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## A dose of reality

Over the past few years, television on both sides of the Atlantic has been dominated by 'reality' programmes. People can't seem to get enough of watching ordinary people go about their daily routine or of seeing celebrities being thrust into frequently humiliating situations.

So the huge response over the past year for the four students who wrote their Graduate Journals for *Naturejobs* shouldn't have been a surprise. Thousands of online readers followed our correspondents' plights as they mulled over where to pursue a postdoc, pondered academia versus industry or wondered whether to leave the bench behind.

But there are key differences between reality shows and the *Naturejobs* column, the most significant of which is the level of reality. On TV it doesn't matter how 'real' the contestants are, they are still thrust into contrived situations. The students, by contrast, reported their ups and downs pretty much as they happened.

One of the more gratifying differences was what drove the interest in the students. On TV, it's often a matter of antipathy for the badly behaved contestants, hoping that they'll get some sort of comeuppance. For the Graduate Journals, interest was driven more by empathy. The students often received encouraging e-mails when they reported setbacks such as failed experiments. That reaction underscores the reason for publishing the journals: to show graduate students that others, too, face adversity.

And although our students might sometimes have felt that they were in a show called "I'm A Graduate Student, Get Me Out of Here", in the end, a more appropriate title would have been "Survivor", as you'll see from each student's final entry, made available online over the next few weeks ([www.nature.com/naturejobs/channels/graduate/graduate-journal.html](http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/channels/graduate/graduate-journal.html)).

**Paul Smaglik**  
*Naturejobs* editor



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