online access for any user) to all peer-reviewed scientific publications of their research and ensuring all [research data is managed responsibly](#), in line with [FAIR principles](#) (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).
- Comply with the '[Do No Significant Harm](#)' principle, [the European Green Deal](#), [the Agenda 2030 guidelines](#), and [the Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI](#).
- All relevant documentation (see detailed instructions below 5.2-5.5) must be submitted on time in English in PDF-format, by the Call deadline.

Applications that do not meet these criteria without justification will be considered ineligible and will not be sent for external evaluation.

IMMUFELLOW particularly encourages applications that will generate high-impact research that intersects scientific, economic, and social values, with intersectionality as a core training element.

In particular, we expect applications that satisfy the following:

- interdisciplinary research that integrates diverse scientific methods and perspectives to tackle the complex challenges of immunology through innovative, cross-cutting strategies that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries.
- Intersectoral, engaging knowledge and resources from outside academia to enhance research quality and practical applicability.
- Systemic and longitudinal, thereby providing a holistic view of human health by connecting organs, diseases or systems across different life stages and genders.
- Use both IMMUFELLOW's and the applicant's global networks, along with European and national research facilities.
- Innovation-driven, aiming for breakthroughs that offer scientific and social value.

In addition, IMMUFELLOW programme values applications that

- employ approaches that engage with strategic theme areas of [UTU](#) or [ÅAU](#)
- exercise further mobility across international borders
- exploit and connect European and national research infrastructures
- make use of UTU's cutting-edge facilities for acquisition and analysis of new data
- apply methodologies from a wide range of disciplines, including the social sciences and humanities (SSH) contributions to immunology (e.g., bioethics, health policy, science communication, and societal impact) and enhance the relevance, responsibility, and societal integration of immunological research.

5.2 Step 2, Learn about applying, identify a research theme and develop a research idea

The application procedures and UTU/ÅAU's various research themes are described on our website www.immufellow.fi and in this Guide for Applicants.

Applicants need to identify at least one suitable research theme/host group for their research topic. Applicants may select any research topic and approach to immunology, including basic, translational, and clinical immunology, diagnostics, drug development, and health economics, provided it is immunology related research and reflects the core research strengths of UTU or ÅAU. Visit www.immufellow.fi/research for a listing of example UTU/ÅAU host units focusing on immunological research along with the contact persons for each research group. You may

contact any potential UTU/ÅAU unit(s) and also those that might not be listed directly on the IMMUFELLOW webpage.

After identifying a suitable research theme/host unit for a research topic, the applicant should email a contact person at that unit, describe their project's concept and confirm that it is feasible for that unit to host the chosen research topic and project concept.

5.3 Step 3, Contact potential host and acquire letter of support

Before submitting an application, the applicants should contact a potential host unit to discuss their proposal and gain support for their application. The rationale for this is to enhance the excellence of applications and ensure that sufficient capacity (e.g. expertise of supervision, research facilities and resources) is available to welcome the selected IMMUFELLOW postdocs to carry out their projects to a high standard.

After finding a suitable research theme/host unit for their research topic by initial email contact and describing their project's concept and confirming that the research is feasible to implement, letter of support should be obtained. The applicant should request least one letter of support at the earliest possible phase from the host.

A template for the Letter of Support (available also on [IMMUFELLOW webpage](#)) must be used and attached to your e-mail to the unit's main contact person. They will evaluate the feasibility of the proposed research and return the letter to you. If the host cannot support the proposed research, they need to give a short explanation of their reasoning. Please note that the potential hosts require a 2-week lead time to respond to requests for letters of support. That is why, we strongly recommend that you contact the potential hosts as early as possible, and a minimum 2 weeks before the Call deadline. Please copy immufellow@utu.fi in all electronic communication with potential hosts.

The Letter of Support given by a hosting unit is converted into pdf format and attached to the application in the online application system (link provided on [IMMUFELLOW website](#)). If you have more than one Letters of Support from different host units, compile them together into one pdf document. Please name the document by using the last name of the applicant and the document title (e.g. Last name_Letter of support).

5.4 Step 4, Prepare the application documents

The application package consists of a completed online application form and supporting documents as attachments by the application deadline.

The required documents included in the application package are:

- Completed online application, including personal details and an agreement to adhere to the rules and undertaking to comply with MSCA mobility rule.

