How I Passed The AIGP Exam in Under 3 Months
Even Without Tech, Legal, or AI Background

Your AIGP "Exam Game Plan"

A practical guide with mindset tips, study strategies, and lessons learned from someone who passed in under 90 days.

💡 Plus: What I Learned from Mentoring 20 Candidates

What You'll Find in This Guide

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Important Disclaimer

This guide is a personal, non-commercial study reflection.

It is **not affiliated with, reviewed by, or endorsed by IAPP**, nor does it contain any actual AIGP exam questions or proprietary content.

All insights, analogies, and strategies shared here are based on my own experience preparing for the AIGP exam in July 2025 including lessons I gathered while mentoring other learners.

Please refer to the **official IAPP Candidate Handbook** and authorized training resources for exam preparation.

Sincerely,

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How I Passed the AIGP Exam in Under 3 Months without legal/tech/data background

and What I Learned from 20 Mentoring Calls

Over the past two weeks, I've had the privilege of speaking with 20 AIGP exam candidates after passing my exam on July 9. Each person brought a different story, different backgrounds, goals, and challenges but what united them was the same drive to grow and contribute in the space of AI governance.

These conversations reminded me of my own experience:
The overwhelm.
The self-doubt.
The cost of the exam.
The pressure to prove myself in a new role or build something entirely new.

I promised my Linkedin network that I'd write down the insights, reflections, and emotional truths that surfaced in our calls so no one would feel like they were figuring it all out alone. This is that summary.

Whether you're preparing for your first attempt or recovering from a setback, I hope this helps you study smarter, feel supported, and stay grounded.

1. Why I Wrote This & Who I Spoke To

Across 20+ calls, I connected with professionals from across the globe - US, UK, India, Australia, Europe, and Africa. Most were mid- to senior-level professionals pivoting into AI governance, or being asked to lead new initiatives within their existing roles.

Some were first-time takers. Others were preparing to reattempt after an earlier try. Their job titles spanned data protection, IT audit, regulatory law, cybersecurity, risk, and compliance.

What stood out to me was their personal stakes.

"Everyone expects me to know this, but I've never worked directly with AI models."
-   Data Protection Officer, 15+ years in privacy law

"There's no roadmap. But I know this is where I need to go."
-   Former IT auditor moving into AI risk

"I've worked in tech for years, and I'm still struggling to connect these frameworks."
-   Cybersecurity expert after 6 months of study

"I've been chipping away at this for a year between work, kids, and burnout."
-   Compliance officer preparing for a second attempt

Some felt like the "only AI person" in their organization. Many were driven by a personal mission to contribute meaningfully but still wrestled with doubts.

2. Emotional Struggles Many Candidates Face

Across all 20+ mentoring calls, I heard a common thread: deep, quiet pressure beneath the surface.

It didn't matter if someone had a decade of experience in privacy or risk; the AIGP exam often brought out deeper feelings of uncertainty:

- *"I've led GDPR audits for years, but this exam still left me questioning if I truly understood AI risk."*
- *"I missed the pass mark by just a few points, and it completely rattled my confidence."*
- *"I'm managing AI policy work, and yet the structure of these questions made me doubt myself."*
- *"I thought I'd breeze through, but now I'm worried I've lost credibility in front of my team."*
- *"Between work, caregiving, and late-night study, I honestly felt like I was on the edge."*

One person said, "In my entire department, I'm the only one focused on AI. Failing again would feel like letting everyone down."
Another shared, "I've never failed a professional exam before. This one shook something in me I didn't expect."

Even first-time takers described the pressure: "This exam is expensive. If I fail, I don't know when I'll get another shot."

What I realized is many of us were navigating much more than just exam - career transitions, layoffs, maternity leave, immigration deadlines, or rebuilding after burnout.

You're not behind. You're not alone. You're already doing something brave.

For many, studying for the AIGP wasn't just a career goal. It was a way to reclaim confidence and open a new chapter. For me, it marked the start of my journey as an entrepreneur.

3. How I Passed AIGP Exam In Under 3 Months/ Full Study Breakdown

(Study Timeline + Mindset + Tactics)

Two questions came up in nearly every call:
- How did you pass?
- How did you study?

Here's what I always tell people:

You don't need a legal, tech, or privacy background to succeed.
What matters most is having *a focused strategy, a realistic timeline, and the right mindset.*

- Everyone's journey looks different:
- Some candidates take 6+ months.
- Others power through in 4 weeks due to deadlines or job pressure.
- It really depends on how much focused time you can dedicate alongside your existing job, family, or other life commitments.

