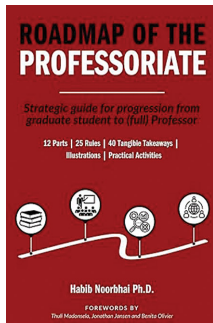


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Roadmap of the Professoriate:  
Strategic Guide for Progression from  
Graduate Student to (Full) Professor

**AUTHOR:**

Habib Noorbhai

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## Planning the academic journey: A review of 'Roadmap of the Professoriate'

As a novice researcher, I approached Habib Noorbhai's *Roadmap of the Professoriate* with curiosity and a lack of clarity about what to expect. Noorbhai, a lecturer at the University of Johannesburg and a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), hopes to mentor emerging researchers on academic journeys. The book presents 25 strategic rules and 40 actionable takeaways in 12 thematic sections.

The 12 sections are wide ranging, from 'Defining Your Path' to 'Building a Legacy'. Each includes strategic rules presented as brief, condensed commandments, such as "Publish with Purpose". These rules are not just theoretical concepts, but practical guidelines that equip you for your academic journey, making you feel not just prepared, but empowered and capable. Near the book's end, tangible takeaways – such as worksheets, templates and checklists – are given to apply the strategic rules. In addition to this, the guide offers reflection prompts that allow you to consider your ambitions genuinely. In this way, Noorbhai inspires readers and leaves them ready to embark on their academic journey.

The checklists were helpful in that they provided me with a concrete starting point. However, at times, I wished for more explanation on why each rule is significant in the broader academic project.

The strength of this book lies in the provision of worksheets and templates; it felt infinitely less intimidating to have a prefabricated career map to follow than to create one of my own from scratch. Moreover, the guide includes research, teaching, leadership and service. It is a good reminder of the holistic duties of an academic as presented in Jansen and Visser's *On Becoming a Scholar* (African Minds; 2022). In other words, Noorbhai's book reminds the reader that being an academic involves much more than just publishing. Some examples seemed more applicable to South Africa (e.g. National Research Foundation grant writing tips), while others, like stories about MIT visiting professorships, might appear less relevant to readers outside North America.

As someone still learning to dissect academic writing, I was surprised to find that this guide paid little attention to career development theories (i.e. how and why academic identity develops). This made it difficult to understand the purpose behind many of the exercises, as theory provides a kind of map that makes it easier to understand the 'why' behind the 'how'.

Despite these limitations, the guide is generalisable across academic audiences. Noorbhai has designed his rules and templates to be broad and generic to fit various contexts; anyone should be able to adjust them to suit their institution. While the advice related to South Africa's National Research Foundation may not be directly comparable to that of other national research councils, readers in different countries could adapt the advice accordingly. This adaptability makes the audience feel the book can be tailored to their needs.

Noorbhai highlights the book's relevance to the South African higher education system by acknowledging the relative lack of mentorship in South Africa. As such, the focus on peer networking and strategic planning felt reassuring. The South African references within the book proved especially helpful in 'locating' this advice within our national academic context, making one feel understood and catered to in the academic journey.

For someone who envisions themselves as a professor in the future, *Roadmap of the Professoriate* offers a user-friendly, nuts-and-bolts introduction to planning an academic career. Its clear layout and straightforward exercises make the material easy to digest, providing a comfortable learning experience for graduate students and early career academics.

Yet I wish the book provided more justification for why the strategies make sense (i.e. theory) and adaptation for contexts other than South Africa and North America. Nonetheless, I recommend *Roadmap of the Professoriate* to early career academics needing structured, hands-on support in their journey towards the professoriate.