

- FOCUS
- SPOTLIGHT
- RECRUITMENT
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
- EVENTS

nature jobs

Variations on a theme

Some say there are only seven or so basic types of plot, which get cast into myriad forms as we write and tell stories. The same might be true for the experiences of graduate students — the tales vary, but the underlying issues seem remarkably similar.

In our competition to find four new correspondents to write this year's Graduate Journal series, we received more than 170 entries from 24 countries. All were eager to document the highs and lows of their forthcoming year in the lab.

Despite the geographical spread and disciplinary diversity of the applicants — ranging from tiger genetics and cancer biology to synthetic chemistry and quantum information — the judging panel detected some common themes. The entrants were looking beyond graduate school to their professional future. They pondered staying in academic science or working in industry; pursuing traditional research paths or taking an alternative route. Many, especially women, worried about how to balance career and partner or family. Other concerns included whether or not to move abroad, and how to pick a good project.

Each entrant riffed on these themes in compelling ways,

to the extent that the judges felt they actually knew the people writing. The hopefuls were judged on story telling, insight, creativity and writing ability. It was a difficult choice, but we are pleased to reveal our four winners.

Milan de Vries, who writes his first column this week (see page 760), is a final-year molecular-biology student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Andreas Andersson is from Sweden and is a final-year oceanography student at the University of Hawaii. Katja Bargum is a final-year evolutionary-biology student at the University of Helsinki in Finland; and Mhairi Dupré is a first-year evolutionary-biology student at the University of Oxford, UK.

Congratulations to our winners — we look forward to following the twists and turns of their stories in 2006.



Paul Smaglik, Naturejobs editor

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