SELF-EDUCATION PATHWAY

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Revised — April 30, 2026

A mastery-based curriculum producing evidence of competence—not credentials. Every unit produces a deliverable assessed against defined standards under external review.

30+ units	**4** tiers	**5** criteria	**19** books

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One-Page Summary

This document contains the complete Self-Education Pathway—a mastery-based curriculum I designed for self-directed study during federal incarceration. The pathway was designed during a twelve-day pre-incarceration build phase ending May 11, 2026, and is intended to govern approximately 12,600 to 15,600 hours of study over sixty-three to seventy-eight months.

The governing principle: every unit produces a deliverable assessed against a mastery standard. No unit exists to cover material. No deliverable advances without meeting defined criteria under external review. The curriculum does not measure time spent. It measures what I can demonstrate.

Foundation layer: A multi-year field research program studying how incarcerated people learn, documented through a structured protocol with nine observation categories, six forms operating on nested review cycles from daily through annual, and ethical guidelines governing participant observation from inside the population being studied.

Three priorities built on the foundation:

Writing — formal grammar, syntax, rhetorical structure, and professional document production. Seven units from diagnostic through publication. Every deliverable in the curriculum is a written artifact; this priority serves all others.

AI Literacy — demonstrated through four applied domains (carceral education, legal guidance, construction safety, and product evaluation) producing a transferable evaluative skill. Six units from foundations through cross-domain synthesis.

Guidance System — an AI-powered guidance platform for federal defendants and their families. Four units from requirements through stress-testing, supported by a bounded legal knowledge unit and advanced financial modeling.

Supporting competencies (financial literacy, legal knowledge, basic math) are embedded in the applied work, not taught as standalone subjects.

Timeline: Four tiers. Tier 1 (months 1–12): institutional establishment. Tier 2 (months 1–36): foundational study. Tier 3 (months 37–63): full-capacity production and convergence. Tier 4 (months 64–78, if applicable): deepening only. Everything essential completes by month 63.

Assessment: Five universal criteria (clear thesis, evidence-based, counterarguments addressed, mechanically sound, audience-appropriate) with falsifiable tests for each. Teach-back and peer review are structural requirements, not supplements. Deliverables assessed without external review carry provisional status.

Total allocated hours: 2,935–4,010. Unallocated buffer of 9,665–11,590 hours accounts for institutional disruption, daily retrieval practice, reading time, revision cycles, and unplanned opportunities.

Materials: Nineteen books across five acquisition waves, plus ongoing correspondence materials delivered through Unfettered's email-based instruction. All materials sourced from outside the facility.

PART I: STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

I do not have a degree. I have a seventh-grade education, a federal conviction, and a set of beliefs about learning that I built from the inside of a system designed to warehouse people, not educate them.

What follows is a statement of what I believe about education—not education in the abstract, but education as I intend to practice it. Every principle here was tested against experience and against the question: does this produce evidence of competence, or does it produce the appearance of effort? The principles that survived that question are the ones I kept.

This statement introduces the Self-Education Pathway, a mastery-based curriculum I designed for myself before entering federal custody. The pathway is not a reading list. It is not a collection of good intentions. It is a structured program that produces evidence—written deliverables, research findings, professional documents, and business plans—assessed against standards specific enough to hold a man accountable to himself and to anyone willing to examine the work. I share it here because the problem it addresses is not mine alone.

What the System Measures and What It Misses

The American education system—inside prisons and outside them—is built around completion. A student completes a course, a semester, a degree. The metric is the credential. The credential is the product. Whether the student can deploy what he studied under real conditions, produce professional work, or solve a problem he has not seen before is a separate question the system does not ask.

This model has consequences everywhere. Inside prisons, the consequences are sharper. In 2023, Congress restored Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students, and the expansion of college programs into federal and state facilities has been celebrated as a turning point. The investment is real, and the public safety returns are measurable: a 2018 RAND Corporation meta-analysis covering thirty-seven years of correctional education research found that incarcerated people who participated in educational programs were twenty-eight percent less likely to reoffend. That finding held across program types and the most rigorous study designs in the review. Prison education saves lives and saves communities.

But the same researchers examined the outcome that matters most to the person walking out of a facility: employment. When they restricted the analysis to the three strongest study designs, the employment effect disappeared. Two of the three studies found no improvement in post-release employment. The researchers concluded that the apparent benefit in weaker studies was likely driven by selection bias—motivated people choosing to enroll, not the programs themselves producing jobs.

This is not an argument against prison education. It is an argument that education as currently delivered is incomplete. A credential without a demonstrated skill set is a piece of paper. A diploma

attached to a felony record meets a labor market that, in most industries, screens on the record before it reads the transcript. The education system produces the credential. The labor market does not honor it. And the person holding both walks out with debt, a degree, and the same employment prospects he had before.

I believe the gap is not in the effort. The gap is in the design. A system that measures completion will produce completion. A system that measures competency will produce competency. The question is which system a man chooses to build for himself when the institutional version does not ask him to demonstrate what he can do.

Why Self-Directed

I chose to build a self-directed pathway not because traditional education is unavailable to me, but because the traditional model would not ask the right questions.

A college course in business would require me to complete assignments designed for a general student population. My curriculum requires me to build a financial model for a specific venture I intend to launch. A college course in writing would walk me through a composition sequence. My curriculum requires me to produce policy briefs, curriculum materials, research summaries, and published writing—documents that serve real purposes for real audiences. A college course in artificial intelligence would survey the field. My curriculum requires me to evaluate AI applications across four domains I will work in and to build the transferable skill of assessing where AI creates value in any new industry.

The traditional system would credential me. My system requires me to prove what I can do. And when I walk into a meeting after release, the question will not be what degree I hold. The question will be what I can produce. A portfolio of professional documents, published writing, research findings, business plans, and AI product evaluations answers that question in a way a transcript cannot—especially a transcript attached to a felony record.

I also chose self-directed learning because it is honest about what sustainable education requires. No instructor will be present to hold me accountable. No institution will remind me to study. No semester calendar will impose deadlines. The accountability must come from the structure I build and the standards I hold myself to—not from an external authority that disappears the moment the course ends. If I cannot sustain a learning practice without institutional scaffolding, I have not learned how to learn. I have learned how to comply.

What I Believe About Learning

Learning is demonstrated through production, not consumption. Every unit in my curriculum produces a deliverable—a written argument, a research summary, a financial model, a curriculum unit, a product evaluation. The deliverable is assessed against defined standards. If it does not meet those

standards, it is revised. If it cannot be revised to standard, the unit is not complete. This makes the curriculum harder, not easier. Completion lets a learner hide behind volume. Mastery does not.

Reading serves production. In a traditional curriculum, reading is the work. In a mastery-based curriculum, reading is a tool. I read a text because it serves a specific deliverable I am building. If the text does not serve the work, the text does not belong in the curriculum—regardless of how important or prestigious it may be. I removed an entire calculus sequence from my original plan because no deliverable in the pathway requires calculus. The aspiration was real. The load-bearing requirement was not.

Three methods govern all study. I did not invent these. They are the methods recognized by cognitive science and implemented by the institutions that produce the most competent graduates. I adapted them for an environment with no internet, no computer, and no instructor.

First: retrieval practice with spaced repetition. I test myself on material at increasing intervals—every day, then every three days, then every seven. The answers come from memory before I check them. Failed prompts recycle. Passed prompts advance. The method is paper-based: index cards, a notebook, a calendar. It prevents the illusion of mastery that comes from rereading material and recognizing it without actually knowing it.

Second: project-based learning. I learn by building, not by studying in preparation for building. Every unit in the curriculum is a project that produces a tangible result. Learning is the byproduct of production—not a precursor that never arrives.

Third: teach-back. I write explanations of what I have learned as though addressing a specific audience—an incarcerated learner with no background in the subject, a policymaker, a facility administrator. If I cannot explain it, I have not learned it. The act of translation exposes every gap in comprehension that reading alone would let a person ignore.

These three methods reinforce each other. All three produce artifacts. Progress is visible and auditable. Any unit that only asks me to read fails the test.

Assessment is production under scrutiny. No multiple-choice test appears anywhere in the pathway. Every assessment is a deliverable reviewed against five criteria: clear thesis, evidence-based, counterarguments addressed, mechanically sound, and audience-appropriate. Each criterion has a specific test that produces a verifiable result. The deliverable is then explained to another person who restates it in his own words—and reviewed by a peer who identifies what is unclear. External review is not a supplement to self-assessment. It is the standard that governs it.

Honest self-evaluation requires more than good intentions. It requires structure—criteria that cannot be reinterpreted, external reviewers who have no stake in the outcome, and a revision process that treats unmet standards as information, not failure. A man serious about his own development builds systems that hold him to his word, not systems that confirm what he already believes about himself.

The Foundation: Research

While incarcerated, I am not only studying. I am studying how people study.

The foundation of the pathway is a multi-year field research program documenting how incarcerated people learn—and how they fail to learn—inside a federal facility. I am a member of the population I am observing. No outside researcher has the sustained, daily access to this reality that I will have. Ethnographic studies visit. Program evaluations measure outcomes. My research documents the process: what incarcerated people do when they try to learn, what stops them, what the institution does that helps and hinders, and what informal systems emerge when formal systems fail.

The research follows a structured protocol. Every observation separates what I saw from what I think it means. Findings must cite specific evidence. The protocol requires me to document what works—not only what fails—and to address the strongest counterexplanation for every finding, because a man who conducts research to confirm what he already believes is assembling a brief, not producing knowledge.

This research feeds everything else. It informs the design of Unfettered, the educational platform I co-founded to serve incarcerated learners. It generates content for publication. It disciplines my own study by forcing me to articulate what I observe in other people's learning—and to apply the same scrutiny to my own.

What I Am Building

The pathway serves three priorities, built on the research foundation.

The first priority is writing. I do not need to learn how to write. I write. What I need is to credential and refine what I already produce—formal grammar, syntax, rhetorical structure, and professional document production at a level that earns recognition outside the facility walls. Every deliverable in the curriculum is a written artifact. A man who cannot write clearly cannot demonstrate mastery of anything.

The second priority is understanding artificial intelligence—not as a subject to survey but as a tool to evaluate across multiple applied domains. I am studying how AI serves incarcerated learners through Unfettered, how it can provide legal guidance to defendants and their families, how it applies to construction safety, and how to assess any AI product's claims against its actual capability. After working across these domains, I will have the pattern recognition to evaluate where AI creates genuine value in any new industry. The flexibility comes from depth, not from breadth.

The third priority is building an AI-powered guidance platform for federal defendants and their families—a population currently served by predatory consultants who charge fees the population cannot afford. This venture is the convergence point where research, writing, and AI literacy come together. It is not a subject to study. It is an applied project that demands all three.

Financial literacy and legal knowledge are embedded where the ventures require them. Math is taught through business modeling—arithmetic, percentages, statistics, financial formulas. Legal knowledge is bounded to what the platform requires: unauthorized practice of law, AI liability, and the regulations governing guidance to defendants. I removed standalone tracks for both. A curriculum that teaches subjects without a destination is a university catalog, not a learning plan.

The Standard I Hold Myself To

I claim the tradition of men who educated themselves inside systems that tried to silence them. Viktor Frankl wrote from a concentration camp that everything can be taken from a man except the freedom to choose his own attitude. Nelson Mandela studied law on Robben Island. Mohandas Gandhi wrote prolifically from prison cells across two continents. I do not compare my circumstances to theirs. I claim the principle they demonstrated: that confinement does not determine what a person becomes. The person determines that.

I also know that determination alone is not enough. A man who is serious about changing builds more than resolve. He builds structure—daily practices, external accountability, standards he did not write to be easy to meet. He submits his work to people who will tell him the truth. He treats criticism as information. He measures his progress by what he produces, not by how he feels about his progress.

The pathway I designed reflects these convictions. It does not ask how many hours I studied. It asks what I built. It does not accept my word that I understand the material. It requires me to prove it—to a peer, to a reviewer, to anyone willing to examine the evidence. And it expects that some deliverables will not meet the standard on the first attempt, because a curriculum that never requires revision is a curriculum that never required effort.

I do not know whether this pathway will produce everything it is designed to produce. I do know that it will produce evidence—of effort, of competence, of growth. And I know that the evidence will be visible to anyone willing to examine it, because I built the system to be examined.

That is what I believe education is. Not the accumulation of credentials. Not the completion of requirements. Not the turning of calendar pages. Education is the production of evidence that a person can do what he claims he can do—tested, reviewed, revised, and held to a standard that does not bend to convenience.

I will spend the next five years building that evidence. The work begins now.

: Bozick, R., Steele, J., Davis, L., and Turner, S. (2018). "Does Providing Inmates with Education Improve Postrelease Outcomes? A Meta-Analysis of Correctional Education Programs in the United States." *Journal of Experimental Criminology.* DOI: 10.1007/s11292-018-9334-6.

PART II: RESEARCH PROTOCOL

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1. Purpose

This protocol governs a multi-year field research program conducted from inside a federal correctional facility. I am a member of the population I am studying—an incarcerated person observing how incarcerated people learn.

The research serves four functions:

First, it produces original findings about how learning happens—and fails to happen—under carceral conditions. No outside researcher has sustained access to the daily reality of incarcerated education. Ethnographic studies visit. Program evaluations measure outcomes. This research documents the process: what incarcerated people do when they try to learn, what stops them, what the institution does that helps and hinders, and what informal systems emerge when formal systems fail.

Second, it feeds every other priority in the Self-Education Pathway. The research observations inform Unfettered's platform design, the guidance system's understanding of its users, the writing portfolio's content, and my own development as a practitioner and advocate.

Third, it disciplines my own learning. By documenting how others learn—and how they fail—I hold a mirror to my own process. The observation forms are not only research instruments. They are accountability tools that force me to separate what I see from what I want to see.

Fourth, it builds a body of evidence that credentials my voice. If I say the carceral education system is broken, I am repeating conventional wisdom. If I can cite four years of structured observations documenting how and where it breaks, I am making a different kind of claim.

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2. Research Questions

The research does not begin with a hypothesis to prove. It begins with questions to investigate. The questions will evolve as data accumulates—early observations will generate new questions that could not have been anticipated before arrival. The starting questions are:

Primary question: How do incarcerated people learn when the institution provides inadequate or no educational programming?

Supporting questions:

What informal learning systems emerge in the absence of formal programming? Who teaches, who learns, what is exchanged, and through what mechanisms?

What institutional structures help learning, and which obstruct it—whether by design or by indifference? What is the difference between an obstacle the institution created and an obstacle the institution simply did not remove?

What motivates an incarcerated person to begin learning? What causes a person who began learning to stop? Are the causes internal (loss of motivation, cognitive fatigue, self-doubt), external (institutional disruption, transfer, loss of materials), or social (peer pressure, staff interference, isolation)?

How does an incarcerated person's educational background affect the way he learns inside? Does a man with a seventh-grade education learn differently—in method, not just in pace—from a man with a college degree?

What role do relationships play in sustaining or undermining a learning practice? Does accountability to another person (a study partner, a teacher, a family member expecting progress) change outcomes?

What happens to learning during institutional disruption—lockdowns, transfers, disciplinary actions, medical holds? Does the disruption destroy progress or merely pause it, and what determines which?

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3. Observation Categories

Every observation is assigned to at least one category. The categories are designed to capture the full range of dynamics that affect learning in a carceral environment. They are listed on Form 1 (Daily Observation Entry) and reproduced here with definitions and examples.

Learner Engagement. An incarcerated person actively attempting to learn. This includes formal programming (classes, courses, GED preparation) and informal learning (reading, discussion, self-study, peer instruction). Record what the person is doing, how long the effort lasts, and what materials or methods are involved.

Example: A man in the housing unit reads a textbook for 45 minutes, stops, copies notes into a separate notebook, then returns to reading. He does this three evenings in a row.

Motivation / Abandonment. Evidence of what drives a person to learn—or to stop. Motivation may be intrinsic (curiosity, self-improvement) or extrinsic (sentence reduction credits, family expectations, employment goals). Abandonment is the cessation of a learning effort. Record both the behavior and, when observable or stated, the reason.

Example: A man enrolled in a GED course stops attending after two weeks. When asked, he says the instructor does not explain the material—he reads from a workbook. The man has not abandoned learning; he has abandoned the program. Record both facts: the dropout and the stated reason.

Institutional Obstacle. A policy, practice, schedule, or physical constraint imposed by the facility that impedes learning. This includes confiscation of materials, schedule conflicts, lockdowns, transfers, denial of access to educational spaces, and administrative indifference.

Example: The education department closes for two weeks because the instructor resigned and no replacement has been assigned. Twelve men enrolled in the literacy program have no instruction and no access to the classroom during this period.

Informal Learning. Learning that occurs outside any institutional programming—self-directed study, peer tutoring, mentorship, skill-sharing, apprenticeship relationships, group discussion. This category often overlaps with Learner Engagement but specifically captures learning that the institution did not organize, authorize, or support.

Example: A man who worked as an electrician before incarceration teaches basic wiring concepts to three other men using diagrams drawn on paper. No institutional program exists for this. The men organize it themselves.

Peer Dynamics. The social interactions among incarcerated people that affect learning—positively or negatively. This includes study partnerships, competition, peer pressure to stop studying, ridicule of effort, encouragement, information-sharing, and the social cost of visible intellectual effort in a carceral environment.

Example: A man studying at a table is told by others in the housing unit that he thinks he is better than them. He moves his study practice to his bunk, where it is less visible but also less comfortable and more easily interrupted.

Internal Obstacle. A barrier within the learner—self-doubt, cognitive fatigue, poor foundational skills, frustration, inability to concentrate in a noisy environment, depression, anxiety, substance withdrawal, or learned helplessness. This category is the hardest to observe in others because internal states are not visible. Record observable behavior and note that the inference is interpretation, not fact.

Example: A man stares at the same page for twenty minutes without turning it. He closes the book and lies down. The observation is the behavior. The inference—that he is struggling with the material or with concentration—is labeled as inference.

Staff Interaction. Any interaction between facility staff (correctional officers, counselors, case managers, education department staff, administrators) and incarcerated people that affects learning. This includes support, indifference, active obstruction, retaliation for intellectual effort, and administrative decisions about programming.

Example: A correctional counselor denies a request for additional study time, stating that the man's work assignment takes priority. The counselor does not explain the policy basis for the denial.

