**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 PhD Scholarship**

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| **Project Reference** | GGE Osborne |

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**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | Virtual reality for health and wellbeing |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | It will be one of the first studies to apply virtual reality in health geography. |
| 2. | As the potential to further link the school with interdisciplinary institutes (e.g., digital cultures, CEHS) |
| 3. | Builds upon a growing research area in the school and the university, with a critical application of virtual reality as a methodological tool.  |
| **Project Summary**  |
| Digital technologies have long impacted the health field, resulting in health and well-being being monitored, produced and consumed via digital technologies. Despite this, there are limited discussions within the subdiscipline of health geography on how digital technologies, such as virtual reality, can shape health outcomes. The project will address this gap by critically applying virtual reality (VR) as an object of research and as a methodological tool to explore how digital environments experienced in VR can stimulate a positive health and well-being response. Virtual reality is a technology that enables one to experience situations that cannot be experienced in the real world and, as such, VR has the unique capacity to experience a virtual space in an immersive environment without limitations in terms of geography, accessibility and time. A collection of disciplines have begun to explore the potential of VR in their research, yet geographical investigations using VR are just starting to emerge. Therefore, this project has the potential to be at the forefront of geographical scholarship in the area, with ample future research opportunities and engagement with health and digital stakeholders. In this context, this research aims to:* Critically explore the therapeutic qualities of digital environments
* Examine the potential of virtual reality as a tool for health and well-being
* Develop guidelines for developing healthy digital landscapes in line with VR’s growing popularity.

These aims will be realised by capturing the experiences of participants being immersed in ‘therapeutic’ landscapes (e.g., woodland) using VR through ‘go-along’ interviews and measures of stress and relaxation. The project will consider both quantitative and qualitative methods, and depending on the interests and skills of the candidate, the methodology can include eye-tracking, natural language processing and paralinguistics, physiological measures, and perceived stress measures to complement the interview data.  |