Attach to the application form in this order the following documents in English (8 attachments):

- Copy of the Doctoral Certificate (if unavailable, a copy of the official confirmation of PhD completion).
- Curriculum Vitae (maximum two pages; [template provided](#); do not provide age, gender, or a photo)
- A list of publications indicating the five most significant (non-English titles must be translated into English.) Please provide the author, title of the article, name of the journal, year, volume and issue, page range, and DOI code (if available). Prepare the list according to instructions: [List of Publications – Research Council of Finland](#).
- Research Plan, including secondment strategy and consideration of ethical issues (maximum 20,000 characters no spaces, including references, [template provided](#)).
- Research Plan Abstract (maximum 2,000 characters no spaces).
- Ethics Self-Assessment form ([template provided](#) based on European Commission checklist and guidance).
- Initial Data Management Plan (DMP) (maximum one page, [template provided](#)).
- A Letter of Support from the host laboratory (UTU or ÅAU) is required. At least one Letter of Support should be provided by the potential host unit using the [template provided](#) on the [IMMUFELLOW webpage](#).

All eight (8) attachments must be in PDF format. All attachments must be written in English with a font size of 11 in Arial, single spaced. This font size must be used throughout the application, except for the footnotes, which must have a font size of 9. Any text within figures, tables, etc., must have a font size of at least 8. Please use the provided standard templates to ensure uniformity and follow the specified instructions for each attachment. Incomplete or non-compliant submissions will not be considered for review.

Name all the attachment documents using your last name and the document title (e.g. Last name_Doctoral certificate, Last name_Curriculum vitae). Upload attachments 5–8 as 'Other attachments' in the application form in the given order and name them accordingly (e.g. Last name_Research Plan Abstract). Please note that in templates, the content in italics and purple font within <...> marks are for guidance only and should be removed before submission. Please check that you have attached all required documents. Before submitting an application, applicants may refer to Appendix 1 'A checklist of obligatory requirements and application documents' for assistance.

5.4.1 Detailed instructions for the mandatory attachment documents

1. **Copy of the Doctoral Certificate** (if unavailable, a copy of the official confirmation of PhD completion). Applicants should upload a copy of their doctoral certificate. If the original degree certificate is not written in English, Finnish or Swedish an official translation in English must also be submitted. In cases where the PhD has been successfully completed but the degree certificate has not yet been issued, applicants should provide confirmation from the university where the PhD was undertaken that the PhD has been successfully completed and that no additional work is required. Please note that by the time the employment contract is signed, the doctoral certificate must be delivered to UTU/ÅAU.
2. **Curriculum Vitae** (maximum two pages, [template provided](#), do not include age, gender, or a photo to prevent any potential bias). The curriculum vitae must be no more than two pages in length and must include the following information: – Personal data: name – Academic education, including degrees, dates and places, major subject, title of doctoral dissertation/PhD project – Posts and positions of primary importance, including all positions in the three years before the Call deadline – Research allocations and grants during the past five years – Most important expert roles and responsibilities – Most important scientific acknowledgements and awards – Outreach/impact activities, including patents, invention disclosures, and outreach – Other scientific merits, including invited talks, editorial activity, and datasets.

Applicants wishing to claim exemption to MSCA rules regarding the length of time which has elapsed since passing their PhD and/or mobility should note this in their CV.

3. **A list of publications**, the applicants are required to clearly indicate the five (5) most important publications in relation to the research plan. If non-English publications are listed, non-English titles must be translated into English. Please provide the author, title of the article, name of the journal, year, volume and issue, page range, and DOI code (if available). The list of publications must be prepared using the instructions provided in List of Publications – Research Council of Finland.
4. **Research Plan**, including secondment strategy and consideration of ethical issues (maximum 20,000 characters no spaces, including references, [template provided](#)). Please note that this character limit will be strictly enforced. The research plan must indicate in the following order: – Applicant's name – Title of the research plan – Name of the UTU/ÅAU unit – Background – Objectives – Methods, including specifying the multidisciplinary aspects of the research, core facility usage, details of planned experiments – Implementation and outputs, including schedule of the applicant's research, a timetable for the research stating milestones and publications/outputs, and

a dissemination strategy including considerations of open access and the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles. Please see UTU's or ÅAU's open science policy – Risk assessment, including implementation and consideration of ethical issues – National and international collaboration, including linkage with research conducted at UTU/ÅAU and with the university's research themes and secondment strategy – Bibliography, max. 10 references (included in the 20, 000 characters). The research plan should follow the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research (see Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) | Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK). The research plans can be checked with the Turnitin OriginalityCheck plagiarism detection software. Use of AI in the research plan must be disclosed by applicants, except when used for language checking.