- For me, this was my main commitment during that season, so I treated it like a 3-month sprint to prototype a new career.

My Starting Point

- Came from the cosmetics industry
- 10+ years in commercial, brand, and distributor market management across Asia Pacific
- No law degree, no data privacy, nor tech background
- Just a clear goal: build a solo AI Governance consultancy in a new country, Netherlands

I Treated the Exam Like a Full-Time Job

- For 3 months, I studied as long as I was awake
- This certification was more than the credential - it was my lifeline
- I had just moved countries with no legal/tech background and no safety net
- Studying, attending webinars, joining AI events, building my consulting offer - this was my full-time job

Exam Timeline

- **Mid-April 2025**: Enrolled in Dr. Kyle David's AIGP Masterclass
- **25 June:** Took my first attempt and failed. *(My mistake: I only gave myself 10 days of intensive study)*
  Passed Domain 2 and Domain 3
  Failed Domain 1 and Domain 4 *(scored 56%, minimum is 60% per domain)*
- **Same night**: Rebooked my second attempt
- **9 July:** Passed second try with flying colours 🎉

What Changed the Second Time?

- Focused less on Domain 2 (already scored ~75%)
- Reviewed incorrect concepts the same day I got home
- Created handwritten mind maps to connect ideas
- Spoke concepts out loud as if teaching someone else
- Used ChatGPT to break down tough definitions and quiz myself
- Prioritized logic, structure, and understanding over memorization
- Gave myself 2 full days after 1st attempt to reset and refresh before jumping back in study mood
- Doubled down on what worked – mapping & applying concepts in real conversations, and not isolating myself

What You Can Take Away

- Choose *depth over quantity*, don't hoard resources
- Be *kind to yourself* - this is a tough but doable exam
- Have a study system that matches *your brain, time, and strengths*

If I could do it from scratch, so can you!
Especially if you're already in privacy, compliance, legal, tech or risk.
You've got more knowledge than you think.

4. Most Common Knowledge Gaps & Pitfalls (including my own mistakes)

These are examples of the most common learning challenges shared by mentees and ones I experienced myself.

- Confusion around the **differences between AI actors** (provider, deployer, importer, distributor) and their obligations especially when companies play multiple roles.
- Difficulty connecting **AI lifecycle stages** with AI Actor obligations/ various assessments / concepts.
- **Underestimating Domains 3 and 4** - many assumed they were short and easy, but they account for a high number of questions.
- Misinterpreting the **wording of questions** especially "EXCEPT," "ONLY," "BEST," or "LEAST" phrasing.
- Memorizing article numbers of laws instead of understanding the structure and logic.
- Uncertainty about various assessments and their use cases – eg: **FRIA (Fundamental Rights Impact Assessment)** how it differs from **DPIA**, and when it's mandatory under the EU AI Act.
- Lack of clarity around foundation models – eg: **GPAI (General Purpose AI)** unique risks & responsibilities, especially for downstream deployers using tools like Copilot or ChatGPT.
- Confusion about **incident reporting rules** under the EU AI Act - who reports what, when, and to which authority.
- **Trying to use too many resources at once**, instead of figuring out which format or course style works best for them.
- **Focusing too heavily on one domain** (e.g. ethics or technical), and not giving equal prep time to all four domains. You need at least 60% in each domain to pass.
- **Cramming too close to the exam instead of studying consistently** - AIGP requires time to absorb, not just memorize.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

- **"Is the certificate worth it?"**
  That depends on your goals but for me, the answer was a clear yes.
  This certification gave me much more than a credential. Body of Knowledge (BOK) gave me a structured way to learn, a common language to talk about AI governance, and a major confidence boost. Most importantly, it gave me credibility especially coming from a non-tech, non-legal background.

  I've since been invited into more strategic conversations, pilot projects, and opportunities I wouldn't have accessed otherwise. So if you're planning to work in this space seriously especially if you're pivoting or freelancing, it's an investment that can open doors.

- **"How technical is the exam?"**
  Most people worried they'd need machine learning expertise or tech background. The reality is: it's not a technical exam. It's about understanding AI governance concepts, legal obligations, and how to apply frameworks in context.