Programming Quality. The quality, structure, and effectiveness of formal educational programming offered by the facility. Record what is offered, how it is delivered, who attends, how the instruction is structured, and whether participants demonstrate learning or merely attendance.

Example: A GED preparation class meets three times per week. The instructor distributes worksheets and sits at a desk. No instruction occurs. Participants complete worksheets independently. No feedback is given on completed work.

Other. Any observation relevant to how incarcerated people learn that does not fit the above categories. If this category accumulates a significant number of entries on a single theme, that theme should be elevated to its own category during a monthly or quarterly review.

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4. Documentation Method

The research uses six forms, designed to move from raw observation to synthesized findings across escalating time horizons. The forms have been produced and are uploaded to this Project (observation-forms.pdf, twelve pages). This section explains how each form functions within the protocol.

5. Review Cycles

The protocol operates on five nested review cycles. Each cycle builds on the one beneath it.

Daily: Observation entries (Form 1) and study notes (Form 2) as events occur. Retrieval practice (Form 3) every morning.

Weekly (Sunday): Weekly review (Form 4). Review all entries from the week. Identify patterns. Assess progress. Set three priorities for the following week.

Monthly (last day of month): Monthly synthesis (Form 5). Review all four weekly reviews. Summarize findings. Assess deliverable progress. Identify course corrections.

Quarterly (every three months, beginning in month 13): Quarterly research brief (not a form—a written deliverable produced as part of Unit F-3). Synthesizes the prior three monthly syntheses into a finding-level document.

Annual (end of each calendar year of incarceration): Annual review—an informal assessment (not a formal form, but documented in the notebook) of the year's research output, the curriculum's progress, and my own development. Compares the year's beginning state to its ending state. Identifies the most important thing learned about how incarcerated people learn—and the most important thing learned about my own learning.

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6. Ethical Guidelines

I conduct this research as a member of the population being studied, inside an institution where traditional research ethics frameworks (Institutional Review Boards, informed consent protocols, confidentiality guarantees) do not apply in the conventional sense. I am not affiliated with a university. I am not producing a study for peer-reviewed publication in the traditional pipeline. I am an incarcerated person documenting what I see.

That does not release me from ethical obligation. It increases it.

6.1 No Names

No observation entry, weekly review, monthly synthesis, or any document produced under this protocol will include the name of any incarcerated person, staff member, or other individual observed. All subjects are described by description only: "the man in Unit 3," "the GED instructor," "the case manager." If a description is specific enough to identify an individual to anyone reading the document, it must be generalized further.

The reason is not institutional compliance. It is the recognition that incarcerated people cannot freely consent to being studied. They did not volunteer. They are in the same facility as I am because the government placed them there. Using their names—even in a private notebook—creates a risk that the archive could be used to harm them if it is confiscated, leaked, or read by staff.

6.2 No Exploitation of Observed Vulnerability

The research documents how people learn, fail, struggle, and sometimes give up. Those moments are data, not material for drama. The protocol requires me to record them with the same dispassion as I record institutional schedules. A man who breaks down in frustration while studying is not a story. He is a data point about the emotional cost of learning under constraint. I do not use another person's worst moment to make my own findings more compelling.

6.3 Observer Effect

I am not invisible. My presence in the environment—studying visibly, taking notes, engaging peers in conversation—affects the behavior I observe. A man who sees me studying may study more, or may resent the display, or may ask for help. Each of these responses is influenced by my presence.

The protocol does not require me to become invisible. It requires me to document the observer effect when I notice it. If a man begins studying after a conversation with me, that observation includes the fact that my interaction may have influenced the behavior. The inference box on Form 1 is where this acknowledgment belongs.

6.4 No Coercion

I do not pressure, persuade, or incentivize anyone to participate in learning activities for the purpose of generating observations. If peers choose to study, that is data. If they choose not to, that is also data. My role is to observe, not to manufacture outcomes.

6.5 Accuracy Over Advocacy

I have a stated belief that the carceral education system is inadequate. The research may confirm that belief, complicate it, or in some areas contradict it. The protocol requires me to document what I observe, not what I expect to observe. Findings that contradict my assumptions are more valuable than findings that confirm them—because they reveal something I did not already know.

If I conduct research to prove a point I have already decided, I am not conducting research. I am assembling a brief. The observation forms are designed to prevent this: the separation of OBSERVED

from INFER forces me to confront the gap between what happened and what I want it to mean.

6.6 Handling Sensitive Observations

Some observations will involve sensitive matters: mental health crises, substance use, self-harm, exploitation, staff misconduct, or illegal activity. The protocol's guidance:

If the observation is relevant to how incarcerated people learn (e.g., a mental health crisis disrupts a man's study practice), document the learning-relevant aspect in general terms. Do not document clinical details, personal disclosures, or specifics that could be used against the individual.

If the observation involves imminent danger to a person, my first obligation is to the person, not to the archive. Respond to the situation. Document the learning-relevant implications later, if any, in general terms.

If the observation involves staff misconduct that obstructs learning, document the obstruction. The protocol is not a grievance mechanism—it documents how learning is affected, not how to build a case against an individual. The curriculum's voice profile governs public writing about the institution: indict the system, not named individuals.

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7. Data Management

7.1 Numbering

Every observation entry (Form 1) receives a sequential number starting at 1. The count never resets. Entry 1 is the first observation of the incarceration period. Entry 500 is the five-hundredth. The number is written on the form at the time of entry. It is the primary cross-referencing tool.

7.2 Storage

All forms and notebooks are kept in my personal property. Federal facilities allow a limited amount of personal property, which varies by institution. I must determine the facility's policy during the Tier 1 institutional orientation (Unit T1-1) and plan storage accordingly. If property limits constrain the archive's physical size, I prioritize retaining monthly syntheses (Form 5) and deliverable assessments (Form 6) over daily entries (Form 1), because the syntheses contain the condensed findings.

7.3 Backup

A paper-based research archive inside a federal facility is vulnerable to confiscation, loss during transfer, damage, and institutional interference. I cannot prevent all of these. I can mitigate:

Correspondence copies: Key findings, monthly syntheses, and completed deliverables are mailed to a designated recipient outside the facility as they are completed. This creates an external copy of the most important documents.

Notebook summaries: At the end of each month, I write a one-page summary of the month's most important findings in a separate notebook that serves as a condensed backup of the archive.

Priority preservation: If I am transferred and can carry only a limited amount of material, the preservation priority is: (1) the Research Protocol itself, (2) monthly syntheses, (3) the most recent quarterly brief, (4) current-month observation entries, (5) everything else.

7.4 Cross-Referencing

The cross-referencing system is built on entry numbers. Each form includes a "CONNECTS TO ENTRY #" field. I use this field to link related observations across time. When a monthly synthesis identifies a pattern, it cites the entry numbers that support the pattern. When a quarterly brief makes a finding, it cites the monthly syntheses and the entry ranges reviewed.

The system is simple because simplicity survives institutional disruption. A complex database would be more powerful and entirely impractical without a computer.

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8. Quality Standards

8.1 Fact Versus Inference

The distinction between observation and interpretation is the single most important quality standard in the protocol. Every form enforces it structurally—WHAT I OBSERVED is a separate field from WHAT I INFER. But the structure only works if I discipline myself to use it honestly.

Fact: what happened, who was involved (by description), when, where, for how long. Verifiable by a second observer who was present.

Inference: what I believe the observation means, what assumption I am making, what I think caused the observed behavior. Labeled as interpretation. Subject to revision when more data arrives.

The test: if another person had been standing next to me, would that person have seen the same thing? If yes, it belongs in OBSERVED. If no—if the second person might have interpreted it differently—it belongs in INFER.

8.2 Confirmation Bias

I expect to find that the carceral education system is inadequate. I will find evidence that confirms this expectation. The danger is not in finding confirmatory evidence—the system may well be inadequate. The danger is in overlooking evidence that complicates or contradicts the expectation.

Countermeasures:

At least one observation per week must document something that works—a program that serves learners, a staff member who supports education, a peer dynamic that helps rather than hinders. If nothing works, that itself is a finding worth documenting explicitly.

Every monthly synthesis includes a section on what I expected to find versus what I actually found. If the two match perfectly, I should question whether I am observing or confirming.

The quarterly research briefs (Unit F-3) require me to address the strongest counterexplanation for each finding. A finding that cannot survive a counterargument is not a finding—it is a preference.

8.3 Consistency

The value of the research archive depends on sustained practice over years. A burst of thirty entries in month one followed by silence in months two and three is not a research program. It is a false start.

The protocol does not set a daily minimum because forced observations corrupt the data. But it sets weekly and monthly review cycles that are non-negotiable. A missed weekly review is documented in the next review. A missed monthly synthesis is documented in the next synthesis. The gaps are visible because the numbering system exposes them.

Consistency does not require perfection. It requires me to notice when the practice is eroding—and to recognize, from my own history, that noticing erosion and dismissing it is how structures collapse.

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9. Integration with the Curriculum

The research program is not a parallel track. It is the foundation layer that runs beneath and feeds into every priority.

Writing priority: Research observations and findings are source material for every writing deliverable from W-3 onward. The quarterly research briefs (F-3) are themselves writing deliverables that develop analytical, evidence-based writing skills. The publication portfolio (W-6) draws on research findings. The curriculum development writing (W-7) is informed by observations about how incarcerated people learn.

AI literacy priority: The research documents the learning environment that Unfettered serves (AI-2). Observations about how incarcerated people seek information and guidance inform the guidance system's design (AI-4). The research method itself—structured observation, pattern analysis, evidence-based conclusions—is a transferable analytical skill that applies to AI product evaluation.

Consultancy platform: The research provides firsthand data on the population the platform intends to serve—people navigating the federal system under institutional constraint. The observation categories (motivation, institutional obstacles, informal learning, peer dynamics) map directly onto the questions the platform must answer about its users.

Financial literacy: Less direct, but the discipline of tracking data (hours, entry counts, cumulative totals) reinforces the numerical literacy that financial modeling requires.

My own learning: Every form completed is a record of how I learn—not only how others learn. The monthly synthesis requires me to assess my own progress, name my obstacles, and adjust my plan. The Deliverable Assessment form (Form 6) holds me to a mastery standard. The research archive is

simultaneously a study of incarcerated education and a documentation of one incarcerated man's attempt to educate himself.

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10. Protocol Revision

This protocol is a living document. It will be revised based on what the facility's reality demands, what the data reveals, and what I learn about my own practice. Revisions are documented—not silent. The protocol adjustment memo (Unit F-2 deliverable) records what changed and why.

Revisions to the protocol do not retroactively change entries made under the prior version. The archive preserves the method that produced each entry. If the observation categories are revised (a new category added, a category split into two), earlier entries remain coded under the original categories. The monthly synthesis for the month of revision documents the change.

The protocol cannot be revised to lower the quality standards. The separation of fact from inference, the ethical guidelines, the review cycles, and the mastery requirements for deliverables are structural. They can be refined but not relaxed. If I relax my own standards and call it revision, I am performing the same operation I have already identified as my primary vulnerability: making the irrational appear rational by redefining the terms.

PART III: CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE

How to Read This Document

Every unit in this curriculum exists because it solves a problem, builds a competency, and produces a deliverable. Units that exist only to cover material have been eliminated.

Each unit entry contains six elements:

- **Problem:** The specific deficiency or gap the unit addresses.
- **Competency:** What I can do after completing the unit.
- **Deliverable:** The artifact that proves competency. No deliverable, no completion.
- **Materials:** Books, references, tools, and supplies required. Exact titles are specified in the Reading List with Acquisition Plan (separate document).
- **Mastery Standard:** The criteria the deliverable must meet before the unit is marked complete. Expanded rubrics appear in the Assessment Standards (separate document).
- **Estimated Hours:** A range, not a target. The curriculum does not care how long a unit takes. It cares whether the deliverable meets the standard.

Priority codes indicate which strand each unit serves:

- **F** = Foundation (Research Program)
- **W** = Writing
- **AI** = AI Literacy
- **CP** = Guidance System
- **FIN** = Financial Literacy (embedded)
- **LEG** = Legal Knowledge (embedded)

Most units serve more than one priority. The primary priority is listed first.

Dependency notation: Where a unit requires completion of a prior unit, the prerequisite is listed. Where a unit's deliverable feeds forward as source material for a later unit, that connection is noted.

FOUNDATION LAYER: Research Program

The research program is not a tier. It runs continuously from day one through the end of incarceration. These units represent phases of the research work, not sequential courses. I do not stop observing when I begin analyzing; I do both.

Unit F-1: Research Methodology Fundamentals

Priority: F | W **Tier:** 1 (activated), continuous thereafter **Parallel/Sequential:** First unit activated. Prerequisite for all other units.

Problem: I intend to study how incarcerated people learn, but I have no training in systematic observation, documentation, or analysis. Without a method, my observations will be anecdotal—useful for storytelling, insufficient for credible findings.

Competency: Design and execute a structured observation protocol. Distinguish observed fact from inference. Categorize observations for pattern detection. Maintain a cumulative research archive that supports cross-referencing across months and years.

Deliverable: A completed Research Methodology Reference Document (8–12 pages, handwritten or typed via Unfettered). Contains: the purpose of the research, the observation categories, the documentation method (daily/weekly/monthly forms), the numbering and cross-referencing system, ethical guidelines for observing fellow incarcerated people, and a calendar for review cycles. This deliverable is produced during the pre-incarceration build phase (days 3–4) and refined during the first month inside.

Materials: Research methodology primer (qualitative methods overview, accessible to a reader without a graduate background). Observation forms (already produced—six forms, twelve pages, uploaded to this Project). Notebook. Pen. Calendar or date-tracking system.

Mastery Standard: The reference document is specific enough that another person could follow the protocol and produce compatible observations. The observation categories cover the dynamics I have identified (learner engagement, motivation and abandonment, institutional obstacles, informal learning, peer dynamics, internal obstacles, staff interaction, programming quality). The ethical guidelines address the fact that subjects cannot consent in the traditional sense and that I occupy the same population I am studying.

Estimated Hours: 30–40 hours (initial production). Ongoing application is embedded in daily practice, not counted separately.

Feeds Forward To: Every unit in the curriculum. The research protocol is the method by which I document my own learning process, not only the learning of others.

Unit F-2: Observation Activation and First Archive

Priority: F **Tier:** 1 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins immediately upon arrival at facility. Runs parallel with T1-1 and T1-2.

Problem: The research protocol exists on paper but has never been tested in the field. Institutional reality will expose gaps in the protocol's categories, timing assumptions, and documentation method.

Competency: Execute the observation protocol under real conditions. Produce entries that separate fact from inference consistently. Identify and document the first recurring patterns. Adjust the protocol

based on what the facility actually looks like.

Deliverable: Research archive containing a minimum of 150 observation entries (Forms 1), covering at least seven of the nine observation categories. First three monthly syntheses (Form 5) completed. A protocol adjustment memo (1–2 pages) documenting what changed from the original protocol and why.

Materials: Observation forms (printed supply plus reproduction guide for handwritten copies). Notebook. Pen.

Mastery Standard: Entries demonstrate consistent separation of observation from inference across the full archive. At least three patterns are identified with supporting entry numbers cited. Monthly syntheses show progressive refinement—month three is sharper than month one. The adjustment memo is specific: it names what did not work, what replaced it, and why the replacement is better.

Estimated Hours: 200–250 hours (distributed across months 1–12, approximately 30 minutes to one hour per day plus weekly and monthly review sessions).

Feeds Forward To: F-3 (pattern analysis), W-3 (the research archive becomes source material for writing deliverables), AI-1 (observations about informal learning inform analysis of where AI could intervene).

Unit F-3: Pattern Analysis and Emerging Findings

Priority: F | W **Tier:** 2–3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins when the archive reaches 150+ entries (expected around month 12). Runs parallel with writing and AI units.

Problem: Raw observations accumulate but do not produce findings on their own. I need to move from documenting what I see to analyzing what the patterns mean—and to produce written findings that could inform Unfettered's design, my own published writing, and my credibility as a practitioner.

Competency: Identify, categorize, and analyze recurring patterns in observational data. Produce written findings grounded in evidence rather than impression. Distinguish between patterns supported by multiple data points and patterns that reflect my own bias.

Deliverable: Quarterly research briefs (3–5 pages each), one per quarter beginning in month 13. Each brief identifies one to three findings, cites supporting entries by number, addresses the strongest counterexplanation, and states what additional observation would confirm or disconfirm the finding. Minimum of four briefs by month 24; eight by month 36.

Materials: Completed research archive (F-2). Monthly synthesis forms. Notebook for analytical drafts.

Mastery Standard: Each brief makes a specific claim about how incarcerated people learn (or fail to learn) in the observed environment. Claims are supported by cited observation entries, not by general impressions. At least one brief per year addresses a finding that contradicts my prior assumptions. Briefs are written at a level suitable for submission to Unfettered for potential publication or platform development.

Estimated Hours: 80–120 hours per year (approximately 2 hours per week dedicated to analysis and writing, plus quarterly production time).

Feeds Forward To: W-7 (publication-ready writing draws on research findings), AI-2 (Unfettered domain work uses these findings), CP-1 (guidance system design draws on understanding of how people learn and seek guidance under institutional constraint).

Unit F-4: Research Archive as Publication Source

Priority: F | W **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins when at least eight quarterly briefs are complete (expected around month 36). Runs parallel with W-7.

Problem: Quarterly briefs serve internal purposes—they inform my other work and build analytical skill. But the research itself has external value: no one outside the carceral system has access to multi-year, structured, first-person observational data on how incarcerated people learn. This data must be organized for external audiences.

Competency: Synthesize multiple quarterly briefs into a sustained argument. Structure field research for a reader who has never been inside a facility. Write for credibility without writing for permission—the findings stand on evidence, not on appeals to the reader's sympathy.

Deliverable: One long-form research paper (15–25 pages) synthesizing findings across at least two years of observation. Structured as: research question, method, findings (organized thematically, not chronologically), limitations, implications for practice. Written for publication on salvadorcastaneda.com and for submission to Unfettered.

Materials: Complete research archive. All quarterly briefs. Writing reference materials from the W units.

Mastery Standard: A reader unfamiliar with carceral settings can follow the argument. Every finding is traceable to cited observations. The limitations section is honest—it names what the method cannot capture (selection bias, single-facility scope, observer effect). The paper does not plead. It reports.

Estimated Hours: 120–160 hours.

Feeds Forward To: Publication portfolio. Unfettered content development. Credibility for guidance system.