5. **Research Plan Abstract** (maximum 2,000 characters no spaces). The one-page abstract must contain, in order, the following: – Applicant's name and academic degree – Title of the research – Summary of the research plan (aims, research material and methods) – Key words (maximum 5).
6. **Ethics Self-Assessment** form ([template provided](#) based on European Commission checklist and guidance). Research ethics: UTU and ÅAU are committed to complying with the guidelines on responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct, issued by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. Consequently, it requires that applicants commit to complying with responsible conduct of research and adhere to the Advisory Board's guidelines. Please see the research integrity guidelines 2023. In addition, applicants must comply with the MSCA's requirements for ethical research which can be found in the Horizon Europe Programme Guide: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf
7. **Initial Data Management Plan (DMP)** (maximum one page, [template provided](#)). The IMMUFELLOW data management plan is based on [the data management plan instructions of the Research Council of Finland](#). Under MSCA rules the Data Management Plan (DMP) should accord to the FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable – principles. (See [the Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#) for further details). The DMP should describe the following: – Where will the data be stored and how will they be backed up during the project – How will any legal and ethical issues related to the sharing of data (e.g. ownership, copyright, sensitivity) be resolved – Where will the data or a publishable portion of them be made available after the end of the project. If the project does not collect or produce any data fully or partially suitable for reuse, justify why the data cannot be made available even partially. – The DMP must also detail software to be used, curation and storage methods, and estimated costs. The DMP thus details the types of data and research outputs to be made available, and how the data will be managed in line with FAIR principles.

8. **A Letter of Support** from the host laboratory (UTU or ÅAU) is required. At least one Letter of Support should be provided by the potential host unit using the [template provided](#) on the IMMUFELLOW webpage. If you have more than one Letter of Support from host units, combine them into one PDF.

5.5 Step 5, Submission of application

The applications must be submitted via our online recruitment systems.

Applicants to UTU submit their application through UTU's online recruitment system (TalentAdore). Please see [instructions for submitting a job application](#).

or

Applicants to ÅAU submit their applications through ÅAU's online recruitment system (LAURA). Please see [instructions for submitting a job application](#).

Uniform eligibility and application criteria apply; all applications will be evaluated equally. Please double check that you have attached all the required attachments. You can refer to [Appendix 1 'A checklist of obligatory requirements and application documents'](#) of this document for assistance.

Applicants will receive confirmation on the submission of an application.

Links to the application forms (UTU and ÅAU) can be also found during the application period on the [IMMUFELLOW webpage](#).

The application deadline is 19 of October 2026 at 23:59 (EEST UTC +3). Late applications cannot be submitted and applications cannot be completed after the application period has ended. You can submit only 1 application during this application round. If multiple applications are submitted, only the last one will be taken into account and this applies to applications to either UTU or ÅAU.

Please note that once the application has been submitted, you can continue to make further adjustments to your application until the end of the application period. We strongly recommend that the application is completed as early as possible, before the end of the application Call period.

Incomplete applications will not be processed. Applicants who have any questions should contact IMMUFELLOW staff as soon as possible via immufellow@utu.fi and at least one week prior to the submission deadline.

