



ERC StG SESSION FOR FUTURE APPLICANTS

How I Got My ERC Starting Grant

What a funded proposal actually looks like underneath — and what panels are really rewarding

Mona Simion

Who I was then — who I am now

2020 — AT SUBMISSION

- Lecturer (Assistant Professor), University of Glasgow
- Co-Director, COGITO Epistemology Research Centre
- 2018 Mind Fellow
- Author of several papers on knowledge-first epistemology
- No major monograph yet published

2026 — TODAY

- Professor of Philosophy & Michael Cohen Fellow, Exeter College, University of Oxford
- Ambassador of the European Research Council to the UK
- Author of 5 monographs (OUP and CUP)
- Winner, Young Epistemologist Prize 2021
- Elected Member, Academia Europaea; Vice-Chair, Young Academy of Europe
- PI, ERC StG KnowledgeLab (2021–2027)
- PI, ERC AdG AI-KNOW (2027-2032)

I'm the ERC Ambassador to the UK — I can help!

As part of the ERC's Ambassadors network, my role is to help UK-based researchers understand the scheme, strengthen their applications, and demystify the process — panels, eligibility, host institution strategy, interview prep.



Get in touch — I'm genuinely happy to help

Whether it's a quick sanity check on your draft, advice on framing, or a longer conversation about strategy — reach out.

mona.simion@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

What panels are actually rewarding



A clear intellectual position

A stance defended, with a name.



One throughline, many parts

Every work package should visibly serve a single research question.



Evidence you can deliver

Preliminary results, prior funding, named methods already in hand.



Impact you can name

Specific journals, organisations, policy bodies — not 'wide impact'.

Stake out a position

KNOWLEDGELAB opened not with a neutral literature review, but with a diagnosis: two existing methodologies in social epistemology (Individual-first, Social-first) both fail — and a third, named option fills the gap.

01

Individual-First

Empirically implausible — too heavy a burden on the lone knower.



02

Social-first

Licenses epistemic injustice — social norms aren't always good norms.



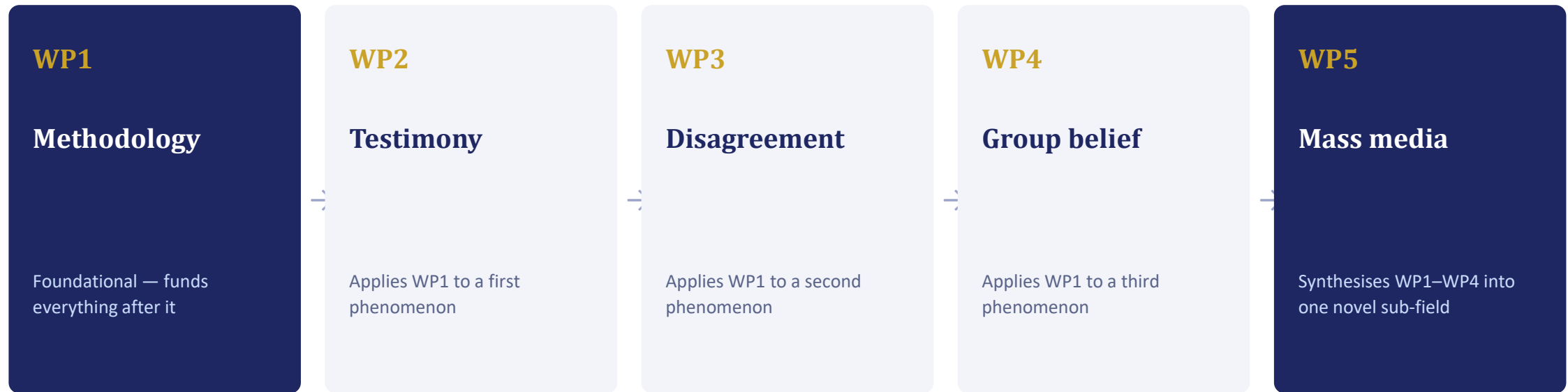
03

Epistemic-value-first

My proposed alternative — named, defended, and built into every WP.

One throughline, five interlocking work packages

Every WP traced back to a single sentence: develop a knowledge-first methodology, then apply it — to testimony, disagreement, groups, and finally the mass media.



Tip: a reviewer should be able to redraw this diagram from your abstract alone.

Give every work package the same skeleton

Research Aims

The view in one paragraph — stated as a thesis, not a question

Method

How you'll get there, citing your own prior tools and frameworks

Ground-breaking

A numbered list of exactly what's new vs. the state of the art

Impact

Who benefits, inside and outside the discipline

Outputs

Named journals, named conferences, a monograph chapter

Contingency

What could go wrong, and your fallback — see next slide

Contingency planning is reassurance, not pessimism

Every WP in KNOWLEDGELAB named its own riskiest assumption — and a fallback that still produces a publishable result.



Risk named

“If knowledge is not a sui generis mental state, the metaphysical grounding for WP4 is lost.”



Fallback ready

“My alternative will be to extend the functionalist metaphysics to epistemic agents.”

Replace 'wide impact' with names

Vague impact claims read as filler. KNOWLEDGELAB named the actual journals, networks, and external bodies it would work with and target.



Target journals

- Philosophical Review
- Noûs
- Synthese
- Mind & Language



Dissemination

- Social Epistemology Network
- European Epistemology Network
- Named International conferences



External partners

- European Federation of Journalists
- UK National Union of Journalists
- Ethical Journalism Network

Make the host institution part of the argument

Don't just list affiliation — show why this project could only flourish here, naming colleagues and rankings.



“COGITO at the University of Glasgow is one of the three most important research clusters in knowledge-first epistemology — alongside the University of Oxford and Kings College London.”

Named, specific colleagues whose expertise the project would draw on

Close on commitment and independence — briefly



“I am genuinely excited by the opportunity that an ERC Starting Grant would provide me to fully realise my passion... I commit 100% of my working time to this project.”

The PI Commitment paragraph is short — but it should do two jobs: signal genuine independence (spanning sub-disciplines on your own initiative) and confirm full-time commitment, explicitly.

TAKEAWAYS

Seven things to do before you submit

- 1 Name your position — don't just survey the field in neutral terms
- 2 Trace every WP back to one sentence
- 3 Repeat the same skeleton in every WP
- 4 Name a real risk and a real fallback
- 5 Replace 'wide impact' with named journals and bodies
- 6 Make your institution part of the argument
- 7 Keep the PI Commitment short, sincere, specific

Questions — and good luck

Mona Simion · mona.simion@philosophy.ox.ac.uk · KnowledgeLab, Exeter College, University of Oxford