TIER 1: Institutional Establishment (Months 1–12)

Tier 1 is not primarily about study. It is about building the conditions under which study becomes possible. The deliverables are operational: a functioning daily routine, secured access to materials, identified allies and obstacles, and a research archive that is producing data. I study at a pace dictated by institutional reality, not by an idealized schedule.

Tier 1 units run parallel with the early Tier 2 units. The distinction is that Tier 1 units address the institution itself, while Tier 2 units address the curriculum content.

Unit T1-1: Institutional Orientation and Daily Structure

Priority: F **Tier:** 1 **Parallel/Sequential:** First unit activated alongside F-1 and F-2. No prerequisites.

Problem: A federal facility is a system with its own rules, rhythms, schedules, and power structures. If I do not learn the system, the system will consume me. Study requires protected time, physical space, and the absence of avoidable conflict. None of this is guaranteed.

Competency: Navigate the facility's daily schedule, administrative processes, and social dynamics. Establish a daily routine that protects study hours. Identify the facility's resources (library, chapel, education department, recreation schedule) and their access requirements.

Deliverable: A documented daily routine (1–2 pages) specifying wake time, study blocks, exercise, meals, institutional obligations, and contingency adjustments for lockdowns, counts, and schedule disruptions. Updated at least once per month for the first six months as the routine stabilizes. Final version by month six.

Materials: Facility handbook (if available). Notebook. Calendar.

Mastery Standard: The routine has been followed for at least 30 consecutive days (with documented adjustments for disruptions, not excuses for abandonment). Study hours average at least three hours per day in the first three months, moving toward the target of five hours per weekday by month six. The routine accounts for institutional realities—counts, meals, lockdowns—rather than ignoring them.

Estimated Hours: 60–80 hours (distributed across months 1–6; this is the time spent deliberately designing, testing, and refining the routine, not the time spent living it).

Feeds Forward To: All subsequent units depend on the routine being operational.

Unit T1-2: Resource Identification and Material Acquisition

Priority: F | W | AI **Tier:** 1 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 1. Runs parallel with T1-1 and F-2. Ongoing as new materials are needed.

Problem: The curriculum requires books, reference materials, writing supplies, and access to Unfettered's email-based instruction. The designated facility is assumed to hold no curriculum-relevant titles. All materials must be acquired from outside—through family-mediated orders, Unfettered, or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program. Federal facilities vary in what they allow through the mail, what vendors can ship directly, and how correspondence-based educational materials are processed. I must map the facility's rules and build a reliable acquisition pipeline before the curriculum stalls for lack of materials.

Competency: Identify all available educational resources within the facility. Determine the facility's policies on receiving books, educational materials, and correspondence-based instruction. Establish a reliable supply chain for materials (approved vendor lists, family-mediated orders, Unfettered correspondence, salvadorcastaneda.com affiliate program).

Deliverable: A Resource Inventory and Acquisition Plan (2–4 pages). Lists: what resources exist in the facility (library, education department, chapel—even if not curriculum-relevant, they may have incidental value); the facility's rules for receiving books, publications, and educational correspondence by mail; the approved vendors or publishers that can ship directly; a prioritized acquisition sequence aligned with the curriculum's unit order and the Reading List; the status of Unfettered's email-based instruction access; and the roles of each outside contact in the supply chain.

Materials: Facility handbook or education department guidance. Notebook.

Mastery Standard: The plan is actionable—it names specific steps for acquiring the first five items on the reading list, identifies who outside the facility will facilitate acquisition, and notes which materials face restriction risk and what alternatives exist. Updated quarterly.

Estimated Hours: 20–30 hours (initial inventory and plan). Ongoing maintenance is minimal.

Feeds Forward To: All units requiring books or reference materials. The acquisition plan feeds directly into the Reading List with Acquisition Plan (separate deliverable, day 5–6 of the build phase).

Unit T1-3: Peer Network Assessment

Priority: F **Tier:** 1 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 2–3, once I have oriented to the facility population. Runs parallel with F-2.

Problem: The curriculum requires peer review of deliverables (Assessment Standards, Form 6). It also benefits from identifying incarcerated people who are engaged in their own learning—potential study partners, teach-back audiences, and subjects for the research program. But the facility population includes people who will undermine study, and my own history demonstrates that proximity to the wrong people erodes discipline. I must assess the population deliberately, not passively.

Competency: Identify individuals who support or could support the study program (potential peer reviewers, teach-back audiences, informal study groups). Identify individuals or dynamics that threaten it. Document both without compromising anyone's privacy or safety.

Deliverable: A Peer Network Assessment (1–2 pages, kept private). Identifies: two to four individuals who could serve as peer reviewers or study partners, with a brief note on each person's strengths and reliability; two to four dynamics or associations to avoid, described without names; a plan for how peer review will function given the population. Updated every six months.

Materials: Research observation entries (F-2 will generate relevant data). Notebook.

Mastery Standard: The assessment is based on observed behavior over at least 60 days, not on first impressions or self-reported claims by the individuals. The avoidance list is honest—it reflects my own

vulnerability to certain associations, not a judgment of other people's character. The peer review plan is realistic about what incarcerated people will and will not do.

Estimated Hours: 15–20 hours (initial assessment). Updates are brief.

Feeds Forward To: All units requiring peer review (every unit that produces a deliverable assessed via Form 6). F-2 and F-3 (observations about peer dynamics feed the research archive).

Unit T1-4: First Writing Deliverables

Priority: W | F **Tier:** 1 (bridge to Tier 2) **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 3–4, once the daily routine is functional. Runs parallel with F-2 and the early W units.

Problem: The writing priority cannot wait for a grammar course to finish before producing real work. I write now—research observations, the daily routine document, the resource inventory. These early outputs are functional, not polished. But they establish the habit of production and provide baseline samples for the grammar diagnostic (W-1).

Competency: Produce functional written documents under institutional constraints. Maintain a writing practice alongside the research program. Generate baseline writing samples that reveal specific mechanical and structural weaknesses.

Deliverable: A portfolio of first-tier writing containing at minimum: the daily routine document (T1-1), the resource inventory (T1-2), the peer network assessment (T1-3), three monthly research syntheses (F-2), and one additional piece of my choosing—a letter, a reflection, or a short analytical piece. Total: six or more documents.

Materials: All deliverables from T1-1, T1-2, T1-3, and F-2. Notebook.

Mastery Standard: This unit does not require polished writing. It requires consistent production. The portfolio exists, the documents are complete, and they are available for diagnostic review in W-1. The mastery standard is production volume and consistency, not mechanical quality—that comes in the W units.

Estimated Hours: Embedded in the hours for T1-1, T1-2, T1-3, and F-2. No additional hours allocated. The writing is the work of those units, collected.

Feeds Forward To: W-1 (grammar diagnostic uses these samples as baseline material).

TIER 2: Foundational Study (Months 1–36)

Tier 2 begins in month one and runs through month 36. Its early months overlap with Tier 1—study happens at whatever pace the institution allows while I establish my routine and build my research archive. By month 12, as Tier 1 work stabilizes, Tier 2 accelerates.

Tier 2 builds the two primary competencies—writing and AI literacy—and embeds the supporting competencies (financial literacy, basic math) within applied deliverables. No unit in Tier 2 exists to survey a subject. Every unit produces.

WRITING PRIORITY (Tier 2)

Writing is the first priority because it serves everything else. Every deliverable in the curriculum is a written artifact. If I cannot write clearly, I cannot demonstrate mastery of anything.

The writing units do not teach me to write. I write. They credential and refine what I produce: formal grammar, syntax, rhetorical structure, and professional document production.

Unit W-1: Grammar and Mechanics Diagnostic

Priority: W **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins when the T1-4 portfolio contains at least four documents (expected month 4–6). Prerequisite for W-2.

Problem: My writing is mechanically unpolished, and I know it. But "unpolished" is not a diagnosis. I need to identify the specific categories of error I make—not errors in general, but the patterns that recur in my own production—so that the grammar work targets those patterns rather than marching through an entire composition textbook.

Competency: Identify and categorize specific mechanical weaknesses in my own writing. Distinguish between errors of knowledge (rules never learned) and errors of habit (rules known but not applied consistently).

Deliverable: A Grammar Diagnostic Report (3–5 pages). Analyzes at least four writing samples from the T1-4 portfolio. Identifies the five to eight most frequent error categories, with three or more examples of each cited from the samples. Classifies each category as knowledge gap or habit gap. Prioritizes the categories for study based on frequency and impact on clarity.

Materials: T1-4 portfolio (baseline writing samples). Grammar reference text (comprehensive, not a workbook—a reference I consult, not a textbook to read cover to cover). Notebook.

Mastery Standard: The diagnostic is honest. It does not minimize errors or inflate competency. The error categories are specific (e.g., "comma splice between independent clauses" not "comma problems"). The examples are real, pulled from the samples, not invented. The priority ranking is justified—I can explain why I ranked the categories as I did.

Estimated Hours: 20–30 hours.

Feeds Forward To: W-2 (targeted grammar study addresses the categories identified here).

Unit W-2: Targeted Grammar and Sentence Mechanics

Priority: W **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after W-1 is complete. Runs parallel with F-2/F-3 and AI-1. Prerequisite for W-3.

Problem: The diagnostic identified specific categories of mechanical error. This unit addresses them—not by working through a grammar textbook chapter by chapter, but by targeting the identified weaknesses through practice, correction, and retrieval.

Competency: Apply the rules governing the identified error categories consistently in new writing. Explain each rule in plain language (teach-back). Self-edit existing writing to correct the targeted errors.

Deliverable: Two artifacts. First: a Grammar Reference Card (2–4 pages, handwritten) containing the rule, the error pattern, a correct example, and an incorrect example for each targeted category. This is a personal reference tool, not a copied textbook entry. Second: three previously written documents (from T1-4 or from ongoing research and study work) revised to eliminate the targeted errors, with a brief revision memo for each noting what was changed and why.

Materials: Grammar reference text. W-1 diagnostic report. Writing samples from T1-4 and ongoing work. Index cards for retrieval practice on grammar rules.

Mastery Standard: The revised documents contain zero instances of the targeted error categories. The Grammar Reference Card explains each rule in my own words—not copied definitions. Retrieval practice: I can state the rule and identify violations in unfamiliar text without consulting the reference card. Teach-back: I can explain each rule to a peer reviewer who confirms the explanation is clear.

Estimated Hours: 80–120 hours (distributed across 3–6 months, with retrieval practice ongoing).

Feeds Forward To: W-3 (paragraph and document structure). All subsequent writing deliverables benefit from the mechanical corrections internalized here.

Unit W-3: Paragraph Structure, Document Organization, and Rhetorical Strategy

Priority: W **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after W-2 is substantially complete (Grammar Reference Card done, at least two revised documents submitted). Runs parallel with AI-1 and AI-2.

Problem: Sentence-level mechanics are necessary but insufficient. My writing needs to organize ideas across paragraphs and documents with intentional structure—thesis, evidence, counterargument, resolution—and to deploy rhetorical strategies appropriate to audience and purpose. This is the difference between writing that is correct and writing that is effective.

Competency: Organize a multi-paragraph document around a clear thesis. Structure paragraphs with topic sentences, evidence, and transitions. Identify and deploy rhetorical strategies (definition, comparison, cause-effect, problem-solution) appropriate to the deliverable's purpose and audience. Write for at least three distinct audiences: incarcerated learners, policymakers or institutional administrators, and a general public readership.

Deliverable: Three documents, each written for a different audience, each using a different rhetorical strategy, each on a topic drawn from the research archive or the curriculum's applied domains. Minimum 1,000 words each. Accompanied by a Rhetorical Strategy Memo (1 page per document) stating the intended audience, the chosen strategy, and why that strategy serves the purpose.

Materials: Rhetoric and composition reference (a text covering argumentation, document structure, and audience analysis—not a freshman composition workbook). Research archive entries and quarterly briefs (F-2, F-3) as source material. Grammar Reference Card (W-2).

Mastery Standard: Each document has a stated thesis identifiable in the first two paragraphs. Every paragraph serves the thesis—no digressions that fail to connect. Transitions between paragraphs are functional, not decorative. The three documents are distinguishable in register—a reader can tell which was written for incarcerated learners versus policymakers without being told. Peer review (one reader per document minimum) confirms that the intended audience would find the document clear and credible.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: W-4 (professional document production). F-3 and F-4 (research writing improves). AI-2 (Unfettered domain writing benefits).

Unit W-4: Professional Document Production

Priority: W | CP **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after W-3 is complete. Runs parallel with AI-2, AI-3, and FIN-1. Prerequisite for CP-1.

Problem: My curriculum produces deliverables that must function as professional documents—policy briefs, curriculum materials, business proposals, research findings, published writing. Each document type has conventions that signal competence to the intended reader. A policy brief that reads like a personal essay undermines its own argument, regardless of how well it is written at the sentence level.

Competency: Produce professional documents in at least four formats: policy brief, curriculum unit or lesson plan, research summary, and analytical essay. Apply the conventions of each format (structure, tone, citation, length) while maintaining my voice. Produce documents that a reader outside the carceral system would take seriously as professional work.

Deliverable: A Professional Document Portfolio containing one document in each of the four formats (policy brief, curriculum unit, research summary, analytical essay). Each document addresses a real topic from the curriculum—research findings, AI applications, educational programming, or construction safety—not a practice exercise on an invented topic. Total portfolio: four documents, 2,000–4,000 words each.

Materials: Style guides or models for each document type (a policy brief template, a curriculum development guide, an academic research summary format). W-3 deliverables as foundation. Research archive (F-2, F-3). AI domain knowledge from AI-1 and AI-2 (where applicable).

Mastery Standard: Each document follows the conventions of its format. A reader familiar with the format would recognize it as competent work—not necessarily expert, but credible. The policy brief makes a recommendation supported by evidence. The curriculum unit could be delivered to a learner. The research summary reports findings, not opinions. The analytical essay builds an argument, not a complaint. Each document passes the Deliverable Assessment (Form 6) with all five criteria met.

Estimated Hours: 160–200 hours.

Feeds Forward To: W-5 (publication portfolio). CP-1 (guidance system deliverables require professional document competency). All Tier 3 deliverables build on these formats.

Unit W-5: Persuasive Writing and Argumentation

Priority: W **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after W-3, can run parallel with W-4. Prerequisite for W-6 (Tier 3).

Problem: Professional document production (W-4) demonstrates competence in format. Persuasive writing demands more: the ability to anticipate objections, address counterarguments, marshal evidence strategically, and move a reader from disagreement or indifference toward my position—without manipulation, sentimentality, or dishonesty. This is the skill that serves the guidance system, published writing, and my credibility as an advocate.

Competency: Construct a sustained persuasive argument. Identify and address the strongest counterargument to my own position. Use evidence strategically—leading with the most compelling point, not burying it. Distinguish between persuasion and manipulation. Write persuasively for a hostile or indifferent audience, not only for sympathetic readers.

Deliverable: Two persuasive documents (2,000–3,000 words each). One argues a position on carceral education policy to an audience of corrections administrators or policymakers (an audience assumed to be skeptical). The other argues a position on AI's application in a specific domain to an audience of industry practitioners (an audience assumed to be indifferent). Each document includes a Counterargument Addendum (1 page) identifying the two strongest objections to the argument and explaining how the document addresses them.

Materials: Argumentation and rhetoric reference. Research archive. AI domain knowledge (AI-1, AI-2). Current policy documents or industry reports relevant to the chosen topics.

Mastery Standard: Each document identifies its audience explicitly and calibrates tone accordingly. The strongest counterargument is addressed within the body of the document, not dismissed in a footnote. A peer reviewer who disagrees with the position confirms that the argument is taken seriously and not easily dismissed. The Counterargument Addendum demonstrates that I can articulate the opposition's best case, not a strawman.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: W-6 (publication-ready writing). CP-1 and CP-3 (persuasive writing is essential for the guidance system's design documents and business model). F-4 (research publication requires

persuasive framing of findings).

AI LITERACY PRIORITY (Tier 2)

AI literacy is built through applied domains, not through survey courses. I learn what AI is by studying what it does in specific contexts I care about. After multiple domains, I have the pattern recognition to evaluate AI's potential in any new industry—flexibility built through depth, not breadth.

The constraint: I have no internet, no computer, no terminal. AI literacy for me is conceptual and evaluative—understanding how AI systems work, what they require, what they produce, where they fail, and how to design products and workflows that use them. Hands-on technical work is not possible inside the facility. Unfettered's email-based instruction provides a channel for guided learning.

Unit AI-1: AI Foundations

Priority: AI **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 3–6 (once daily routine is stable). Runs parallel with W-2 and F-2. Prerequisite for AI-2, AI-3, AI-4, AI-5.

Problem: I cannot evaluate AI applications in any domain without understanding what AI is, how it works at a conceptual level, what it requires (data, compute, human oversight), what it produces (predictions, classifications, generated content), and where it fails (bias, hallucination, misalignment with user needs). This is not a computer science course. It is the foundational literacy required to make informed decisions about AI as a builder, evaluator, and advocate.

Competency: Explain what artificial intelligence is and is not, in plain language, to an audience with no technical background. Describe the basic architecture of machine learning (training data, model, output) without jargon. Identify the three to five most common failure modes of AI systems (bias, hallucination, overfitting, data quality, misalignment). Explain why AI requires human oversight and what that oversight looks like in practice. Distinguish between AI marketing claims and demonstrated capability.

Deliverable: An AI Foundations Reference Document (8–12 pages). Written as a teach-back: the intended audience is an incarcerated learner who has heard of AI but does not understand what it does. Covers: what AI is, how machine learning works (conceptual, not mathematical), what training data is and why it matters, common failure modes with real-world examples, the difference between narrow AI and general intelligence claims, and why human oversight is not optional. Each section includes at least one real-world example drawn from published case studies.

Materials: One to two accessible AI literacy texts (written for a general audience, not a technical audience). Published case studies of AI successes and failures (sourced through Unfettered or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program). Notebook for retrieval practice.

Mastery Standard: Teach-back test: I explain the core concepts to a peer with no AI background, and the peer can repeat the explanation accurately. The reference document uses no unexplained jargon.

The failure modes section does not rely on a single source or a single industry—examples span at least two sectors. The document distinguishes between what AI does today and what marketers claim it will do.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: AI-2 (Unfettered domain), AI-3 (product evaluation), AI-4 (legal guidance domain), AI-5 (construction safety domain).