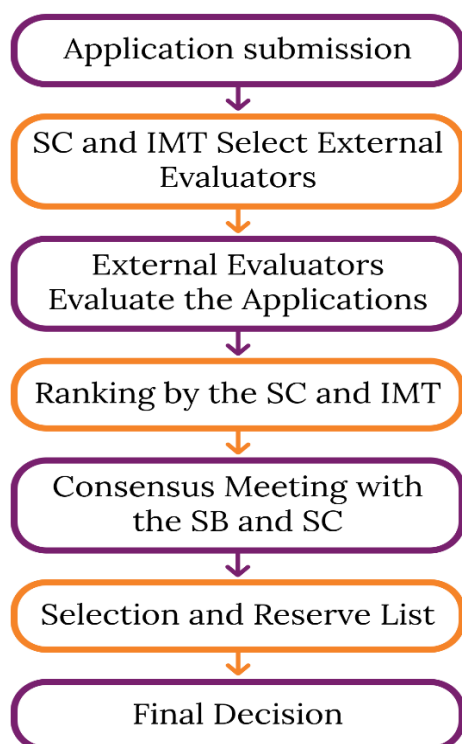
6. Evaluation and selection process

6.1. Informing applicants

Applicants will be kept informed about their application status at each stage and will be advised on the appeal process. The UTU online submission system will automatically confirm the receipt of applications. IMMUFELLOW will notify applicants personally with emails about eligibility checks, review outcomes, and provide anonymized external reviews, feedback requests regarding the selection process, and details on appeals or complaints. Information on the reserve list system and the publication of the names of selected applicants on the website. In general, contact information can be found on the IMMUFELLOW programme website, and information regarding the application period, decisions, along with events, and other news are updated on the website.

6.2 Processing and reviewing of applications

6.2.1 Process stages and organized bodies involved



After submission of applications, eligible applications will proceed to external evaluation. The Selection Committee (SC) will oversee the selection process with operational support from the IMMUFELLOW Management Team (IMT). The SC appoints external evaluators and ranks the applicants according to the external evaluation. The SC and Supervisory Board (SB) makes the final selection on the successful applications, relying upon the scores and evaluations of external reviewers.

The IMT provides day-to-day administrative support and the Director of the programme will oversee confirmation of specifics of each IMMUFELLOW postdoc, including the selection of mentors, supervisors, and secondments, as well as completion of PCDPs and dissemination plans. The Director and STC will oversee IMMUFELLOW postdocs development with UTU/ÅAU and secondment supervisors.

Figure 1. Workflow of the selection process.

6.2.2 Eligibility check

The eligibility check for all applications will start after the Call has closed. Incomplete and ineligible applications will be discarded at this stage. All applicants will get feedback on their eligibility by email: non-eligible applicants will be notified of the results of the eligibility check and reason(s) for ineligibility, while eligible applicants will receive confirmation that they have passed the eligibility check.

All mandatory eligibility criteria are described in part 4.1 of this Guide for Applicants. In summary the eligibility criteria are that:

- Applicants be within ten years of having received their PhD. (Only for special reasons, such as maternity, paternity or parental leave, military service or non-military service, or a long illness may more than ten years have passed since the successful completion of the degree. Applicants who wish to plead special reasons should highlight this in their curriculum vitae.)
- Applicants must meet the [MSCA mobility rule](#)
- All relevant documentation must be submitted on time

Failure to complete the online form, use the mandatory templates (5; CV, Research plan, Ethics Self-Assessment Form, Data Management Plan, Letter of Support), and upload the required files in the correct format (8 attachments) by the Call deadline will result in the application being deemed ineligible. Incomplete or non-compliant submissions will not be considered for review. No more than one application per applicant will be considered. If multiple applications are submitted, only the last one will be taken into account and this applies to applications to either UTU or ÅAU.

6.2.3 External Evaluation and Ethical Issues Check

Applications that meet all IMMUFELLOW eligibility requirements will be sent for external review. The IMMUFELLOW Selection Committee is responsible for identifying and selecting external reviewers, and the IMMUFELLOW management team facilitates this process by ensuring that all necessary resources, guidance, and tools are available. Three external reviewers will be selected for each application.

All applications (to UTU or ÅAU) will be evaluated in a single pool using the same criteria and external reviewers. After the evaluation process, separate ranking lists will be established for UTU and ÅAU. Appointments will then be made in order of ranking within each list.

The external experts will review each application based on pre-defined criteria, which include:

- Excellence of the research project (innovation and scientific merit)
- Impact (social, scientific, and economic relevance)
- Quality and Efficiency of Implementation (feasibility and methodology)

Personal data and doctoral certificates are not shared with external reviewers to avoid potential bias. To ensure international excellence, the majority of external reviewers are based outside Finland. A predefined scoring system ensures consistency and transparency, and the experts participate in training to ensure fair evaluation.

