

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

China's growing research and development (R&D) enterprise is something of a paradox. The country is experiencing incredible economic growth, largely the result of a manufacturing boom, and the government continues to increase R&D funding. But the country's students and young scientists are struggling to cling to their dreams of working independently in academia or pursuing their preferred science professions. Meanwhile, foreign-trained PhD students are often still favoured over home-grown talent (see page 1028).

Major reforms to China's higher-education system in the late 1990s improved its capacity to teach students in a variety of disciplines, and enrolment has risen sharply — up from 0.3 million to 13.3 million for undergraduates between 1998 and 2004. A similar trend can be seen in graduate schools, but graduate studies, including those in science and technology, present a stumbling block for career-seekers in the form of poor pay.

Many of China's top students still head overseas, where the United States is the most popular destination. A report from the US Council of Graduate Schools, released on 14 April, suggests that although graduate-school applications from China have slowed somewhat, they are still significant — particularly when compared with applications from other nations.

Other countries also attract plenty of Chinese talent. Around 19% of Canada's science and engineering graduate students were from China in 2004. And of the more than 18,000 foreign graduate students enrolled in Japanese universities in 2005, nearly 10,000 of them were from China.

Perhaps it is only a matter of time before the Chinese government raises postdoc salaries and graduate-student stipends. And maybe there is no rush to stem an exodus of students who receive good training and cross-cultural experiences abroad — as long, that is, as China finds a way to create jobs to accommodate the increasing number who are returning.

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