Unit AI-2: AI in Carceral Education (Unfettered Domain)

Priority: AI | F **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after AI-1 is substantially complete (reference document drafted). Runs parallel with W-3/W-4 and F-3.

Problem: I co-founded Unfettered, an AI-powered educational platform for incarcerated learners. I must understand—at a level deeper than a pitch deck—how AI can serve learners who have no internet access, limited educational background, and institutional constraints that shape every aspect of their learning. This is not abstract. I am the use case.

Competency: Analyze the specific constraints of the carceral learning environment and identify where AI can and cannot address them. Evaluate Unfettered's current approach against those constraints. Identify at least three opportunities for AI to improve educational outcomes for incarcerated learners, grounded in observed evidence from the research archive. Identify at least two risks or limitations of AI in this context that marketing materials would not disclose.

Deliverable: An AI in Carceral Education Analysis (10–15 pages). Part one: the learning environment as documented through the research program (drawing on F-2 and F-3 findings). Part two: how AI-powered education can serve this environment—specific use cases, not generalities. Part three: limitations and risks—what AI cannot do in this context, what could go wrong, and what safeguards are needed. Part four: recommendations for Unfettered's development, grounded in evidence from parts one through three.

Materials: AI-1 reference document. Research archive (F-2) and quarterly briefs (F-3). Unfettered's current documentation and communications (via email correspondence). Published literature on educational technology in underserved contexts.

Mastery Standard: The analysis is grounded in my own research observations, not in general claims about educational technology. The recommendations are specific enough to be actionable by Unfettered's development team. The limitations section is honest—it names at least one scenario where AI-powered education could harm the learner population. The document demonstrates understanding of AI's actual capabilities (from AI-1), not its marketed promises.

Estimated Hours: 120–160 hours.

Feeds Forward To: AI-3 (evaluation framework draws on this domain analysis), AI-4 (pattern of domain analysis applies to legal guidance), CP-1 (guidance system design learns from Unfettered's approach). Unfettered platform development.

Unit AI-3: AI Product Evaluation Framework

Priority: AI **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after AI-2 is complete. Runs parallel with W-4/W-5 and FIN-1.

Problem: AI literacy is not complete when I understand what AI is. It is complete when I can evaluate any AI product or proposal—not just the ones I built—and determine whether the claims are credible, the design is sound, and the risks are manageable. This is the transferable skill: the ability to assess where AI creates value in any new industry.

Competency: Evaluate an AI product or proposal against a structured framework. Identify the data requirements, the claimed value proposition, the actual capability versus the marketing claims, the risks to the intended users, the regulatory constraints, and the business model viability. Produce a written evaluation that a non-technical decision-maker could use.

Deliverable: Two artifacts. First: an AI Product Evaluation Framework (4–6 pages) that codifies the evaluation criteria into a reusable tool. The framework covers: problem definition (what problem does the AI solve?), data requirements (what data does it need, and is that data available and ethical to use?), capability assessment (what can it actually do versus what the marketing claims?), risk analysis (what can go wrong, for whom?), regulatory landscape (what rules govern this application?), and business model (who pays, and is it sustainable?). Second: two completed evaluations using the framework—one on a real AI product in the carceral or legal domain, one on a real AI product in construction or industrial safety.

Materials: AI-1 reference document. AI-2 analysis (as a model for domain-specific evaluation). Published descriptions of real AI products in the relevant domains (sourced through Unfettered or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program). Industry reports or case studies.

Mastery Standard: The framework is clear enough that another person could apply it to a product I have not seen and produce a coherent evaluation. The two completed evaluations reach specific conclusions (not "it depends")—each states whether the product delivers on its claims and identifies the most significant risk. Teach-back: I can walk a peer through one evaluation and the peer can identify the key risk without prompting.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: AI-4 (legal guidance domain evaluation), AI-5 (construction safety domain evaluation), AI-6 (cross-domain evaluation in Tier 3). CP-1 (the framework is applied to the guidance system itself).

SUPPORTING COMPETENCIES (Tier 2)

Financial literacy and basic math are not standalone tracks. They are embedded in the work the ventures require. The following unit builds the minimum mathematical and financial competency

needed for business modeling in Tier 3.

Unit FIN-1: Financial Literacy and Business Mathematics

Priority: FIN | CP **Tier:** 2 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 12–18 (once writing and AI foundations are underway). Runs parallel with AI-3 and W-4/W-5. Prerequisite for FIN-2 (Tier 3).

Problem: I have identified financial illiteracy as a personal deficiency and a contributing factor in my criminal decisions. I cannot build a viable business model for the guidance system—or evaluate any business opportunity—without understanding basic financial concepts: revenue, cost, margin, cash flow, break-even analysis, pricing, basic statistics, and the mathematics that underpin them.

Competency: Perform arithmetic operations relevant to business: percentages, ratios, markup and margin calculations, simple interest, compound interest (conceptual), and unit economics. Read and interpret basic financial statements (income statement, cash flow statement, balance sheet) at the level required to build a business model. Calculate break-even point, customer acquisition cost, and lifetime value at a simplified level. Interpret basic statistics: mean, median, mode, percentages, rates, and what they do and do not prove.

Deliverable: Two artifacts. First: a Financial Literacy Reference Guide (6–10 pages). Covers each concept above with a definition in my own words, the formula or method, a worked example relevant to the guidance system or a construction business, and a retrieval practice prompt. Second: a Preliminary Financial Model for the guidance system (2–4 pages). Includes: projected revenue sources, estimated costs (fixed and variable), pricing structure with justification, break-even calculation, and a 12-month cash flow projection. The model is preliminary—it will be refined in Tier 3—but it must be internally consistent and the math must be correct.

Materials: One accessible financial literacy text (personal finance and small business focus, not corporate finance). One basic statistics primer. Calculator (if permitted) or manual computation. Notebook for practice problems and retrieval cards.

Mastery Standard: The reference guide contains no computational errors. The worked examples are relevant to my actual ventures, not textbook abstractions. The preliminary financial model's arithmetic is correct and the assumptions are stated explicitly—no hidden numbers. Teach-back: I can explain break-even analysis and cash flow projection to a peer who confirms understanding. Retrieval practice: I can perform percentage, margin, and break-even calculations from memory without consulting the reference guide.

Estimated Hours: 120–160 hours.

Feeds Forward To: FIN-2 (advanced business modeling in Tier 3). CP-1, CP-3 (guidance system requires a viable financial model).

TIER 3: Full Capacity (Months 37–63)

By month 37, the institutional routine is established. The research archive holds three or more years of observations. The writing competency has moved from mechanics to production. AI literacy has a conceptual foundation and two applied domains. Financial literacy is functional.

Tier 3 is where everything converges. Writing shifts from competency-building to publication. AI literacy deepens through the remaining applied domains and cross-domain evaluation. The guidance system moves from preliminary concept to comprehensive design. The legal knowledge unit is completed within the guidance system work.

Everything essential completes by month 63.

WRITING PRIORITY (Tier 3)

Unit W-6: Publication-Ready Writing

Priority: W | F **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 37. Runs parallel with AI-4 and CP-1. Builds on W-4 and W-5.

Problem: My writing is now mechanically sound and rhetorically competent. But writing for a portfolio and writing for publication are different. Publication-ready writing must survive editorial scrutiny, hold a reader's attention across thousands of words, and make an original contribution—not merely restate known positions with better grammar. The shift is from demonstrating competence to producing work that matters.

Competency: Produce long-form writing (2,000–5,000 words) that meets publication standards for online platforms (salvadorcastaneda.com, Unfettered's platform, external outlets). Revise iteratively—multiple drafts, not single-pass production. Develop and sustain an original argument or narrative across the full length of a piece. Write with a voice that is recognizably mine, not a generic professional register.

Deliverable: A Publication Portfolio containing at least four pieces of publication-ready writing. Two must draw on research findings (F-3, F-4). One must address AI applications (from any domain). One is my choice—topic, format, and audience at my discretion. Each piece undergoes at least two revision cycles with documented changes. The portfolio is accompanied by a Publication Log (1 page) listing each piece, its intended outlet, its current status, and the date of last revision.

Materials: All prior writing deliverables as models and source material. Research archive and quarterly briefs. Revision checklist (developed from W-1 through W-5 insights into my own patterns). Peer reviewers from the facility population (T1-3).

Mastery Standard: Each piece is formatted for its intended outlet. A reader outside the carceral system can follow the argument without insider context. At least one piece has been submitted for

publication (to salvadorcastaneda.com, to Unfettered, or to an external outlet that accepts mail submissions). Peer review confirms that each piece is clear, credible, and not self-indulgent. The voice profile's litmus test applies: "Does this sound like something I would actually write—or does it sound like an AI trying very hard to imitate me?"

Estimated Hours: 200–280 hours (across Tier 3).

Feeds Forward To: Publication record. Professional credibility. Unfettered content. Consultancy platform credibility.

Unit W-7: Curriculum Development Writing

Priority: W | F | AI **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 40–42 (after at least one publication-ready piece is complete). Runs parallel with AI-4 and CP-2.

Problem: Unfettered serves incarcerated learners. I am both a co-founder and the person best positioned to develop curriculum materials for that population—because I am that population, studying in real time how that population learns. Curriculum writing is a specific discipline: it must sequence concepts, scaffold difficulty, anticipate misconceptions, and produce learner-facing materials that are clear without being condescending.

Competency: Write instructional materials for incarcerated adult learners with limited formal education. Sequence learning objectives logically. Write clear instructions, explanations, and exercises. Design assessments that test understanding, not compliance. Adapt existing knowledge (from the curriculum's domains) into instructional format.

Deliverable: Two complete curriculum units written for Unfettered's platform. Each unit contains: learning objectives, prerequisite knowledge, instructional content (explanations, examples, and exercises), a teach-back assignment, and an assessment with mastery criteria. One unit covers a writing-related topic (drawn from the W units). The other covers an AI-related topic (drawn from the AI units). Each unit is 10–20 pages.

Materials: Curriculum development reference (instructional design principles for adult learners). All prior writing and AI deliverables. Research findings on how incarcerated people learn (F-3, F-4).

Mastery Standard: An incarcerated learner with no background in the topic can work through the unit and produce the required deliverable. The instructions are testable—if a peer in the facility attempts the unit and gets stuck, the point of failure indicates what the unit needs to fix. The assessments test production (deliverables), not recall (multiple choice). Each unit has been tested with at least one peer reviewer or learner.

Estimated Hours: 140–180 hours.

Feeds Forward To: Unfettered platform content. Publication portfolio (curriculum materials are publishable work). Professional credibility as an instructional developer.

AI LITERACY PRIORITY (Tier 3)

Unit AI-4: AI in Legal Guidance for Federal Defendants (Consultancy Domain)

Priority: AI | CP | LEG **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 37–40. Runs parallel with W-6, CP-1, and LEG-1. Prerequisite for CP-2.

Problem: The guidance system provides AI-powered guidance to federal defendants and their families—a population currently served by predatory consultants charging fees the population cannot afford. I must understand how AI can and cannot function in this space: what guidance AI can safely provide, where it crosses into unauthorized practice of law, what the liability exposure is, and how the platform's design must account for these constraints.

Competency: Analyze the specific needs of federal defendants and their families for guidance during the pretrial, sentencing, and post-sentencing phases. Identify where AI can serve those needs (information aggregation, document preparation guidance, procedural orientation, resource identification) and where it cannot (legal advice, case strategy, court representation). Evaluate the risks of AI-generated guidance in a high-stakes, legally constrained domain. Design product requirements that navigate the boundary between guidance and legal advice.

Deliverable: An AI in Legal Guidance Analysis (12–18 pages). Part one: the defendant and family experience—what they need, when they need it, and what they currently receive (drawing on my firsthand knowledge and research). Part two: where AI can serve these needs—specific use cases with feasibility assessment. Part three: the legal and ethical boundaries—unauthorized practice of law, AI liability, informed consent, and the consequences of getting it wrong. Part four: product requirements for an AI-powered guidance platform that stays within legal boundaries while delivering genuine value.

Materials: AI-1 reference document and AI-3 evaluation framework. LEG-1 materials (legal knowledge unit, which runs in parallel). Published information on legal technology products. Published information on unauthorized practice of law statutes (federal and state). My own experience as a federal defendant.

Mastery Standard: The use cases are specific and feasible—not aspirational technology descriptions. The legal boundaries are drawn from actual law (cited by statute or regulation), not from my intuition about what seems legal. The product requirements are specific enough that a developer could begin building. The analysis distinguishes between what the platform should do (guidance) and what it must not do (legal advice), with concrete examples of each. The AI-3 evaluation framework is applied to the platform concept itself.

Estimated Hours: 140–180 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-1, CP-2, CP-3 (this analysis is the technical foundation of the guidance system). AI-6 (cross-domain evaluation includes this domain).

Unit AI-5: AI in Construction Safety

Priority: AI **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 42–48 (after AI-4 is underway). Runs parallel with CP-2 and W-6. Can extend into Tier 4.

Problem: I have OSHA certifications and experience as a construction pre-apprenticeship instructor. AI in construction safety is a business entry point—the overlap between AI and my existing expertise. This unit applies AI literacy to a domain where I have practical knowledge, demonstrating that the AI evaluation skill transfers beyond the carceral and legal contexts.

Competency: Analyze how AI is being applied in construction safety (hazard detection, compliance monitoring, predictive analytics, training). Evaluate existing AI products in this space using the AI-3 framework. Identify specific opportunities where my construction safety expertise combined with AI literacy creates a viable business entry point. Assess the regulatory environment governing AI in construction safety (OSHA requirements, industry standards).

Deliverable: An AI in Construction Safety Analysis and Business Case (10–15 pages). Part one: current AI applications in construction safety (landscape analysis based on available published information). Part two: evaluation of two to three specific products or approaches using the AI-3 framework. Part three: a business case for a specific service or product that combines my construction expertise with AI—including target market, value proposition, competitive landscape, and feasibility assessment.

Materials: AI-1 reference document and AI-3 evaluation framework. OSHA standards and construction safety references (from my existing knowledge and any accessible publications). Published industry reports on AI in construction (sourced through Unfettered or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program). Notebook.

Mastery Standard: The landscape analysis is grounded in specific products or approaches, not in generalities about AI's potential. The business case identifies a specific niche—not "AI in construction" broadly, but a defined service for a defined customer. The feasibility assessment is honest about what I can and cannot build from inside a facility and what would need to wait until release. The AI-3 evaluation framework is applied rigorously to the products analyzed.

Estimated Hours: 120–160 hours.

Feeds Forward To: AI-6 (cross-domain evaluation). Business plan for post-release. Professional credibility in construction industry.

Unit AI-6: Cross-Domain AI Evaluation

Priority: AI **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins when AI-2, AI-3, AI-4, and AI-5 are all substantially complete (expected month 55–60). This is the capstone AI literacy unit.

Problem: I have now applied AI literacy across four domains: carceral education, legal guidance, construction safety, and general product evaluation. The transferable skill—the ability to assess where AI creates value in any new industry—emerges from the patterns across these domains. This unit makes that pattern recognition explicit.

Competency: Identify the common patterns across AI applications in different domains: what works, what fails, what the recurring risks are, and what the design principles are that distinguish sound AI applications from unsound ones. Evaluate an AI application in a domain I have not previously studied, using only the framework and pattern knowledge developed across the prior domains.

Deliverable: Two artifacts. First: a Cross-Domain AI Evaluation Synthesis (8–12 pages). Identifies the common patterns across all four domains studied. States the principles that govern where AI creates genuine value versus where it creates risk or theater. Addresses the question: what do I now know about AI that I could not have known from studying any single domain? Second: a Cold Evaluation—a written evaluation of an AI product or proposal in a domain I have not studied (healthcare, agriculture, logistics, finance, or any domain accessible through available materials). The cold evaluation applies the framework without domain-specific training to test whether the transferable skill has been built.

Materials: All prior AI deliverables (AI-1 through AI-5). The AI-3 evaluation framework. Published information on an AI product in an unfamiliar domain (sourced through Unfettered or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program).

Mastery Standard: The synthesis identifies at least three cross-domain patterns with supporting evidence from multiple domains. The cold evaluation reaches a specific, defensible conclusion about the evaluated product—not a hedged "it has promise and risk." Teach-back: I can explain the evaluation framework and the cross-domain patterns to a peer who has not studied AI, and the peer can apply the framework's core questions to a hypothetical product.

Estimated Hours: 80–120 hours.

Feeds Forward To: Professional competency. Post-release career flexibility. Consultancy platform credibility.

CONSULTANCY PLATFORM (Tier 3)

The guidance system is not a subject to study. It is a convergence project that demands research, writing, AI literacy, financial modeling, and legal knowledge. It begins when those foundations are producing usable material. The units below represent phases of the platform's development, not separate courses.

Unit CP-1: Platform Vision and Requirements

Priority: CP | AI | W **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 37–40 (when AI-4 begins). Runs parallel with AI-4 and W-6. Prerequisite for CP-2 and CP-3.

Problem: The guidance system has been identified as a venture but has not been designed. "AI-powered guidance for federal defendants" is a concept, not a product. This unit moves from concept to requirements: what does the platform do, for whom, through what mechanism, within what constraints, and how does it differ from what exists?

Competency: Translate a business concept into a structured product requirements document. Define the target user, the user's needs at each stage of the federal criminal process, the platform's features, the interaction model (how the user engages with AI-generated guidance), the data requirements, and the constraints (legal, ethical, technical, financial).

Deliverable: A Platform Requirements Document (15–20 pages). Contains: problem statement (what the platform solves and for whom), user profiles (federal defendant, family member, defense attorney as potential secondary user), feature specifications (what the platform does at each stage—pretrial, sentencing, post-sentencing, reentry), interaction model (how users engage with the platform given that many are not technically sophisticated and some are incarcerated), data and content requirements (what information the platform needs to function), constraints and boundaries (what it must not do—unauthorized practice of law, case-specific advice), competitive analysis (how existing services compare, including predatory consultants), and success criteria (how the platform measures whether it is delivering value).

Materials: AI-4 analysis (AI in legal guidance). Research archive (insights into how the target population learns and seeks information). Published information on legal technology platforms. Published information on the federal criminal process.

Mastery Standard: The requirements document is specific enough that a developer could use it to begin technical design. The user profiles are grounded in observed behavior and firsthand experience, not in demographic assumptions. The feature specifications distinguish between launch features and future features, with justification for the prioritization. The constraints section draws on LEG-1 (legal knowledge) and states specific statutes or regulations, not general warnings. The competitive analysis is honest about what predatory consultants do well (access, speed, personal attention) and what the platform must match or exceed.

