

- FOCUS
- SPOTLIGHT
- RECRUITMENT
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
- EVENTS

# nature jobs

## Good in parts

A report card on attempts to help US postdocs gives mixed marks for research institutions trying to improve the plight of their fellows.

In 2003, only 12 of the 60 institutions surveyed by the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) had both postdoc offices and postdoc associations. By 2006, when 120 institutions were surveyed, the number of postdoc offices had ballooned to 87, postdoc associations numbered 68, and 47 institutions had both.

This growth is important, because postdoc offices provide a formal mechanism for institutions to address postdoc concerns, and associations give fellows a unified voice to push for reforms on stipends, benefits and career information.

However, grades were less good in another category on the report card: creating long-term tracking of postdoc outcomes. Following where postdocs go when they leave their institutions is helpful, because it gives current fellows an idea of the jobs they can expect. And postdoc alumni databases could also provide a network of speakers for those wishing to hear about non-traditional paths, says

Alyson Reed, executive director of the NPA, based in Washington DC.

Such data will help both prospective postdocs and grad students to “shop” for institutions whose fellows had good career outcomes, says Howard Garrison, public-affairs director of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. And having such outcomes publicly available could prompt research institutions to be more engaged in career development, because they indicate how well the institutions prepare postdocs for careers.

If the NPA's track record is any indication, the next two years should see more tracking data generated by the increasing numbers of postdoc offices and associations. Hopefully, these data will send both postdocs and the NPA to the top of the class.



**Paul Smaglik, Naturejobs editor**

### CONTACTS

**Publisher:** Ben Crowe  
**Editor:** Paul Smaglik

**European Head Office, London**  
The Macmillan Building,  
4 Crinan Street  
London N1 9XW, UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996  
e-mail: [naturejobs@nature.com](mailto:naturejobs@nature.com)

**European Sales Manager:**  
Andy Douglas (4975)  
**Natureevents:** Matt Betteridge (4015)

**UK/RoW/Ireland:**  
Nils Moeller (4953)  
**Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal:**  
Claudia Paulsen Young (4973)  
**France/Switzerland/Belgium/  
Italy:** Maria Ceraolo (4994)  
**Germany/Austria/  
The Netherlands:**  
Reya Silao (4970)  
**Business Development Manager:**  
Amelie Pequignot (4974)

**Advertising Production Manager:**  
Stephen Russell  
To send materials use London  
address above.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996  
e-mail: [naturejobs@nature.com](mailto:naturejobs@nature.com)  
**Naturejobs web development:** Tom Hancock  
**Naturejobs online production:**  
Catherine Alexander

**European Satellite Office  
Germany:** Patrick Phelan  
Tel: +49 89 54 90 57 11  
Fax: +49 89 54 90 57 20  
e-mail: [p.phelan@nature.com](mailto:p.phelan@nature.com)

**US Head Office, New York**  
75 Varick Street,  
9th Floor, New York,

NY 10013-1917  
Tel: +1 800 989 7718  
Fax: +1 800 989 7103  
e-mail: [naturejobs@natureny.com](mailto:naturejobs@natureny.com)

**US Sales Manager:** Peter Bless

**Japan Head Office, Tokyo**  
Chiyoda Building,  
2-37 Ichigayatamachi,  
Shinjuku-ku,  
Tokyo 162-0843  
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751  
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746  
**Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:** Ayako Watanabe  
e-mail: [a.watanabe@natureasia.com](mailto:a.watanabe@natureasia.com)