Evaluations will adhere to San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA](#)) principles, prioritizing research output quality and recognizing diverse academic contributions. In reviewer selection, IMMUFELLOW aims to maintain a gender and geographical balance. Guidance concerning UTU/ÅAU regulations and the EU principles of best practice and equality in recruitment (Charter and Code), and the Research Council of Finland's guidelines for responsible researcher evaluation, will be provided to all those involved in the selection and evaluation process. This approach emphasises the quality of research outputs over quantity, values diverse contributions, ensures transparency and fairness in the evaluation process, respects diversity and integrity, and acknowledges career breaks and diverse paths.

All those involved in the selection process must also declare any conflict(s) of interest with regard to particular applications. In accordance with UTU policy, these are defined as follows:

- Close collaboration with the applicant (e.g. co-authorship and/or publishing of an article with the applicant over the past 3 years; involvement in the preparation of the application and/or in the exploitation of research results).
- Occupies or has occupied the position of the applicant's superior, subordinate or instructor.
- Concurrent application for the same post as the applicant.
- Close association with the applicant (e.g. spouse, child, sibling, formally or otherwise, or close friend).

During the selection process, external reviewers must also carefully consider the ethical issues of the proposals, including those that may not be explicitly mentioned. Applications that achieve a review score sufficient for selection or reserve listed and are either flagged for ethical issues or identified by reviewers as having ethical concerns—such as bias, maleficence, lack of informed consent, or inadequate data protection—will be first assessed by the IMMUFELLOW Ethics, Gender, and Diversity Committee (EGDC). If necessary, the EGDC will refer the matter to the relevant UTU/ÅAU Ethics Committee Chair for a statement. All selected projects with ethical issues raised by any party must receive EGDC approval. This assessment ensures that the handling of ethical issues is in line with the UTU/ÅAU Ethics Policy. The EGDC is responsible for preparing the final ethics assessment, which summarizes the ethical approval.

All eligible applicants will be sent copies of their external reviews.

6.2.4 Evaluation Criteria for researcher selection

In the IMMUFELLOW review process, the focus is on evaluating scientific quality based on **three key criteria**: 1) excellence, 2) impact, and 3) quality and efficiency of implementation.

Each criterion is accompanied by specific sub criteria that provide a comprehensive assessment of each application. This approach ensures a holistic evaluation that considers the academic strengths, social and economic implications, and practical feasibility of the research, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

1. Criteria for Evaluating the Excellence of the Applicant and Research Project:

- **Excellence:** Evaluators will balance the applicant's qualifications and the project's scientific merit, considering both equally. A strong applicant can enhance a borderline project and vice versa, leaving room for evaluators' discretion in the final assessment.
- **Quality of the Applicant at the International Level:** The overall quality and impact of the applicant's research outputs, considering international collaborations, conference presentations, and alignment with international standards, as outlined in the European Charter for Researchers.
- **Record of Activities:** Includes teaching, supervision, knowledge transfer, public outreach, and innovation, in accordance with DORA recommendations and the Charter's emphasis on diverse academic and non-academic roles.
- **Engagement in International Networks:** The applicant's involvement in international collaborations is consistent with the Charter's focus on mobility and international cooperation.
- **Confirmation of Recognition for Academic Excellence:** Recognition through awards, funding, and other accolades, reflecting diverse forms of achievements as per DORA and the Charter.
- **Originality and Innovation:** The project's uniqueness, ambition, and innovation, including its potential to advance or challenge current knowledge and methodologies.
- **Theoretical and Methodological Robustness:** The relevance of the proposed theoretical framework and research methods, including interdisciplinary approaches, gender dimensions, diversity aspects, and open science practices.
- **Quality of Collaborations and External Activities:** The relevance and contribution of proposed partners, supervisors, and external activities, with an explicit emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

2. Criteria for Evaluating the Impact:

- **Scientific Impact:** The project's contribution to advancing knowledge in its field, including the potential for ground-breaking discoveries and methodological advancements.
- **Researcher Development and Career Impact:** The project's potential to enhance the applicant's professional growth, including the development of new skills, research independence, and overall career advancement.
- **Social Impact:** The project's relevance and benefits to society, including how it addresses social challenges, contributes to public policy, improves quality of life, and engages the public through dissemination and outreach.
- **Economic Impact:** The project's potential economic benefits, such as fostering innovation, creating commercial opportunities, and influencing industry practices.