Estimated Hours: 120–160 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-2 (content development), CP-3 (business model), CP-4 (stress-testing).

Unit LEG-1: Legal Knowledge for the Guidance System

Priority: LEG | CP **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins in month 37–40, runs parallel with AI-4 and CP-1. Feeds into CP-1 and CP-2.

Problem: The guidance system operates at the boundary between guidance and legal advice. I must understand—specifically, not generally—where that boundary lies. This is not a law school course. It is a bounded legal knowledge unit that covers exactly what the platform requires: unauthorized practice of law (UPL) statutes, AI liability frameworks as they apply to automated guidance, regulations governing advice to federal defendants, and the ethical obligations that apply to non-lawyer service providers.

Competency: Identify and explain the key UPL statutes and regulations relevant to the guidance system (federal and the states where the platform will operate). Distinguish between legal information (permissible) and legal advice (prohibited for non-lawyers). Explain the current state of AI liability law as it applies to automated guidance platforms. Identify the specific regulatory risks the platform faces and

the design safeguards that mitigate them.

Deliverable: A Legal Compliance Reference Document (10–15 pages). Contains: an overview of UPL law as it applies to non-lawyer guidance services, with specific statutes cited; the distinction between legal information and legal advice, with concrete examples relevant to the platform; AI liability frameworks and how they apply to the platform's design; regulatory risks ranked by severity and probability; recommended safeguards (disclaimers, scope limitations, referral protocols, human review triggers); and a compliance checklist the platform must meet before launch.

Materials: UPL statutes (federal and key state statutes, sourced through Unfettered or salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program). Published legal scholarship on AI liability (sourced through Unfettered or affiliate program). Bar association ethics opinions on non-lawyer legal services. Published information on the regulatory landscape for legal technology. Facility law library (as a supplement if available, not as a primary source).

Mastery Standard: The document cites specific statutes and regulations, not general principles. The examples of legal information versus legal advice are specific to the platform's intended features—not textbook examples. The compliance checklist is actionable: each item can be verified as met or not met. A lawyer reviewing the document would find the legal analysis directionally correct, even if not comprehensive (I am not producing a legal memo—I am producing a design constraint document informed by legal knowledge).

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-1 (constraints section), CP-2 (content must comply), CP-4 (stress-testing includes legal compliance testing). AI-4 (legal boundaries inform the AI analysis).

Unit CP-2: Platform Content Development

Priority: CP | W | AI **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after CP-1 is substantially complete (requirements document drafted). Runs parallel with AI-5 and W-7.

Problem: The platform needs content—the information, guidance, and resources that users access. Content for an AI-powered guidance platform is not a blog or a FAQ. It must be accurate, comprehensive, legally compliant, written at a reading level appropriate for the target population, and structured for AI retrieval and delivery. This is the intersection of writing competency, AI knowledge, and legal understanding.

Competency: Develop platform content that is accurate, accessible, legally compliant, and structured for AI-assisted delivery. Write for users in crisis (defendants facing sentencing, families facing separation) without condescension or false reassurance. Structure content for retrieval—modular, tagged, versioned.

Deliverable: A Content Development Package containing: a content architecture (what topics the platform covers, how they are organized, how they are tagged for retrieval), three to five fully developed content modules (each covering one stage of the federal process—pretrial, plea, sentencing,

incarceration, reentry), and a content style guide (reading level target, tone, legal compliance rules for content writers, quality standards). Each module: 3,000–5,000 words.

Materials: CP-1 requirements document. LEG-1 legal compliance reference. Research archive (how the target population seeks and processes information). W-4 professional document production skills. Published information on the federal criminal process.

Mastery Standard: Content is accurate—legal procedures described match current federal practice. Content is accessible—a reader with a high school education can follow it. Content is compliant—no module crosses the line from legal information into legal advice, verified against the LEG-1 compliance checklist. Content is modular—each module stands alone and can be updated independently. At least one module has been reviewed by a peer who is or has been a federal defendant and who confirms it addresses real needs.

Estimated Hours: 200–260 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-4 (stress-testing includes content review). Platform launch preparation.

Unit CP-3: Business Model and Financial Projections

Priority: CP | FIN **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins after FIN-1 is complete and CP-1 is substantially complete. Runs parallel with CP-2.

Problem: The guidance system must be financially viable. The preliminary financial model (FIN-1) established the basics. This unit produces a comprehensive business model that addresses revenue, costs, pricing, customer acquisition, the competitive landscape, and a realistic financial projection for the first three years post-release.

Competency: Develop a comprehensive business model for a technology-enabled service business. Price a service for an underserved population without replicating the predatory pricing of existing consultants. Project revenue, costs, and cash flow across multiple scenarios (optimistic, baseline, conservative). Identify funding requirements and potential sources.

Deliverable: A Business Plan and Financial Projections document (15–20 pages). Contains: executive summary, problem and market analysis, business model (how the platform generates revenue and delivers value), pricing model with justification (including ethical considerations—serving a financially strained population), customer acquisition strategy, competitive positioning, operational plan (what happens in months 1–12 post-release), three-year financial projections under three scenarios, funding requirements, and risk analysis.

Materials: FIN-1 preliminary financial model. CP-1 requirements document. Published information on legal technology business models. Published information on social enterprise funding. Calculator or manual computation.

Mastery Standard: The financial projections are internally consistent—revenue times volume equals total revenue, costs are itemized and totaled correctly, cash flow reflects the timing of income and expenses. The pricing model addresses the tension between financial viability and serving a population

that cannot afford predatory fees—and resolves it with a specific structure (sliding scale, freemium, sponsorship, or other), not with a vague commitment to affordability. The three scenarios differ in assumptions, not in arithmetic quality. The risk analysis names at least three specific business risks (not generic risks) and states how each is mitigated.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-4 (stress-testing includes business model review). Post-release execution.

Unit FIN-2: Advanced Business Financial Modeling

Priority: FIN | CP **Tier:** 3 **Parallel/Sequential:** Runs parallel with CP-3. Builds on FIN-1.

Problem: The preliminary financial model (FIN-1) covered basic concepts. The guidance system and the construction safety business entry point require more sophisticated financial analysis: multi-year projections, scenario modeling, sensitivity analysis (what happens to the model if one key assumption changes?), and unit economics at a level that would satisfy an investor or a grant evaluator.

Competency: Build multi-year financial models with variable assumptions. Perform sensitivity analysis on key variables (price, volume, customer acquisition cost, churn rate). Compare scenarios and articulate the conditions under which each applies. Present financial analysis in a format legible to investors, grant evaluators, or business partners.

Deliverable: Refined financial models for both the guidance system and the construction safety venture (2–4 pages each, plus supporting calculation sheets). Each model includes: three-year projections, sensitivity analysis on two to three key variables, scenario comparison, and a one-page executive summary written for a non-financial reader.

Materials: FIN-1 reference guide and preliminary model. CP-3 business plan (as context). Financial modeling reference or case studies (accessible texts on startup financial modeling). Calculator or manual computation.

Mastery Standard: The models are arithmetically correct throughout. The sensitivity analysis demonstrates that I understand which variables have the most impact on viability—and I can explain why. The executive summaries are clear to a non-financial reader. Teach-back: I can walk a peer through the model's logic and the peer can identify the riskiest assumption.

Estimated Hours: 80–100 hours.

Feeds Forward To: CP-4 (stress-testing). Post-release business execution.

Unit CP-4: Platform Stress-Testing and Refinement

Priority: CP | AI | LEG | W **Tier:** 3 (late, months 58–63) **Parallel/Sequential:** Begins when CP-1, CP-2, CP-3, and LEG-1 are all complete. This is the final Tier 3 unit for the guidance system.

Problem: The platform's design documents—requirements, content, business model, legal compliance—were produced sequentially over months. Each reflects the knowledge available at the time it was written. By month 58–63, I have more research data, more writing skill, more AI knowledge, and more legal understanding than I had when the early documents were drafted. The platform must be stress-tested against this fuller knowledge and revised.

Competency: Review and revise a complex, multi-document project for internal consistency, completeness, and accuracy. Apply the AI-3 evaluation framework to my own product. Identify gaps, contradictions, and weaknesses in the design and propose specific fixes. Produce a final integrated design document that could serve as a blueprint for development post-release.

Deliverable: Two artifacts. First: a Platform Stress-Test Report (5–8 pages). Applies the AI-3 evaluation framework to the guidance system itself. Tests the requirements document against the latest research findings. Tests the content against the legal compliance checklist (LEG-1). Tests the business model against the latest financial projections (FIN-2). Identifies every gap, contradiction, or outdated assumption found. Second: a Revised Platform Design Summary (10–15 pages) integrating the updates from the stress-test into a single reference document that consolidates the essential elements of CP-1, CP-2, CP-3, and LEG-1.

Materials: All CP and LEG deliverables. AI-3 evaluation framework. Latest research archive and quarterly briefs. Latest financial models (FIN-2).

Mastery Standard: The stress-test report is critical, not confirmatory—it is looking for problems, not reassurance. At least three substantive issues are identified and resolved in the revised design. The revised design summary is self-contained—a reader unfamiliar with the preceding documents can understand the platform's purpose, design, constraints, and business model from this document alone. A technical reviewer (via Unfettered correspondence) has reviewed the requirements and confirms they are specific enough to inform development.

Estimated Hours: 80–120 hours.

Feeds Forward To: Post-release platform development. The revised design summary is the working blueprint.

TIER 4: Deepening (Months 64–78, if applicable)

Nothing new begins. Everything essential is complete by month 63. Tier 4 deepens, extends, and stress-tests the work already produced. If the sentence is 63 months, Tier 4 does not exist. If the sentence extends to 78 months, Tier 4 fills the additional time with work that strengthens the foundation without adding new structures.

Unit D-1: Publication Portfolio Expansion

Priority: W | F **Tier:** 4 **Parallel/Sequential:** Continues from W-6. No new prerequisites.

Problem: Fifteen additional months of research observations and study accumulate. The publication portfolio can grow. More importantly, revision of earlier published pieces—with the perspective of additional years—strengthens the body of work.

Competency: Produce additional publication-ready writing. Revise earlier pieces with the perspective of additional research and study. Maintain the writing practice through the final phase of incarceration.

Deliverable: Two to four additional publication-ready pieces (building on the W-6 portfolio). At least one revised version of an earlier published piece, with a revision memo explaining what changed and why. Updated Publication Log.

Materials: All prior writing and research deliverables. Revision checklist.

Mastery Standard: Same as W-6. Each new piece meets publication standards. Revised pieces demonstrate growth—the revision memo articulates what the earlier version missed, not just what was cleaned up.

Estimated Hours: 150–200 hours.

Unit D-2: AI in Construction Safety—Full Depth

Priority: AI **Tier:** 4 **Parallel/Sequential:** Continues from AI-5. No new prerequisites.

Problem: AI-5 produced a landscape analysis and business case. With additional time, the analysis can deepen—more products evaluated, the business case refined against additional evidence, and the construction safety domain's regulatory landscape explored in greater detail.

Deliverable: An expanded AI in Construction Safety document (15–25 pages), incorporating additional product evaluations, a refined business case, and a regulatory compliance analysis specific to AI-assisted safety monitoring in construction.

Materials: AI-5 deliverables. Additional industry reports or publications acquired during Tier 3–4.

Mastery Standard: Same as AI-5, with expanded scope. The business case is specific enough to present to a potential investor or partner post-release.

Estimated Hours: 100–140 hours.

Unit D-3: Guidance System Refinement

Priority: CP **Tier:** 4 **Parallel/Sequential:** Continues from CP-4. No new prerequisites.

Problem: Additional research observations, legal developments, and reflection may reveal new considerations for the platform design. The additional months allow stress-testing against a longer evidence base.

Deliverable: An updated Revised Platform Design Summary incorporating any new research findings, legal developments (communicated through Unfettered or mail), and refinements identified during the Tier 4 period. An appendix documenting what changed since the Tier 3 version and why.

Materials: CP-4 deliverables. Updated research archive. Any new legal or industry information received.

Mastery Standard: Same as CP-4. Updates are substantive, not cosmetic. The document remains internally consistent after revisions.

Estimated Hours: 60–80 hours.

Unit D-4: Research Archive Completion and Legacy

Priority: F **Tier:** 4 **Parallel/Sequential:** Continues from F-4. No new prerequisites.

Problem: The research archive now spans five or more years. This is an unprecedented dataset—longitudinal, structured, first-person observation of how incarcerated people learn. The archive's value as a legacy document (for Unfettered, for my published work, for the field of carceral education) depends on its organization, accessibility, and the clarity of its final findings.

Deliverable: A Research Archive Summary and Index (10–15 pages). Contains: total observation count, category distribution, chronological index of all quarterly briefs, summary of key findings across the full incarceration period, comparison of early findings versus late findings (what changed with more data), and recommendations for how the archive should be used post-release (for Unfettered, for publication, for policy advocacy).

Materials: Complete research archive. All quarterly briefs. F-4 publication drafts.

Mastery Standard: The index is complete—every entry is accounted for. The findings summary is a genuine synthesis, not a concatenation of quarterly briefs. The comparison of early versus late findings demonstrates intellectual honesty—I name where my earlier conclusions were wrong or incomplete. The recommendations are specific and actionable.

Estimated Hours: 80–120 hours.

DEPENDENCY MAP

The following summarizes the critical dependencies across all units. "→" indicates a prerequisite relationship (the unit on the left must be substantially complete before the unit on the right begins). "|" indicates parallel execution.

Sequential Dependencies

F-1 → F-2 → F-3 → F-4 T1-1 → T1-4 W-1 → W-2 → W-3 → W-4 → W-6 W-3 → W-5 → W-6 AI-1 → AI-2 → AI-3 AI-1 → AI-4 → CP-1 AI-1 → AI-5 AI-2 + AI-3 + AI-4 + AI-5 → AI-6 FIN-1 → FIN-2 → CP-3 CP-1 → CP-2 → CP-4 CP-1 + LEG-1 → CP-2 CP-1 + CP-2 + CP-3 + LEG-1 → CP-4

Parallel Strands

Tier 1: T1-1 | T1-2 | F-2 (all run simultaneously from month 1) Tier 2 Writing and AI: W-2 | AI-1 (can run simultaneously once W-1 is complete) Tier 2 Mid: W-3 | AI-2 | F-3 (can run simultaneously) Tier 2 Late: W-4 | W-5 | AI-3 | FIN-1 (can run simultaneously) Tier 3 Early: W-6 | AI-4 | CP-1 | LEG-1 (can run simultaneously from month 37) Tier 3 Mid: W-7 | AI-5 | CP-2 | CP-3 (can run simultaneously) Tier 3 Late: AI-6 | CP-4 (can run simultaneously from month 55–58)

Cross-Feed Relationships (where one unit's deliverable becomes another's source material)

F-2 observations → AI-2 analysis (research informs Unfettered domain) F-3 quarterly briefs → W-6 publication portfolio (findings become published work) F-3 quarterly briefs → CP-1 requirements (research informs platform design) AI-3 evaluation framework → AI-4, AI-5, AI-6, CP-4 (framework is the reusable tool) AI-4 analysis → CP-1, CP-2 (AI analysis informs platform design and content) W-4 professional documents → CP-2 content (writing competency serves content development) W-5 persuasive writing → CP-1, CP-3 (persuasive skill serves requirements and business plan) LEG-1 compliance reference → CP-1, CP-2, CP-4 (legal constraints govern platform design) FIN-1 preliminary model → CP-3 business plan (financial literacy serves business modeling) T1-4 writing portfolio → W-1 diagnostic (early writing serves grammar diagnosis)

HOUR ALLOCATION SUMMARY

Layer / Priority	Estimated Hours (Low)	Estimated Hours (High)
Foundation: Research Program (F-1 through F-4, D-4)	510	690
Tier 1: Institutional Establishment (T1-1 through T1-3)	95	130
Writing Priority (W-1 through W-7, D-1)	810	1,110
AI Literacy Priority (AI-1 through AI-6, D-2)	660	920
Guidance System (CP-1 through CP-4, D-3)	560	760
Financial Literacy (FIN-1, FIN-2)	200	260
Legal Knowledge (LEG-1)	100	140

Total Allocated	**2,935**	**4,010**
Total Available (63–78 months)	**12,600**	**15,600**
Unallocated (buffer, disruption, additional reading, retrieval practice)	**9,665**	**11,590**

Note on Unallocated Hours

The large unallocated buffer is intentional and necessary. It accounts for:

- **Institutional disruption:** Lockdowns, transfers, administrative interference, medical holds, holiday schedules, and the unpredictable realities of federal incarceration that consume hours without advancing the curriculum.
- **Daily retrieval practice:** Spaced repetition runs every day across the full incarceration period. The hours add up (estimated 300–500 hours total) but are not assigned to individual units because they serve all units simultaneously.
- **Reading time:** The estimated hours for each unit cover production of deliverables. Reading the assigned materials—often the majority of the time spent—is embedded in the estimates but will vary based on the difficulty of the texts and my reading speed.
- **Revision and rework:** Mastery-based assessment means some deliverables will not pass on the first attempt. Revision hours are not pre-allocated because the curriculum does not predict which units will require rework.
- **Unplanned opportunities:** The facility may offer educational programming, work assignments with learning value, or peer-learning situations that are worth pursuing even though they fall outside the planned curriculum.

The curriculum does not need to fill every hour. It needs to produce every deliverable to standard. If I finish in 4,000 hours with every deliverable at mastery standard, I have completed the curriculum. If I spend 12,000 hours and leave deliverables unfinished, I have not.

PART IV: READING LIST WITH ACQUISITION PLAN

Summary by Wave

Wave	Timing	Titles	Purpose
1	Ship before arrival or within month 1	5 books + supplies	Research methodology, grammar reference, learning science, AI foundations
2	Months 6–12	5 books	Rhetoric, composition, writing craft, educational philosophy, AI failure modes
3	Months 12–24	4 books	Financial literacy, statistics, research-based writing
4	Months 24–36	3 books	Curriculum development, business modeling
5	Months 36+	2 books + correspondence materials	Legal foundations, startup law, industry reports
Ongoing	Throughout incarceration	Correspondence materials	Case studies, policy documents, industry reports, legal documents

Total books: 19 titles. Plus supplementary materials delivered through Unfettered correspondence and sourced through industry publications.

