

Despair over science cuts

Sir - I should like to add my voice to the uproar from the scientific establishment over the proposed cuts to research funding proposed by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) (Science, January 15).

My son commenced a funded three-year postgraduate research in high-energy gamma-ray astronomy at Durham University last September, as part of the international High Energy Stereoscopic System project.

The research uses data obtained from the most advanced gamma-ray telescopes in the world and is the only British collaboratively funded project in this waveband.

The implication of this on a personal level is that my son, along with other first-year PhD astronomy students, will be unable to access data from 2009 to complete their doctorate.

When despair is frequently voiced at the lack of science students and teachers in our schools, I find the STFC proposals astonishing, especially as the scientific community sends PhD students into local secondary schools as "researchers in residence" to demonstrate how exciting science can be and enthuse another generation.

I deplore any withdrawal from international scientific studies, because it will have a detrimental effect on our standing in the international scientific community while degrading science education in Britain.

Maggie Cheesebrough, Carlisle