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## Responses and resolutions

At the end of last year, in between trips, interviews and deadlines, I checked the *Naturejobs* feedback inbox and was dismayed to find it clogged with spam. After deleting hundreds, if not thousands, of offers for dubious goods and services, I resolved not to let this happen again in 2005 — and to address the four most pertinent questions the box contained.

One reader said it was irresponsible to recommend that young scientists pursue higher-risk research, rather than following the crowd. I'd respond by saying that every course of action has its risks and one needs to calculate them and match them with one's goals. Another reader had a question about the wisdom of using Francis Crick as an example of someone who changed scientific direction at a late age and was successful. Again, my main point was that such a move is possible; my only caveat is to weigh the risks of making such a move before doing it.

Another column, about US President Bush's impact on foreign scientists, had one writer seeing red, and accusing me of being partisan. She said that it was unfair to attribute the decline in numbers of foreign graduate students in the United States to politics. Although I agree that correlation does not equal cause-and-effect, I'd say that the decline — happening after the president changed his visa policy — is impossible to ignore.

My favourite letter, though, is from someone who said that the four graduate students who kept journals for *Naturejobs* last year all sounded too positive. I'd respond by saying that they did report bumps in the road, but carried out a good job in writing about how this would affect their future career decisions — the entire point of the column. And I'd add that, in addition to resolving to address readers' concerns faster and more regularly this year, *Naturejobs* will attempt to offer viable solutions to scientific career issues and not just complain about problems.

**Paul Smaglik**

*Naturejobs* editor



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