**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 Scholarship**

**Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) Scholarship**

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| **Project Reference** | DClinPsy Robertson |

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**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | Examining factors contributing to postgraduate researcher wellbeing and resilience | |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | Originality:  The educational environment has been transformed by Covid with far-reaching educational consequences, and a growing corpus of research reveals profound and adverse impacts on students’ psychological wellbeing. A comprehensive examination of the impacts of working as a postgraduate researcher particularly has been relatively neglected. It is thus timely to interrogate impacts currently given PGRs are acknowledged to experience challenges to psychological wellbeing during their studies, and increased risk isolation and self-harm. |
| 2. | Significance:  This project aligns with policy and initiatives across the HEI sector to enhance postgraduate student wellbeing. The speed of change to the educational landscape gives further impetus to understanding the factors that underpin psychological resilience and wellbeing in postgraduate researchers |
| 3. | Impact:  Academic - This project dovetails with University of Leicester’s comprehensive strategy to foster and enhance student wellbeing.  Non-academic/translational – Project findings have the potential to inform routine assessment of postgraduate researcher wellbeing as part of their professional development, and develop feasible interventions to enhance resilience and transition into early career roles. |
| **Project Summary** | | |
| Undertaking doctoral study can be a time of transition and change, particularly for those researchers completing PhD studies (Laudel & Gläser, 2008). Embarking on higher degrees for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) implies a commitment to further study, but with some uncertainty and precarity about progression, utility of degree and future career opportunities. Understandably, the uncertainties inherent in postgraduate study can affect wellbeing, yet is also a time in which future resilience can be shaped (Schmidt & Hansson, 2018).  Wellbeing can be defined as “*having the emotional resilience to cope with everyday pressures, enjoy life and undertake productive work while having a belief in one’s own and others’ worth*” (Brown, 2016, p.1). PGRs struggling with their mental health may find their wellbeing adversely affected, compromising their studies, the research programmes in which they are embedded, and potentially jeopardising fruitful careers in academia and industry. Indeed, there has been increased attention examining the wellbeing and mental health of university students in the UK (Brown, 2016), as an escalation in demand for counselling and disability services within higher education institutions has become evident (Thorley, 2017).  Previous research reveals that PGRs report lower levels of psychological health, elevated anxiety, and lower life satisfaction than the general population. This project will seek to understand key factors contributing to PGR wellbeing. In particular hybrid study modalities and the relatively underexplored impact of distance learning will be scrutinised in the post-pandemic context. The project will also seek to understand specific stressors (individual, interpersonal and organisational), support strategies for PGRs and the potential for compassion-focused approaches and reflective peer support (drawn from other public sector initiatives) to enhance wellbeing within the higher education environment. | | |