3. Criteria for Evaluating the Quality and Efficiency of Implementation:

- **Risk/Gain Balance:** The project's ability to balance feasibility with potential risks and gains, with an emphasis on risk management.
- **Methodological Coherence:** The coherence, effectiveness, and thoroughness of the project's methodological framework and work plan.

- **Resource Allocation and Management:** The appropriateness of task distribution, resource allocation, and the adequacy of the management structure, including risk mitigation strategies.
- **Institutional and Secondment Complementarity:** The suitability of the institutional infrastructure and the relevance of secondments to the project, ensuring that the resources and environment are conducive to successful implementation.
- **Project Duration Feasibility:** The likelihood of completing the project within the 36-month fellowship period.

6.2.5 Scoring and threshold

In the review process, the emphasis is on scientific quality, which is structured across excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of implementation, each with specific sub criteria. This approach evaluates not only academic strengths, but also the social and economic implications of the research, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

The external reviewers provide both, written feedback and numerical scores for these three criteria, as well as an overall assessment. They are encouraged to focus on evaluative rather than descriptive comments when assessing both strengths and weaknesses. The overall score is an integrated assessment, not simply the arithmetic average of individual scores. Consideration of the ethical sustainability of projects (e.g. data protection, research targeting vulnerable populations) is also crucial, and will be scored.

The scoring system for our programme aligns with the MSCA's Postdoctoral Fellowship scoring system. The external reviewers will evaluate the research proposals based on three key criteria: excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of implementation. Points are awarded for each criterion, not for individual aspects. Each criterion is scored on a scale of 0–5 to one decimal place and weighted according to the table (excellence 50%, impact 30%, quality and efficiency of implementation 20% of the total score).

Score criteria: 5 Excellent, exceptionally strong; 4 Very good, strengths outweigh weaknesses; 3 Good, reasonable but with some issues; 2 Fair, some weaknesses; 1 Poor, significant weaknesses; 0 Fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed.

The preliminary ranking is based on the total score given to each proposal by the external evaluators, with a maximum possible score of 100%. Proposals that achieve a score of at least 70% will be considered for funding, subject to availability of the positions. Scores below this threshold will be rejected. The IMMUFELLOW scoring system will offer a thorough and equitable evaluation of each proposal, in line with its focus on academic rigor, social contribution, and intersectoral collaboration.

Table 2. IMMUFELLOW scoring criteria

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives (and the extent to which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state of the art)	Credibility of measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and their contribution to skills development	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, risk assessment, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
Soundness of the proposed methodology (including interdisciplinary approaches, consideration of the gender dimension and other diversity aspects if relevant for the research project, and the quality of open science practices)	Suitability and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	Quality and capacity of host institutions and participating organizations, including hosting arrangements
Quality of supervision, training, and two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and host	The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, social, and economic impacts	
Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competence, and skills		
50%	30%	20%
Weighting		
Calculation:		
(Excellence Score) * 50% + (Impact Score) * 30% + (Quality and efficiency of the implementation Score) * 20%.		
The final overall score is expressed as a percentage out of 100%.		

6.2.6 Ranking production, ties and reserve listing

The Selection Committee (SC) will rank the applicants based on the aggregated evaluation scores. If significant differences in evaluation scores (more than 10 percentage points) arise for the same application, an online consensus meeting with the reviewers and the SC members is organised. If there are borderline cases or ties that require a decision, the SC will vote, and the Chair (or Vice Chair as acting Chair) will have the casting vote in the event of a tie or if all members are not present. In accordance with MSCA practice, the committee will consist of the original reviewers, one of whom will be designated as rapporteur, and will prepare a consensus report after its deliberations. The Chair or Vice Chair of the SC may act as a facilitator, if necessary, to reach a consensus.

Once the final rankings have been established, a selection meeting will be held between the SC and the Supervisory Board (SB) to finalise the rankings and confirm the selection and reserve lists. At this meeting, the SB and the SC will finalise the rankings and make the final selections. If not, all members are present or there is a tie vote, the SC Chair (or the Vice Chair acting as Chair) will decide the matter.