WAVE 1: Ship Before Arrival or Within Month 1

These titles support the first units activated: research methodology (F-1), grammar diagnostic and mechanics (W-1, W-2), AI foundations (AI-1), and the learning methods that govern the entire curriculum. Without these books, the first six months stall.

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2. A Writer's Reference

Author: Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers **Publisher:** Bedford/St. Martin's **Edition:** Eleventh Edition (2024) or Tenth Edition (2021)—either is acceptable **Format:** Paperback (spiral-bound edition if

permitted; comb-bound may face restriction at some facilities) **Curriculum Unit:** W-1 (Grammar and Mechanics Diagnostic), W-2 (Targeted Grammar and Sentence Mechanics), all subsequent writing units **Priority Code:** W

Why this book: The curriculum requires a comprehensive grammar reference—not a workbook to complete chapter by chapter, but a desk reference to consult when diagnosing and correcting specific errors. This is the standard. It is organized by topic (grammar, punctuation, mechanics, sentence style, word choice, research and documentation) with tabbed sections for quick access. I use it first for the W-1 diagnostic to identify my error patterns, then as a reference during W-2 targeted practice, then as an ongoing tool for every writing deliverable in the curriculum.

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3. Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning

Author: Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, Mark A. McDaniel **Publisher:** Belknap Press of Harvard University Press **Edition:** First Edition (2014) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** F-1 (Research Methodology—informs the learning methods), all units (retrieval practice and spaced repetition are structural methods) **Priority Code:** F

Why this book: The curriculum's three structural learning methods—retrieval practice with spaced repetition, project-based learning, and teach-back—are grounded in the cognitive science this book presents. I do not need to take it on faith that these methods work. I need to understand why they work, how they fail, and what the research demonstrates about memory, learning, and the illusion of mastery through rereading. This book also feeds the research program: it gives me a framework for evaluating what I observe about how other incarcerated people learn and why common study habits (highlighting, rereading) produce the illusion of competence without the substance.

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4. Artificial Intelligence: A Guide for Thinking Humans

Author: Melanie Mitchell **Publisher:** Farrar, Straus and Giroux **Edition:** First Edition (2019) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** AI-1 (AI Foundations) **Priority Code:** AI

Why this book: AI-1 requires me to explain what AI is and is not, describe how machine learning works at a conceptual level, identify common failure modes, and distinguish between marketing claims and demonstrated capability. Mitchell is a computer scientist who wrote this book for a general audience. She explains neural networks, deep learning, natural language processing, and computer vision without requiring mathematical background. More importantly, she is honest about what AI cannot do—the gap between narrow capability and general intelligence—which is the evaluative skill the entire AI literacy strand builds toward.

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5. You Look Like a Thing and I Love You: How AI Works and Why It Is Making the World a Weirder Place

Author: Janelle Shane **Publisher:** Voracious / Little, Brown and Company **Edition:** First Edition (2019) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** AI-1 (AI Foundations) **Priority Code:** AI

Why this book: AI-1 requires coverage of failure modes with real-world examples across multiple sectors. Shane—a research scientist—catalogs how AI systems fail in specific, documented, often absurd ways. The book complements Mitchell: where Mitchell explains how AI works in principle, Shane shows what happens when it does not work in practice. The failure mode emphasis is essential because the curriculum's AI literacy is evaluative, not aspirational. I need to spot where AI breaks before I can design products that avoid the breakage.

WAVE 2: Months 6–12

By month six, the daily routine is functional, the research archive is active, the grammar diagnostic is complete or underway, and AI foundations study has begun. These titles support the transition from sentence-level mechanics to paragraph and document-level writing (W-3), persuasive argumentation (W-5), and the deepening of AI literacy through the lens of societal impact.

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6. They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing

Author: Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein **Publisher:** W.W. Norton **Edition:** Fifth Edition (2021) or Fourth Edition (2018)—either is acceptable **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** W-3 (Paragraph Structure, Document Organization, and Rhetorical Strategy), W-5 (Persuasive Writing and Argumentation) **Priority Code:** W

Why this book: W-3 requires me to organize documents around a thesis, deploy rhetorical strategies, and write for distinct audiences. W-5 requires sustained persuasive argument with counterargument engagement. This book provides templates—not formulas—for entering conversations, summarizing opposing positions, responding to objections, and connecting claims to evidence. It teaches the structural moves of argumentation without prescribing content. The "they say / I say" framework maps directly to the curriculum's requirement that persuasive documents address the strongest counterargument, not a strawman.

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7. Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace

Author: Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup **Publisher:** Pearson **Edition:** Thirteenth Edition (2023) or Twelfth Edition (2017)—either is acceptable **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** W-3 (Paragraph Structure, Document Organization, and Rhetorical Strategy), W-4 (Professional Document Production), all subsequent writing units **Priority Code:** W

Why this book: *A Writer's Reference* (title 2) handles grammar and mechanics—what is correct. This book handles style—what is clear, direct, and effective. Williams teaches how to construct sentences

that a reader can follow, how to build paragraphs that cohere, and how to revise prose for concision without sacrificing substance. The emphasis on active voice, concrete subjects, and strong verbs aligns with my existing instincts (documented in the voice profile). The book does not teach rules I must memorize. It teaches principles I already practice and gives me the vocabulary to refine them deliberately.

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8. Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Author: Paulo Freire **Publisher:** Bloomsbury Academic **Edition:** Fiftieth Anniversary Edition (2018) or any edition of the Myra Bergman Ramos translation **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** F-3 (Pattern Analysis—provides theoretical framework for interpreting observations), AI-2 (AI in Carceral Education), W-7 (Curriculum Development Writing) **Priority Code:** F | AI

Why this book: The research program documents how incarcerated people learn under institutional constraint. Freire wrote the foundational text on education within oppressive systems—what he called the "banking model" of education (depositing knowledge into passive recipients) versus "problem-posing" education (dialogue, critical consciousness, learner agency). The curriculum does not assign Freire as a subject to study. It assigns Freire as a lens through which I interpret what I observe: when the facility's GED program treats learners as empty containers, Freire gives me the language to name what is happening and why it fails. When I design curriculum for Unfettered (W-7), Freire's framework informs what I build.

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9. Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy

Author: Cathy O'Neil **Publisher:** Crown **Edition:** First Edition (2016) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** AI-1 (AI Foundations—additional failure mode case studies), AI-3 (AI Product Evaluation Framework), AI-4 (AI in Legal Guidance) **Priority Code:** AI

Why this book: If title 5 (Shane) arrived in Wave 1, this book extends the failure mode analysis from technical malfunction to systemic harm—how algorithms encode bias, how opaque models damage vulnerable populations, and how the people harmed have the least power to challenge the system. O'Neil's case studies span criminal justice, lending, hiring, insurance, and education—at least three of which touch my applied domains directly. The book serves AI-3's evaluation framework: it demonstrates what a rigorous product evaluation looks like when the evaluator asks "who gets hurt?" rather than "does it work?"

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10. On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction

Author: William Zinsser **Publisher:** Harper Perennial **Edition:** Thirtieth Anniversary Edition (2006) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** W-3 (Rhetorical Strategy), W-4 (Professional Document

Production), W-6 (Publication-Ready Writing) **Priority Code:** W

Why this book: *Style* (title 7) teaches sentence and paragraph construction. *They Say / I Say* (title 6) teaches argumentation structure. Zinsser fills the remaining gap: how to write nonfiction that a reader wants to finish. He covers clarity, simplicity, the elimination of clutter, writing about people and places, science writing, business writing, and memoir—each relevant to at least one deliverable type in the curriculum. His chapter on "The Sound of Your Voice" is directly applicable to my goal of producing writing that is recognizably my own, not a generic professional register. The book is short, direct, and free of academic jargon—qualities that match both the curriculum's tone and my preferences.

WAVE 3: Months 12–24

By month twelve, the research archive holds a full year of observations. Grammar and mechanics work is substantially complete. AI foundations are established. The curriculum shifts toward financial literacy (FIN-1), research-based writing (connection between F-3 and the writing units), and deeper engagement with AI case studies across domains.

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11. The Personal MBA: Master the Art of Business

Author: Josh Kaufman **Publisher:** Portfolio / Penguin **Edition:** Tenth Anniversary Edition (2020) or Original Edition (2010)—either is acceptable **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** FIN-1 (Financial Literacy and Business Mathematics), CP-3 (Business Model and Financial Projections) **Priority Code:** FIN | CP

Why this book: FIN-1 requires me to understand revenue, cost, margin, cash flow, break-even analysis, pricing, and basic financial statements—at the level required to build a business model, not at the level of a finance degree. Kaufman covers all of these concepts plus marketing, sales, operations, and systems thinking in a format designed for self-directed learners who will never attend business school. Each concept is explained in two to five pages with practical application. The book serves as a reference throughout the guidance system work—I will return to it when building the CP-3 business plan and FIN-2 financial models.

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12. Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data

Author: Charles Wheelan **Publisher:** W.W. Norton **Edition:** First Edition (2013) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** FIN-1 (Financial Literacy and Business Mathematics—statistics component), F-3 (Pattern Analysis—interpreting research data), AI-3 (AI Product Evaluation—assessing claims based on data) **Priority Code:** FIN | F

Why this book: FIN-1 requires me to interpret basic statistics—mean, median, mode, percentages, rates—and understand what they prove and what they do not. The research program (F-3) requires me

to distinguish between patterns supported by data and patterns that reflect observer bias. AI product evaluation (AI-3) requires me to assess whether a product's claimed performance metrics are meaningful. Wheelan teaches all of this without requiring mathematical background. He uses real-world examples—elections, sports, medicine, economics—to explain statistical reasoning, common errors, and the gap between correlation and causation.

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13. Accounting Made Simple: Accounting Explained in 100 Pages or Less

Author: Mike Piper **Publisher:** Simple Subjects **Edition:** Latest available edition **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** FIN-1 (Financial Literacy and Business Mathematics—financial statement reading) **Priority Code:** FIN

Why this book: FIN-1 specifically requires me to "read and interpret basic financial statements (income statement, cash flow statement, balance sheet) at the level required to build a business model." *The Personal MBA* (title 11) covers business concepts broadly. This book covers financial statements specifically—what each line means, how the three statements connect, and how to read them without an accounting degree. At 100 pages, it is a focused tool, not a textbook. I will use it once to build the skill, then reference it during CP-3 financial projections.

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14. The Craft of Research

Author: Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. FitzGerald **Publisher:** University of Chicago Press **Edition:** Fourth Edition (2016) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** F-3 (Pattern Analysis—structuring research findings), W-4 (Professional Document Production—research summary format), W-6 (Publication-Ready Writing), F-4 (Research Archive as Publication Source) **Priority Code:** F | W

Why this book: The research program produces findings. The writing priority produces documents. This book connects the two—it teaches how to formulate a research question, build an argument from evidence, organize findings for a reader, and handle sources and claims with integrity. It is the standard university-level text on research-based writing, written by the same team behind *Style* (title 7). By month 12–24, I am producing quarterly research briefs (F-3) and moving toward professional document production (W-4). This book provides the structural framework for writing that is grounded in evidence rather than opinion—the transition from competent writing to credible scholarship.

WAVE 4: Months 24–36

By month twenty-four, the writing priority is producing professional documents. AI literacy has a conceptual foundation and at least one applied domain (Unfettered) underway. Financial literacy is functional. The curriculum prepares for the Tier 3 shift: curriculum development for Unfettered (W-7), business modeling for the guidance system (CP-3), and the transition from learning to production.

15. Understanding by Design

Author: Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe **Publisher:** ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) **Edition:** Expanded Second Edition (2005) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** W-7 (Curriculum Development Writing) **Priority Code:** W | AI

Why this book: W-7 requires me to write curriculum for Unfettered—instructional materials for incarcerated adult learners with limited formal education. Wiggins and McTighe's "backward design" framework is the standard in curriculum development: start with what the learner must be able to do (the desired result), then design the assessment that proves it (the evidence), then design the instruction that prepares the learner (the learning plan). This is the same logic that governs the Self-Education Pathway itself—every unit begins with a competency and a deliverable, not with a reading list. The book gives me the formal framework for the practice I am already living.

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16. Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers

Author: Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur **Publisher:** Wiley **Edition:** First Edition (2010) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** CP-3 (Business Model and Financial Projections), CP-1 (Platform Vision and Requirements) **Priority Code:** CP | FIN

Why this book: CP-3 requires a comprehensive business model—revenue sources, pricing, customer acquisition, competitive positioning, and operational planning. Osterwalder and Pigneur created the Business Model Canvas, a single-page visual framework that maps nine building blocks of a business. The book teaches how to use the canvas, how to test assumptions, and how to iterate on a business model before committing resources. It is visual, modular, and designed for entrepreneurs who need to prototype a business structure quickly. I use it to structure the guidance system's business model and to test assumptions against the evidence from my research program.

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17. The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses

Author: Eric Ries **Publisher:** Crown Business **Edition:** First Edition (2011) **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** CP-1 (Platform Vision and Requirements), CP-3 (Business Model and Financial Projections), CP-4 (Platform Stress-Testing) **Priority Code:** CP

Why this book: The guidance system will be designed inside a facility and built after release. I cannot test the product with real users while incarcerated. But I can apply lean methodology to the design phase—identifying the riskiest assumptions, designing the minimum viable product, and building stress-tests into the design documents. Ries's framework—build, measure, learn—provides the vocabulary and the logic for CP-4's stress-testing of the platform design against evidence. The book

also reinforces a principle embedded throughout the curriculum: production is not completion. A deliverable that meets the standard today may need revision when new evidence arrives.

WAVE 5: Months 36 and Beyond

Tier 3 begins. The guidance system design requires legal knowledge (LEG-1, AI-4). AI in construction safety (AI-5) requires industry-specific materials. Some materials in this wave are books; others are documents sourced through correspondence. The book acquisitions here are fewer because much of the Tier 3 work draws on deliverables already produced and on supplementary materials delivered through Unfettered.

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18. Law 101: Everything You Need to Know About American Law

Author: Jay M. Feinman **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Edition:** Sixth Edition (2022) or Fifth Edition (2018)—either is acceptable **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** LEG-1 (Legal Knowledge for the Guidance System), AI-4 (AI in Legal Guidance) **Priority Code:** LEG | CP

Why this book: LEG-1 requires me to understand unauthorized practice of law (UPL) statutes, AI liability, and regulations governing guidance to federal defendants. These are specific legal topics, but they exist within a broader legal system I must navigate at a general level—how statutes work, how liability is determined, how regulatory frameworks operate, what the difference is between federal and state law. Feinman provides that general foundation in accessible language. He covers torts, contracts, property, criminal law, constitutional law, and the court system—giving me the vocabulary and the structural understanding required before I engage the specific legal topics in LEG-1. This is not a law school textbook. It is a legal literacy book written for non-lawyers.

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19. The Entrepreneur's Guide to Law and Strategy

Author: Constance E. Bagley and Craig E. Dauchy **Publisher:** Cengage Learning **Edition:** Fifth Edition (2018) or any available edition **Format:** Paperback **Curriculum Unit:** LEG-1 (Legal Knowledge—AI liability, regulatory compliance), CP-1 (Platform Vision and Requirements—legal constraints), CP-3 (Business Model—legal structure) **Priority Code:** LEG | CP

Why this book: Where *Law 101* (title 18) provides general legal literacy, this book addresses the specific legal questions an entrepreneur faces: intellectual property, liability, entity structure, contracts, regulatory compliance, and the legal dimensions of raising capital. The guidance system operates at the boundary of legal guidance and unauthorized practice of law. I need to understand not only UPL law but also the broader legal environment of building a technology-enabled service business—liability exposure, terms of service, disclaimers, and regulatory risk. Bagley and Dauchy provide that framework with case studies and practical application.

ONGOING: Materials Sourced Through Correspondence

The following materials are not books. They are documents, articles, reports, and reference materials delivered through Unfettered's email-based instruction channel or sourced through salvadorcastaneda.com's affiliate program over the course of the incarceration period. They are listed here so the acquisition plan accounts for them, and so the person managing the correspondence channel knows what to prepare and when.

AI Case Studies and Industry Reports

Curriculum Units: AI-1, AI-2, AI-3, AI-4, AI-5, AI-6 **Timing:** Ongoing, beginning in month 3

Unfettered delivers published case studies of AI applications—successes and failures—across multiple sectors. The curriculum requires real-world examples for AI-1's failure modes section, AI-2's analysis of AI in carceral education, AI-3's product evaluations, AI-4's legal guidance domain, AI-5's construction safety domain, and AI-6's cold evaluation of an unfamiliar domain. These are not textbook exercises. They are descriptions of real products, real outcomes, and real consequences, sourced from technology journalism, industry publications, and company documentation.

What to source: Product descriptions, capability claims, published performance data, regulatory filings (where public), and independent evaluations of AI products in: education technology, legal technology, construction safety technology, and one additional domain of my choosing (for AI-6).

Format: Printed articles, reports, or summaries delivered via Unfettered's email-based instruction. Each document should be dated, sourced, and relevant to at least one curriculum unit.

Legal Documents for LEG-1

Curriculum Units: LEG-1, AI-4, CP-1, CP-2 **Timing:** Beginning month 36, continuing through month 50

The legal knowledge unit requires specific legal materials that are not available in book form or that would require a full legal database to access. Unfettered correspondence sources and delivers:

- **Unauthorized Practice of Law statutes:** Federal UPL provisions and the UPL statutes for the three to five states where the guidance system will initially operate. The specific states will be determined during CP-1 development. At minimum: Oregon, Washington, California, and the federal provisions under 28 U.S.C.
- **ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct:** Relevant sections on UPL and non-lawyer legal services. Available from the American Bar Association.
- **Bar association ethics opinions:** Published opinions on technology-assisted legal services, non-lawyer legal guidance, and the boundary between legal information and legal advice. State bar

associations publish these; they are public documents.

• **AI liability frameworks:** Published legal scholarship, regulatory guidance, or proposed legislation governing liability for AI-generated guidance. This is a developing area of law—the materials will reflect whatever is current at the time of delivery.

• **Federal criminal process reference:** A plain-language overview of the federal criminal process from arrest through reentry, sufficient for CP-2's content development. The Federal Judicial Center publishes accessible materials on federal court procedures.

Format: Printed statutes, ethics opinions, and articles delivered via Unfettered's email-based instruction.

