PhD jobs: revamp funding structures

If more PhD students are being trained than the system can support (*Nature* **550,** 429; 2017), I suggest that funding structures need to be changed to create more long-term roles in research.

Nature's PhD survey found that 52% of respondents want to stay in academia (*Nature* **550,** 549–552; 2017), even though many need side jobs to make ends meet (*Nature* **549,** 297–299; 2017). Urging supervisors to spend more time preparing students for the day they must leave academia seems unnecessarily defeatist.

I agree that society benefits if, as you write in your Editorial, "a sizeable number of well-educated and well-trained scientists spread to other sectors, and take with them healthy scepticism and respect for evidence". However, such skills can also be learned in good undergraduate or master's degree programmes.

Awarding fewer, better-funded PhD studentships and investing more in long-term research posts could offer a less wasteful solution. For example, the UK Natural Environment Research Council's annual report for 2016–17 notes that it spent about £25 million (US$33 million) funding some 1,300 PhD students and about £7 million on 84 postdoctoral fellowships (each lasting 5 years). Doubling the number of fellowships, at the expense of 400 or so studentships, would open the door for many more young scientists.

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