How it works:

During a one-week Summer Camp, 42 selected postgraduate students will attend in-depth presentations about the pharmaceutical and chemical industry. Participants will work in small teams to generate an innovative idea that addresses a scientific challenge and develop the idea into a business plan. The teams will receive coaching and guidance from managers and scientists of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and its affiliates, as well as experienced retirees. The teams will present their business plans to a grand jury composed of top management of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and its affiliates and external experts. The jury will select the best business plan and present the winning team with the Innovation Cup award and a cash prize of EUR 25,000 plus EUR 10,000 and EUR 5,000 for the runner-ups. Options to implement the best business plans will be evaluated. On the first day of the Summer Camp, a conference with alumni from previous editions of the Innovation Cup will be organized.

Further information:

Further information about the program and how to apply is available online:

innovationcup.emdgroup.com

If selected, you will be invited to sign the participants' agreement and attend the Innovation Summer Camp near Frankfurt am Main, Germany on August 14 - 20, 2027. Travel, accommodation, and food expenses will be paid by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany.

Not open to healthcare professionals.

About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across life science, healthcare and electronics. More than 62,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people's lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From providing products and services that accelerate drug development and manufacturing as well as discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2025, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 21.1 billion in 65 countries.

The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, operate as MilliporeSigma in life science, EMD Serono in healthcare and EMD Electronics in electronics. Since its founding in 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.

Merck KGaA
Frankfurter Str. 250
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Organized by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

INNOVATION CUP 2027

The Innovation Cup brings together a promising new generation of academic talents from the natural sciences, computer sciences, and business administration with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany senior management, active researchers, and accomplished retirees. This meeting of minds is a creative and innovative platform aimed at advancing science and technology. The 2027 Innovation Cup will comprise teams working on the following topics: oncology, immunology & inflammation, drug discovery, synthetic biology, fertility, advanced electronic materials and climate change.

Apply now!

Online application:
November 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Summer Camp:
August 14 - 20, 2027

innovationcup.emdgroup.com

What's in it for me?

If you are a postgraduate student with an interest in the pharmaceutical, chemical or digital industry, the Innovation Cup will be your chance to gain in-depth knowledge about research and development, to network with top students from around the world, and to build a business case together with experienced professionals. A conference with alumni from previous editions of the Innovation Cup will be held on the first day of the Summer Camp. Selected top performing participants could get an offer for a permanent employment at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany or any of its affiliates.

A EUR 25,000 prize will be awarded to the team that presents the most convincing business plan, plus EUR 10,000 and EUR 5,000 for the runner-ups. The Innovation Cup 2027 will take place near Frankfurt am Main, Germany (August 14 - 20, 2027). Travel, accommodation, and food expenses will be paid by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany.

Who can apply:

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany invites advanced students in the natural sciences, computer sciences, and business administration from all over the world to apply to participate in the Innovation Cup. 42 students will be selected:

- Sciences: Postgraduate students in the natural or computer sciences on their way towards a PhD or working as a postdoc in biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, biotech, bioinformatics, biochemistry, pharmacy, informatics, computer science, data science, engineering, or related fields.
- Business: Advanced MBA students or recent MBA graduates with an interest in the pharmaceutical, chemical or digital business.

Not open to healthcare professionals.

What to expect:

During the one-week Summer Camp, participants will work together in small teams to:

- Learn the essentials about R&D within the pharmaceutical, chemical and digital industry.
- Understand how products are successfully discovered, developed, and brought to market.
- Get to know Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and its affiliates and learn about career options.
- Work as part of a team to generate new ideas in the fields of: oncology, neuroscience & immunology, drug discovery, fertility, synthetic biology, smart facturing and advanced electronic materials.
- Evaluate your ideas from a technical and business perspective and build a convincing business plan.