Construction Safety and AI Industry Materials for AI-5

Curriculum Units: AI-5, D-2 **Timing:** Beginning month 42, continuing through Tier 4

AI-5 requires a landscape analysis of AI in construction safety—hazard detection, compliance monitoring, predictive analytics, and training. The materials are industry-specific: trade publications, OSHA regulatory updates, product documentation from construction technology companies, and published research on AI-assisted safety monitoring.

What to source: Product descriptions and capability claims from construction technology companies (e.g., companies offering AI-powered site monitoring, wearable safety devices, predictive analytics for incident prevention). OSHA regulatory guidance on technology in construction safety. Industry association publications from organizations such as the Associated General Contractors of America or the National Safety Council. Published evaluations or case studies of AI-assisted safety technology in construction.

Format: Printed articles, product descriptions, and regulatory guidance delivered via Unfettered's email-based instruction.

Professional Document Models for W-4

Curriculum Units: W-4 (Professional Document Production) **Timing:** Months 18–24

W-4 requires me to produce documents in four professional formats: policy brief, curriculum unit or lesson plan, research summary, and analytical essay. For each format, the curriculum calls for a model—an example of what competent work in that format looks like. These are not books. They are individual documents, sourced and delivered through Unfettered correspondence.

What to source:

• **Policy brief model:** One published policy brief from a credible organization (Vera Institute of Justice, Brennan Center for Justice, RAND Corporation, Brookings Institution, or equivalent). Topic: criminal justice, education, or technology policy.

- **Curriculum unit model:** One published curriculum unit or lesson plan from an established educational organization (Khan Academy, MIT OpenCourseWare, community college open educational resources, or equivalent). Subject: any field accessible to an adult learner.
- **Research summary model:** One published research summary from a peer-reviewed journal or research organization. Topic: education, criminal justice, or technology.
- **Analytical essay model:** One published analytical essay from a recognized outlet (The Atlantic, Harper's, Stanford Social Innovation Review, or equivalent). Topic: my choice—anything that demonstrates sustained argument grounded in evidence.

Format: Printed documents delivered via Unfettered's email-based instruction. Each document should be complete (not excerpted) and sourced (author, publication, date).

Social Enterprise and Legal Technology Business Models for CP-3

Curriculum Units: CP-3 (Business Model and Financial Projections), FIN-2 (Advanced Business Financial Modeling) **Timing:** Months 36–48

CP-3 requires published information on legal technology business models and social enterprise funding. These are specialized topics not covered by the general business books in the list.

What to source: Published case studies or profiles of legal technology startups (companies providing technology-assisted legal services to underserved populations). Published information on social enterprise funding models—grants, impact investment, revenue-based financing, and hybrid structures. Published information on pricing models for legal services that serve financially constrained populations (sliding scale, freemium, sponsored access).

Format: Printed articles, reports, and case studies delivered via Unfettered's email-based instruction.

PART V: ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Purpose

This document defines what "complete" means. Every unit in the curriculum produces a deliverable. Every deliverable is assessed against a mastery standard. This document contains those standards—not as general principles but as specific rubrics I apply to my own work with enough precision to prevent self-deception.

The word "enough" carries weight. A rubric that says "the writing is clear" invites me to decide my own writing is clear. A rubric that says "a peer reviewer who has not read the source material can restate the argument accurately after one reading" does not. The standards in this document are written to be tested, not interpreted.

The Governing Problem

I am assessing my own work, and my mind, left to evaluate itself, will return a favorable verdict. This is not a general risk. It is a specific, documented vulnerability. The Socratic dialogues established that I can eliminate rational alternatives and make the irrational appear necessary. That mechanism operates in self-assessment the same way it operates in decision-making: if I want to advance to the next unit, I can convince myself the current deliverable meets the standard when it does not.

The assessment system accounts for this through three structural requirements:

- **The rubric is specific enough to be falsifiable.** Every criterion has a test. The test produces a result I cannot easily reinterpret. "Does the document contain a thesis statement identifiable in the first two paragraphs?" is falsifiable. "Is the document well-organized?" is not.
- **The teach-back test externalizes comprehension.** I explain the deliverable's core argument or method to another person. That person's ability to restate it accurately is the measure—not my belief that I explained it well.
- **Peer review externalizes quality.** Another person reads the deliverable and identifies what is unclear, unconvincing, or missing. I do not get to decide that everything is clear. Someone else does.

Where teach-back and peer review are not available (periods of isolation, lockdown, transfer, or absence of a willing reviewer), I must acknowledge the gap in writing on Form 6 and revisit the deliverable when external review becomes possible. A deliverable assessed without external review carries a provisional status—APPROVED (PROVISIONAL)—that converts to APPROVED only after external review is completed.

The Five Universal Criteria

Every deliverable in the curriculum is assessed against five criteria. These appear on Form 6 (Deliverable Assessment). This section defines what each criterion means, how it is tested, and what separates MET from PARTIAL from NOT MET.

Criterion 1: Clear Thesis or Purpose

What it means: The deliverable states what it argues, demonstrates, or accomplishes. A reader who has never seen the document can identify its purpose within the first two paragraphs (for written documents) or within the first page (for reference documents, frameworks, and operational plans).

The test: Cover everything after the first two paragraphs. Read only the opening. Write down what the document is about and what it intends to accomplish. Then read the full document. If the purpose identified from the opening matches what the document actually does, the criterion is met. If the opening promises one thing and the document delivers another—or if the opening does not promise anything specific—the criterion is not met.

MET: The purpose is stated explicitly and the document delivers on that statement. No ambiguity about what the deliverable is for.

PARTIAL: The purpose is present but buried—it appears on page three, or it is implied rather than stated, or the opening contains throat-clearing that delays the point. The document delivers on its purpose, but a reader has to work to find it.

NOT MET: The document has no identifiable thesis or purpose. It reads as a collection of related material without a governing argument or objective. Or the stated purpose and the actual content do not align.

Criterion 2: Evidence-Based

What it means: Every claim in the deliverable is supported by evidence—observation entries, source material, data, cited references, or logical reasoning grounded in documented facts. No claim floats unsupported. No assertion relies on the reader's willingness to trust me.

The test: Underline every claim in the document. A "claim" is any statement that asserts something is true, effective, important, or necessary. For each underlined claim, identify the evidence that supports it. If the evidence is an observation, cite the entry number. If the evidence is a source, cite the title, author, and page. If the evidence is a calculation, show the math. If a claim has no supporting evidence, mark it.

MET: Every claim is supported. A skeptical reader—one who does not take me at my word—can trace each assertion to its evidence and verify it.

PARTIAL: Most claims are supported, but one or two assertions rely on my authority rather than on cited evidence. The unsupported claims are minor and do not affect the document's central argument.

NOT MET: The document contains claims that are central to its argument and unsupported by evidence. Or the document relies primarily on my experience or opinion without tying that experience to documented observations, sources, or data.

Criterion 3: Counterarguments Addressed

What it means: The deliverable identifies the strongest objection to its central claim and responds to it. This is not a formality. The purpose is to demonstrate that I have considered why I might be wrong—and that the argument survives that consideration.

The test: State the deliverable's central claim in one sentence. Then ask: "What would a person who disagrees say?" If the answer is obvious and the document does not address it, the criterion is not met. If the document addresses a weak version of the objection (a strawman) rather than the strongest version, the criterion is partial.

Application by deliverable type: Not every deliverable argues a contested position. Reference documents, operational plans, and financial models are not persuasive essays. For these deliverable types, "counterarguments addressed" translates to "limitations acknowledged"—the document identifies what it does not cover, where its assumptions could be wrong, and what would change the conclusion. A financial model that presents one scenario without acknowledging what could invalidate the projections has not met this criterion.

MET: The strongest objection or most significant limitation is identified and addressed within the document. A reader who holds the opposing view recognizes that I have engaged with the best version of their argument.

PARTIAL: An objection or limitation is addressed, but it is not the strongest one. Or the response is dismissive rather than substantive. I acknowledged a weakness but did not grapple with it.

NOT MET: The document ignores objections and limitations entirely. Or the document addresses only objections I can easily defeat, avoiding the ones that would require revision.

Criterion 4: Mechanically Sound

What it means: The document meets the mechanical standards of professional writing: grammar, syntax, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and formatting. This does not require perfection. It requires that no mechanical error obstructs the reader's comprehension or undermines the document's credibility.

The test: Read the document aloud, slowly. Every place where the reader stumbles—where a sentence has to be reread to parse, where punctuation creates ambiguity, where a paragraph break seems arbitrary—is a candidate for revision. Then check the document against the Grammar

Reference Card (W-2 deliverable) for the specific error categories identified in the W-1 diagnostic. Any recurring error from the diagnosed categories that appears in the document is a mechanical failure.

MET: The document reads without obstruction. No diagnosed error pattern recurs. Formatting follows the conventions appropriate to the document type (court formatting for legal documents, standard margins and spacing for professional documents, correct citation format where sources are cited).

PARTIAL: The document is readable, but one or two diagnosed error patterns recur. Or the formatting is inconsistent. Or the sentence structure is functional but occasionally awkward in ways that slow the reader.

NOT MET: Mechanical errors recur throughout the document. The diagnosed error patterns from W-1 are present and uncorrected. Or the formatting does not meet the conventions for the document type. Or sentence-level errors undermine the document's credibility—a policy brief with comma splices throughout will not be taken seriously regardless of the quality of its argument.

Criterion 5: Audience-Appropriate

What it means: The document is written for its intended reader, and that reader finds it useful, clear, and credible. A policy brief written for corrections administrators uses language and framing that those administrators recognize. A teach-back explanation written for an incarcerated learner with no background does not assume knowledge the reader does not have. A business plan written for a potential investor presents information in the sequence and format an investor expects.

The test: Name the intended audience before reading the document. Then read the document as though you are that audience. Does the document assume knowledge the audience does not have? Does it explain things the audience already knows? Does it use language the audience would not use? Does it adopt a tone the audience would dismiss? If a member of the intended audience were available to read it, would that person find it credible—or would they identify the writer as an outsider performing the role?

MET: The document speaks to its intended audience without condescension or inaccessibility. A reader from the intended audience confirms (through peer review) that the document is useful and clear. Or, in the absence of a reader from the exact intended audience, the document demonstrates calibration—its vocabulary, assumptions, tone, and structure match the conventions of documents written for that audience.

PARTIAL: The document is generally appropriate but slips in places—a section that assumes too much technical knowledge, a passage that shifts into a different register, or a tone that wavers between audiences. The intended reader could follow it but would notice the inconsistencies.

NOT MET: The document is written for me, not the reader. It assumes the reader shares my context, knowledge, or values. Or it is written for a generic audience rather than the specific audience the unit identifies. A document meant for policymakers that reads like a personal essay, or a teach-back explanation that uses jargon the target learner would not know, does not meet this criterion.

Assessment by Deliverable Category

The five universal criteria apply to every deliverable. But deliverables differ in type, and each type has additional standards specific to its purpose. This section defines those standards by category.

Category 1: Reference Documents and Frameworks

Deliverables in this category: Research Methodology Reference Document (F-1), AI Foundations Reference Document (AI-1), Grammar Reference Card (W-2), Financial Literacy Reference Guide (FIN-1), Legal Compliance Reference Document (LEG-1), AI Product Evaluation Framework (AI-3), Rhetorical Strategy Memos (W-3).

The governing standard: A reference document exists to be used, not to be read once. It is a tool. The test is whether another person can pick it up and use it without me present to explain it.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Usability test. Hand the document to a peer who has not seen it before. Ask the peer to perform a specific task using the document as a guide. For a grammar reference card: look up the rule for comma splices and apply it to a sample sentence. For the AI evaluation framework: evaluate a hypothetical product using the framework's criteria. For the financial literacy guide: calculate a break-even point using the formula and method in the guide. If the peer can complete the task using only the document, the usability test is passed. If the peer requires verbal explanation from me, the document needs revision at the point where confusion occurred.

Completeness test. The document covers every element specified in the curriculum unit's deliverable description. Compare the finished document against the unit entry in the curriculum architecture. If the unit says the reference document contains six elements, the document contains six elements. Missing elements are not compensated for by the quality of the elements present.

Currency provision. Reference documents may become outdated as my knowledge deepens. Each reference document includes a date of last revision and a note on what would trigger a revision (new error patterns identified, new AI concepts encountered, new legal developments). A reference document that was accurate in month six but is no longer accurate in month eighteen has failed the currency provision—not because the original was wrong, but because I did not maintain it.

Category 2: Research Archive Work

Deliverables in this category: Observation entries (F-2, Form 1), monthly syntheses (F-2, Form 5), quarterly research briefs (F-3), protocol adjustment memo (F-2), long-form research paper (F-4), Research Archive Summary and Index (D-4).

The governing standard: Research work is governed by one principle above all others: the separation of fact from inference. A research archive that does not maintain this distinction is a diary, regardless of its volume or the quality of its prose.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Fact/inference separation test. Review a random sample of ten observation entries from the archive. For each entry, identify whether the OBSERVED section contains only facts (verifiable by a second observer who was present) and the INFER section contains only interpretations (labeled as such). If any entry mixes fact and inference in the same section, the entry fails. If more than two of the ten sampled entries fail, the archive's quality standard is not being maintained, and I must review and correct the pattern before producing further entries.

Pattern support test (for monthly syntheses and quarterly briefs). Every pattern or finding claimed in a synthesis or brief must cite specific entry numbers. Check each cited entry. Does the cited observation actually support the claimed pattern, or have I selected entries that confirm what I want to find? This is the confirmation bias countermeasure. If a finding is supported only by entries I would have noticed because they confirmed my expectations, the finding is suspect. At least one finding per quarterly brief must address something I did not expect.

Counterexplanation test (for quarterly briefs and the research paper). Every finding must address the strongest alternative explanation. "Incarcerated people stop studying because the programs are inadequate" may be true—but the strongest counterexplanation might be "incarcerated people stop studying because the immediate social costs of visible effort outweigh the uncertain long-term benefits." If the brief does not engage with the strongest counterexplanation, Criterion 3 is not met for that finding.

Consistency test (for the archive as a whole). The cumulative entry count is checked against the calendar. Gaps in numbering reveal gaps in practice. A gap is not a failure—institutional disruptions happen. An undocumented gap is a failure. Every gap in the entry sequence must be explained in the weekly review (Form 4) or monthly synthesis (Form 5) for the period in which it occurred.

Category 3: Operational Documents

Deliverables in this category: Daily routine (T1-1), Resource Inventory and Acquisition Plan (T1-2), Peer Network Assessment (T1-3), first writing portfolio (T1-4).

The governing standard: Operational documents are plans that have been tested against reality. A plan that exists only on paper and has never been followed is a hypothesis. A plan that has been followed, adjusted, and documented through adjustment is operational.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Field-tested. The daily routine has been followed for the minimum consecutive period specified in the unit's mastery standard (30 days for T1-1). The resource inventory has been used to acquire at least one item. The peer network assessment is based on observed behavior over the minimum period (60 days for T1-3), not on first impressions. If the document has not been tested, it is a draft, not a

deliverable.

Adjustment documented. Operational documents must be updated as conditions change. Each update is dated and notes what changed and why. An operational document that has never been updated in six months is either perfect (unlikely) or neglected. The monthly synthesis (Form 5) for each month should reference the status of operational documents and note any updates.

Honesty test (specific to T1-3 Peer Network Assessment). The avoidance list reflects my own vulnerability to certain associations—not a judgment of other people's character. The assessment asks: "Does this list name dynamics I am susceptible to, or does it name people I have decided are beneath me?" The first is self-knowledge. The second is arrogance.

Category 4: Diagnostic and Revision Work

Deliverables in this category: Grammar Diagnostic Report (W-1), revised documents with revision memos (W-2).

The governing standard: Diagnostic work is honest or it is worthless. A grammar diagnostic that minimizes my error patterns to protect my ego produces a comfortable report and a writing practice that never improves. The standard is not how the report reads but whether it leads to measurable improvement.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Specificity test. Error categories are named with precision. "Comma problems" is not a diagnosis. "Comma splice between independent clauses" is. "Run-on sentences" is not a diagnosis. "Fused sentences where two independent clauses join without punctuation or conjunction" is. The diagnostic must name the error at a level specific enough that I can write a rule for it, recognize it in unfamiliar text, and correct it.

Honesty test. The diagnostic is compared against the writing samples it analyzed. A peer reviewer reads three of the analyzed samples and independently identifies the most frequent error categories. If the peer's findings do not match the diagnostic, the diagnostic is revised. I do not get to decide that my errors are minor when a reader finds them significant.

Improvement test (for W-2 revisions). The revised documents are compared against the originals. Every change is documented in the revision memo: what was changed, what rule it violated, and why the revision is correct. A revised document that contains new instances of the same diagnosed errors has not met the standard—the revision demonstrates that the rule was not internalized, only applied once under conscious attention.

Category 5: Analytical and Persuasive Writing

Deliverables in this category: Multi-audience documents (W-3), persuasive documents with counterargument addenda (W-5), domain analyses (AI-2, AI-4, AI-5), cross-domain synthesis and cold

evaluation (AI-6), platform content (CP-2 content modules).

The governing standard: Analytical writing makes claims and supports them. Persuasive writing makes claims, supports them, and anticipates resistance. Both require me to know the difference between what I believe and what I can demonstrate. A document that asserts without evidence is an editorial. A document that addresses only friendly objections is a performance.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Thesis isolation test. The document's central claim can be stated in one sentence. If I cannot state it in one sentence, the document has not achieved focus. Write the sentence before rereading the document. Then reread. If the document supports that sentence throughout, the thesis is governing. If sections of the document serve a different thesis—or no thesis—the structure needs revision.

Evidence traceability. Every claim in the analytical or persuasive section traces to a specific source: an observation entry number, a page in a referenced text, a data point in a financial model, or a statute citation. "According to research" is not a citation. "According to Entry 47, recorded on March 12" is.

Audience calibration test (for W-3 multi-audience documents). The three documents are read by the same peer reviewer. Without being told which audience each document addresses, the reviewer identifies the intended audience for each. If the reviewer cannot distinguish them—if all three read the same—the audience calibration has failed.

Counterargument strength test (for W-5 and all persuasive elements). The counterargument addendum is read independently of the main document. Does the addendum present the opposition's best argument—one that would require me to revise if I could not answer it? Or does it present a weakened version that is easy to dismiss? A useful heuristic: if the counterargument makes me uncomfortable, it is probably the right one. If it is easy to answer, it is probably a strawman.