The SC compiles an ordered ranking of reviewed applications, divided into three categories:

- i. Main List: the highest-ranked applicants are selected for funding
- ii. Reserve List: the applicants ranked immediately below those selected
- iii. Not Selected: the remaining reviewed applications

6.3. Appeals and Redress

Prior to the official publication of results, applicants who have not been selected will be informed of the decision on their application. In line with MSCA policies, applicants can appeal only for procedural errors by submitting a two-page appeal in writing and should be sent to the IMMUFELLOW Redress Committee (RC) by email (redress-immufellow@utu.fi) no later than one week after notification of the ranking decision is issued. Appeals titled "Redress_IMMUFELLOW [Surname][First name]" should clearly state the reasons for the appeal and the procedural issue.

The possible re-assessment, managed by the RC and the SC, may involve extra reviews and must be completed within 2 weeks. In cases where the appeal is deemed valid, the applicant will be offered the opportunity to have the proposal re-evaluated, to which they must respond within a week. Post-decision, after possible appeals processes have been completed, a meeting with the RC or SC Chair can be requested to further enhance fairness and understanding. This meeting aims to provide applicants with a clearer understanding of the decision-making process and to address any remaining concerns. Re-rankings, if any, are communicated, and impacted applicants are informed. Subsequent appeals by affected applicants will follow the same process, including the option for a post-decision meeting. The process concludes with the final selections. The process concludes with the final selections. UTU-related complaints follow official procedures. The decisions of the RC are final and binding. Complaints concerning any UTU/ÅAU activity or employee can also be submitted to UTU's/ÅAU's main offices, in line with its standard procedure.

6.4 Results of the Call

Selected applicants will be notified of the job offer directly by email. If the job offer is rejected or there is no response to the job offer within three weeks, the applicant will lose the position offered to them and the position will be offered to the highest ranked applicant on the reserve list.

To ensure transparency in the application process, the names of the selected IMMUFELLOW post-doc research fellows and project titles will be published on the IMMUFELLOW website and the University of Turku website after it has been confirmed that the selected applicants have accepted the places offered to them.

7. Additional information and contacts

For more information, see the [IMMUFELLOW website](#).

Further questions about the IMMUFELLOW postdoctoral COFUND MSCA programme may be addressed to immufellow@utu.fi.

Appeals to the IMMUFELLOW Redress: redress-immufellow@utu.fi

7.1 IMMUFELLOW staff

Director prof. Marko Salmi marko.salmi@utu.fi

Vice-Director prof. Cecilia Sahlgren (ÅAU) Cecilia.Sahlgren@abo.fi

Coordinator Inari Ahokas inari.ahokas@utu.fi

Coordinator Verna Louhivuori verna.louhivuori@utu.fi

Research Manager Jarkko Koivunen jarkko.koivunen@utu.fi

Research Coordinator Sampo Koivunen sampo.koivunen@utu.fi

Project specialist Kati Kemppainen (ÅAU) Kati.Kemppainen@abo.fi

HR specialist (UTU) Anne Jackson anne.jackson@utu.fi

HR specialist (ÅAU) Anna Lübchow Anna.Lubchow@abo.fi

8. Appendix 1: A checklist for applicants

A checklist of obligatory requirements and application documents

Applicants may use the following checklist of obligatory requirements and application documents before submitting their application:

Requirements:

☐ PhD

Doctoral degree by the call deadline, awarded no longer than 10 years prior to the call deadline (excluding any career breaks, such as parental leave or national service, that are declared in the CV).

☐ MSCA Mobility Rule

Applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Finland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the call deadline.

** Please note: documentation verifying compliance with the mobility rule will be collected from selected fellows for the whole 36-month period.*

☐ Research related to immunology.

☐ Research project of own design that can be implemented within a research unit at UTU or ÅAU and engages with UTU's/ÅAU's core research expertise.

☐ Compliance with UTU/ÅAU policies (including those on research ethics) and local law.

☐ Full-time dedication (1,612 hours/year) to research and training activities, unless duly justified.

☐ Maximum permitted research/training duration away from UTU/ÅAU of 12 months.

☐ Adherence to the principles of Open Science, provision of immediate Open Access to all peer reviewed scientific publications of research, and ensuring that all research data are responsibly managed in line with the FAIR principles.

Application documents (using the templates provided):

☐ Submitted Online Application

☐ Copy of Doctoral Certificate

☐ Curriculum Vitae

☐ List of Publications

☐ Research Plan

☐ Research Plan Abstract

☐ Ethics Self-Assessment Form

☐ Initial Data Management Plan

☐ Letter of Support