Domain analysis completeness (for AI-2, AI-4, AI-5). Each domain analysis follows the structure specified in the curriculum unit entry. For AI-2 (carceral education): learning environment, AI use cases, limitations and risks, recommendations. For AI-4 (legal guidance): defendant and family needs, AI use cases, legal and ethical boundaries, product requirements. For AI-5 (construction safety): landscape analysis, product evaluations, business case. Missing sections are not compensated for by the quality of the sections present.

Category 6: Professional Format Documents

Deliverables in this category: Professional Document Portfolio (W-4: policy brief, curriculum unit, research summary, analytical essay).

The governing standard: Professional documents are recognized by their format. A policy brief that does not look and function like a policy brief—regardless of the quality of its argument—has not met the standard. The convention is part of the competency.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Format recognition test. A reader familiar with the document type recognizes the deliverable as an example of that type within the first page. A policy brief opens with a recommendation or a problem statement, not with background. A research summary opens with the research question and findings, not with my personal interest in the topic. A curriculum unit opens with learning objectives, not with a philosophical statement about education. If the format is not recognizable, the document is an essay wearing a costume.

Convention compliance. Each document type has conventions. The standards for each:

Policy brief: States the problem in the first paragraph. Recommends a specific action. Supports the recommendation with evidence. Addresses implementation considerations. Does not exceed the length expected by the intended audience (typically two to eight pages, depending on the audience). Uses headers and structure that allow a busy reader to find the recommendation without reading the entire document.

Curriculum unit or lesson plan: States learning objectives that are specific and measurable ("the learner will be able to..." followed by an observable action). Sequences instruction logically—each section builds on the prior section. Includes exercises or activities that test the objectives. Includes an assessment aligned with the objectives, not with general impressions of understanding.

Research summary: States the research question. Describes the method. Reports the findings—what was found, not what I hoped to find. Acknowledges limitations. Distinguishes findings from implications. Does not editorialize within the findings section.

Analytical essay: Builds a sustained argument across multiple paragraphs. Does not merely describe—it analyzes (identifies causes, evaluates significance, draws conclusions). Uses evidence from multiple sources, not from a single authority. Reaches a conclusion that follows from the analysis, not from my preexisting beliefs.

Category 7: Curriculum Materials

Deliverables in this category: Curriculum units for Unfettered (W-7).

The governing standard: Curriculum materials are tested by the learner they serve, not by me. The standard is not whether I am satisfied with the unit. The standard is whether an incarcerated learner with no background in the topic can work through the unit and produce the required deliverable.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Learner test. At least one peer in the facility attempts the curriculum unit. I observe (or the peer reports) where the learner gets stuck—where the instructions are unclear, where assumptions are wrong, where the difficulty spikes without scaffolding. Each point of failure indicates a revision need. A curriculum unit that has not been tested with a learner is a draft, regardless of how polished the writing is.

Objective alignment. The learning objectives stated at the beginning of the unit match the assessment at the end. If the objective says "the learner will be able to explain the difference between legal

information and legal advice," the assessment requires the learner to explain that difference—not to list definitions, not to answer a multiple-choice question, not to demonstrate a different skill entirely.

Accessibility test. The unit's instructional content is written at a reading level accessible to an adult with a high school education or equivalent. Technical terms are defined at first use. No paragraph assumes knowledge the unit has not provided or listed as a prerequisite.

Production assessment. The assessment requires the learner to produce something—a written explanation, a completed exercise, a teach-back, a document. No assessment in the curriculum relies on recognition (multiple choice, true/false, matching). The deliverable is the evidence of learning. If the learner cannot produce the deliverable, the learner has not met the standard—and the curriculum unit may be at fault, not the learner.

Category 8: Business and Financial Documents

Deliverables in this category: Preliminary Financial Model (FIN-1), Business Plan and Financial Projections (CP-3), refined financial models (FIN-2), platform requirements document (CP-1).

The governing standard: Business and financial documents are governed by internal consistency and explicit assumptions. A financial model whose arithmetic is correct but whose assumptions are hidden is a deception—of investors, of partners, and of myself. Every number must be traceable to an assumption, and every assumption must be stated.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Arithmetic verification. Every calculation in the document is checked. Revenue times volume equals total revenue. Costs are itemized and totaled. Cash flow reflects the timing of income and expenses—not just the annual totals. Break-even calculations are correct. If any arithmetic error is found, the entire model is rechecked before the deliverable is assessed. One error may be a mistake. A pattern of errors suggests I am estimating rather than calculating.

Assumption transparency. Every assumption underlying the financial model is stated explicitly in a designated section. Assumptions include: projected price per unit, projected volume, customer acquisition cost, growth rate, cost categories and their basis, and any variable that, if changed, would change the conclusion. A model with hidden assumptions—numbers that appear without explanation—is not met on Criterion 2 (evidence-based) regardless of the quality of the arithmetic.

Scenario differentiation. Where multiple scenarios are required (optimistic, baseline, conservative), the scenarios must differ in assumptions, not in arithmetic quality. All three scenarios must be calculated with equal rigor. The assumptions that differ between scenarios must be identified and justified. "The optimistic scenario assumes higher growth" is not a justification. "The optimistic scenario assumes a 15 percent monthly growth rate based on comparable legal technology platforms' first-year performance, versus the baseline scenario's 8 percent based on conservative customer acquisition projections" is.

Sensitivity identification. I can identify the two or three variables that have the most impact on the model's outcome and explain why. The sensitivity analysis tests what happens when those variables change. A model that projects profitability but does not test what happens if customer acquisition costs double is not stress-tested.

Developer readability (for CP-1 platform requirements). The requirements document is specific enough that a developer unfamiliar with the project could begin technical design. Feature specifications describe what the system does, not what it is like. "The platform provides users with information about sentencing guidelines" is a feature description. "The platform displays federal sentencing guideline ranges based on user-entered offense level and criminal history category, with a disclaimer stating that the information is for reference only and does not constitute legal advice" is a feature specification.

Category 9: Publication-Ready Writing

Deliverables in this category: Publication Portfolio (W-6), additional publications (D-1).

The governing standard: Publication-ready writing must survive editorial scrutiny, hold a reader's attention across thousands of words, and make an original contribution. The standard is not whether I am proud of it. The standard is whether an editor at the intended outlet would consider it ready for publication—or at minimum, worth a revision request rather than a rejection.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Originality test. The piece says something that has not already been said by every other writer on the topic. This does not require a revolutionary thesis. It requires that my perspective—informed by firsthand research, lived experience, and the analytical work of the curriculum—produces insight a reader cannot get from a general internet search. A piece on carceral education that repeats the standard arguments (recidivism statistics, underfunding, lack of programming) without adding original observation or analysis is not publication-ready. It is competent summary.

Voice test. The piece sounds like me, not like a professional register applied to a topic. The voice profile's litmus test applies: "Does this sound like something I would actually write—or does it sound like an AI trying very hard to imitate me?" If the piece could have been written by any competent writer on the same topic, the voice is absent. If the piece carries the specific rhythms, preferences, and commitments documented in the voice profile, the voice is present.

Revision depth. Each publication-ready piece must undergo at least two revision cycles with documented changes. A revision cycle is not a proofreading pass. It is a structural reconsideration: does the opening earn the reader's attention, does the argument build rather than repeat, does every paragraph serve the thesis, does the ending resolve rather than trail off? The revision memo documents what changed between drafts and why—not "I fixed some sentences" but "I moved the counterargument from paragraph eight to paragraph four because the reader needs to encounter it before the evidence, not after."

Submission readiness. At least one piece in the portfolio has been formatted for and submitted to a specific outlet (salvadorcastaneda.com, Unfettered's platform, or an external publication that accepts

mail submissions). Submission does not require acceptance. It requires that I have committed to placing the work before a reader who did not ask for it.

Category 10: Platform Design Documents

Deliverables in this category: Platform content architecture and content modules (CP-2), stress-test report (CP-4), revised platform design summary (CP-4).

The governing standard: Platform design documents must hold together as a system, not merely as individual documents. The requirements document (CP-1, assessed under Category 8) defines what the platform does. The content modules (CP-2) deliver the information users access. The stress-test (CP-4) verifies internal consistency. The revised design summary (CP-4) integrates everything into a working blueprint. Each must function independently, but together they must cohere—no contradictions, no gaps, no features described in one document and absent from another.

Additional criteria beyond the universal five:

Legal compliance check (for CP-2 content modules). Every content module is checked against the LEG-1 Legal Compliance Reference Document's compliance checklist. No module crosses the boundary from legal information into legal advice. Each module includes appropriate disclaimers. The check is documented—which checklist items were tested, whether each passed—on a per-module basis. A content module that has not been compliance-checked is not assessed.

User accessibility (for CP-2 content modules). Content is written at a reading level accessible to a person with a high school education. Technical and legal terms are defined at first use. The tone is appropriate for a person in crisis—no false reassurance, no condescension, no jargon that distances me from the reader's situation.

Cross-document consistency (for CP-4 stress-test). The stress-test report compares CP-1, CP-2, CP-3, and LEG-1 against each other. Features described in CP-1 must be represented in CP-2's content architecture. Legal constraints in LEG-1 must be reflected in CP-2's content and CP-1's feature specifications. Revenue projections in CP-3 must align with the pricing model described in CP-1. Any inconsistency identified is documented in the stress-test report and resolved in the revised design summary.

Self-contained test (for CP-4 revised design summary). A reader unfamiliar with any of the preceding documents can understand the platform's purpose, design, constraints, and business model from the revised design summary alone. If the reader must consult CP-1, CP-2, CP-3, or LEG-1 to understand the summary, the summary is not self-contained.

The Teach-Back Test

The teach-back test appears on Form 6 for every deliverable. It is not a formality. It is the final gate—the point at which my comprehension is externalized and verified.

The procedure:

- I select the deliverable's core argument or method—the one thing the deliverable must communicate. For a policy brief, it is the recommendation and its justification. For a financial model, it is the logic connecting assumptions to projections. For a domain analysis, it is the central finding.
- I explain that core argument or method, in plain language, to a person who has no background in the subject. This person may be a peer in the facility, a family member receiving a letter, or any available audience. The explanation is written on Form 6.
- The listener restates the explanation in his own words. If the listener's restatement accurately captures the core argument or method, the teach-back test is passed. If the listener cannot restate it, or restates it incorrectly, the teach-back test has identified a comprehension gap—either in the deliverable or in my understanding of it.

What the teach-back test catches: I may have produced a document that is technically correct, well-evidenced, and mechanically sound—but that I do not actually understand. This happens when I have assembled material from sources without internalizing the reasoning. The teach-back test exposes this because I cannot explain what I do not understand. I can only recite.

What to do when the teach-back test fails: The failure is diagnostic. Where did the explanation break down? That is where my comprehension is weakest. I return to the source material for that section, rework the relevant portion of the deliverable, and retake the teach-back test.

Peer Review

Peer review is required for every deliverable assessed via Form 6. The reviewer is another person—not me. In a federal facility, the reviewer is an incarcerated peer identified through the T1-3 Peer Network Assessment.

What the reviewer does:

- Reads the deliverable without me present to explain or defend it. The document must stand on its own.
- Identifies: what was clear, what was unclear, what was unconvincing, and what was missing. The reviewer records these observations. The format is open—the reviewer may write notes, mark the document, or provide verbal feedback that I record.
- Reports to me. I record the reviewer's observations on Form 6 under "Peer Review Notes."

What I do with the feedback:

- Every point where the reviewer found the document unclear is treated as a revision need, unless I can demonstrate that the unclearness was the reviewer's limitation rather than the document's failure—and I must make this case in writing, not merely assert it. The default assumption is that

the document failed, not the reviewer.

• Every point where the reviewer found the document unconvincing is treated as an analytical weakness, not a reader problem. I revise the argument, not the audience.

• Revisions are documented on Form 6 under "What did I revise?"

What to do when no peer reviewer is available:

If no willing or capable reviewer is available (due to transfer, lockdown, population dynamics, or the absence of a literate peer), I note this on Form 6 and mark the deliverable as APPROVED (PROVISIONAL). The provisional status is resolved when a reviewer becomes available—the deliverable is reviewed and the provisional status is either confirmed or converted to REVISE.

I do not use the absence of a reviewer as a permanent excuse to avoid external evaluation. If three or more consecutive deliverables are assessed without peer review, I must document why in the monthly synthesis and identify what I am doing to restore external review capacity. A curriculum assessed entirely by the person it is designed to hold accountable is a curriculum that has failed its own principle.

The Revision Process

A deliverable that does not meet the mastery standard is not discarded. It is revised. The revision process is structured, not open-ended.

Step 1: Identify the failures. Form 6 identifies which criteria scored PARTIAL or NOT MET. The teach-back test and peer review identify specific points of weakness. These are recorded on Form 6 under "What remains."

Step 2: Diagnose the cause. For each failure, I determine whether the problem is comprehension (I do not understand the material well enough), execution (I understand the material but did not produce the deliverable competently), or honesty (I understood and could have executed, but cut corners). The diagnosis is recorded in the revision memo.

Step 3: Address the cause, not the symptom. A comprehension failure requires returning to the source material—rereading, re-engaging the retrieval practice cycle, and rebuilding the section from renewed understanding. An execution failure requires revision of the specific section. An honesty failure requires me to name what I avoided and why. The voice profile's red flags apply: minimization, justification, and performance of effort without substance are disqualifying.

Step 4: Revise and resubmit. The revised deliverable is reassessed on a new Form 6. The revision memo accompanies the resubmission and documents what changed, why it changed, and what caused the original failure. The teach-back test and peer review are repeated.

Step 5: No infinite loops. If a deliverable fails assessment three times, I do not attempt a fourth revision immediately. I pause the unit, advance other work, and return to the failed deliverable after additional study in the relevant competency area. The pause is documented in the monthly synthesis. A deliverable that fails repeatedly is signaling that I am not ready for it—not that I need to try harder at the

same level of preparation.

Retrieval Practice Assessment

Retrieval practice is not assessed through Form 6. It is assessed through Form 3 (Retrieval Practice Log) and the weekly review (Form 4). The standards:

Daily practice is non-negotiable. Form 3 is completed every morning, before consulting any notes or references. The log records the prompt, the answer from memory, and the honest result. Missed days are documented in the weekly review. Three or more missed days in a single week triggers a course correction entry in the next weekly review—what happened, what will change.

Honesty is the only useful standard. A retrieval practice log in which every prompt is marked "fully correct" for weeks on end is either evidence of genuine mastery or evidence of dishonest self-assessment. I distinguish between the two by testing myself under tighter conditions: answering the prompt verbally to a peer, or writing the answer and comparing it word-for-word against the source. If the answers are consistently fully correct under these tighter conditions, the prompts are being mastered. If not, the log has been inflated.

Spaced repetition cycle compliance. Failed prompts return the next day. Passed prompts move to three-day intervals, then seven-day intervals. A prompt that passes at the seven-day interval is retired. The cycle is tracked on a calendar or in the notebook. The weekly review (Form 4) confirms that the cycle is being followed—not that every prompt was answered correctly, but that the system is running.

Self-Deception Countermeasures

This section consolidates the mechanisms embedded throughout the assessment system that guard against the specific vulnerability I have identified in myself: the capacity to make irrational conclusions appear rational by eliminating alternatives and evaluating myself favorably without testing the evaluation.

Countermeasure 1: Falsifiable criteria. Every criterion in this document has a test that produces a result I cannot easily reinterpret. The tests are designed to generate evidence, not impressions. A peer reviewer either can or cannot restate the argument. A financial model either does or does not balance. A diagnosed error pattern either recurs or does not. My opinion of my own work is not a test result.

Countermeasure 2: External evaluation as default. Teach-back and peer review are not optional supplements. They are structural requirements. My self-assessment is one input. The external reviewer's assessment is the binding input. Where the two conflict, the external assessment governs unless I can demonstrate in writing why the reviewer's assessment is wrong—and the burden of proof is on me, not the reviewer.

Countermeasure 3: Provisional status for unreviewed work. A deliverable assessed without external review is APPROVED (PROVISIONAL), not APPROVED. The provisional status is a visible flag that the assessment is incomplete. It does not expire. It converts only when external review occurs.

Countermeasure 4: Documented revision history. Every revision is documented with what changed and why. The revision history is cumulative—it creates a record of what I got wrong and how I addressed it. If I never revise, I am either producing perfect work from the start (unlikely over 63 months) or avoiding honest assessment. The absence of revisions is itself a red flag.

Countermeasure 5: Monthly self-audit. The monthly synthesis (Form 5) includes a course correction section. I am required to name what needs to change—not just what I completed. A monthly synthesis that reports only progress and no problems is treated with suspicion. The research protocol's confirmation bias standard applies to my self-assessment: if the monthly synthesis matches my expectations perfectly, I should question whether I am assessing or confirming.

Countermeasure 6: The cross-thread principle. The Socratic dialogues concluded that my mind, left to evaluate itself, will return a favorable verdict. This principle is not a philosophical observation. It is an operational constraint on the assessment system. Every assessment procedure in this document is designed with the assumption that I will, at some point, be tempted to pass work that does not meet the standard. The system does not rely on my integrity to function. It relies on the structural impossibility of advancing substandard work past external review, falsifiable criteria, and documented revision.

The system is not foolproof. If I am determined to deceive myself, I can circumvent any system. But a system that requires me to circumvent multiple independent checks at least forces the deception to be deliberate rather than unconscious—and deliberate self-deception is harder to sustain than the passive drift I have already identified as my pattern.

Mastery Advancement Rule

A unit is complete when its deliverable meets all five universal criteria (no NOT MET scores), passes the teach-back test, passes peer review, and meets all additional category-specific criteria applicable to the deliverable type. The completed Form 6 with a verdict of APPROVED (or APPROVED after revision) is the unit's completion record.

A unit with any criterion scored NOT MET does not advance. The deliverable is revised and resubmitted.

A unit with criteria scored PARTIAL may advance only if the partial scores are accompanied by a documented plan to address the gap—and the gap is addressed before the next monthly synthesis. PARTIAL is acceptable as a temporary condition. It is not acceptable as a permanent state.

The curriculum does not track grades. It tracks binary outcomes: the deliverable meets the standard or it does not. There is no distinction between a deliverable that barely meets the standard and one that exceeds it. The standard is the standard. If I meet it, I have demonstrated the competency. If I do not, I have not. The curriculum has no interest in ranking performance. It has interest in confirming mastery.