- **"Should I memorize the article numbers of the EU AI Act or GDPR?**
  Short answer: Not necessarily. It's much more useful to focus on what each framework is trying to achieve and how the obligations are structured especially under the EU AI Act. In my experience, the exam emphasized understanding over memorization of article numbers.

- **"Is the IAPP practice exam V2.0 format the same as the real exam?"**
  Not exactly. In my experience, the practice questions were often longer and more scenario-based. The actual exam questions felt shorter, more precise, and focused on concept clarity. I always tell people: treat practice questions as a tool to test your understanding not as a replica of the real exam format.

- **"Do I need to learn laws from the US, Canada, or just the EU AI Act?"**
  You'll need a working understanding of several global frameworks including NIST, OECD, and some US/Canadian laws but the **EU AI Act & how GDPR work together is the centerpiece**.

- **"Can I do this without a technical or legal background?"**
  Yes. I always share my own story here. I came from the cosmetics industry. If I could do it, anyone already working in privacy, ethics, or risk absolutely can.

- **"What's the format of the real exam?"**
  It's 100 multiple-choice questions in 3 hours. No open-ended or essay questions. No access to materials during the exam.

- **"How do I know I'm ready for the exam?"**
  This is one of the most common and hardest questions to answer. A strong sign is when you can confidently explain how key concepts connect: actor roles, lifecycle stages, various assessments triggers, AI actor obligations, and governance frameworks, all within one use case or scenario.

  In my case, I knew I wasn't ready the first time - I was scoring around 75% on practice questions and still felt gaps in my weaker domains. By the second attempt, I was consistently reaching 90–95% across all domains and could explain the logic out loud without notes. That's when I felt truly prepared.

  (See Section 7: Signs Might be Ready to Take the Exam for more.)

- **"Do I need to buy the official IAPP training course?"**
  It depends on your learning style, budget, and how much structure you prefer.

  IAPP's official training is designed by the team behind the certification and offers structured content aligned with the Body of Knowledge (BoK).

  Personally, I didn't purchase the official training due to budget constraints, so I explored additional self-study tools and peer discussions to support my learning. That worked for my situation but may not be ideal for everyone.

  What matters most is aligning your study approach with your goals and the BoK.

- **"What study materials should I use?"**
  The IAPP BoK and the exam blueprint are essential starting points. From there, choose supplementary materials that help you absorb the content more deeply.

  Some people benefit from video explanations, peer discussions, or printed regulations to follow along. I focused on a few resources that matched my learning style, and avoided overwhelming myself with too many options.

In short: stay close to the core content and find complementary formats that help you absorb the material without straying too far from the scope of the exam.

A lot of these questions opened the door to deeper, more personal conversations about study habits, learning styles, and confidence-building. In the next section, I'll walk through the exact strategies, tools, and mindset shifts that helped me prepare effectively and ultimately pass the AIGP exam.

6. Study Tricks That Helped Me

(Including How I Bounced Back Within 2 Weeks)

Everyone has their own rhythm, but here's what worked for me and what I often shared with others during our study calls:

- **Study Like You're Prototyping Your Future:** I treated this like building my future business. I studied full-time - listening to webinars, joining live events, replaying courses, asking questions in study groups, and testing myself aloud using flashcards and tools like ChatGPT.
- **Talk to Real People Working in AI Governance:** My biggest breakthroughs didn't come from textbooks. They came from conversations. I reached out to professionals in privacy, compliance, and AI governance. Hearing how they apply concepts in real-world work helped me absorb ideas more naturally. Don't be afraid to ask beginner questions, this is one of the most powerful (and overlooked) study tools.
- **Visual Mapping of AI Lifecycle and Actor Obligations:** I finally grasped these concepts by drawing side-by-side columns repeatedly on paper until I could explain them clearly without notes.
- **Say It Out Loud:** If you can confidently explain key concepts like AI lifecycle stages, Assessments triggers, or GPAI obligations without checking your notes, you're probably close to exam-ready.
- **Listen for Clues in Courses:** If your tutor or course says, "This is the important to note" pause and highlight. I missed these cues the first time. Don't repeat my mistake.
- **Link Concepts Across Domains:** For instance, connect Domain 3's design stage (data practices) with Article 10 of the EU AI Act. Data governance is critical. Bad data leads to bad outcomes, regardless of intent.
- **Use IAPP's Official Free Resources – you get access to them after you registered:** Especially helpful resources are the "Key Terms for AI Governance" and the "EU AI Act Compliance Matrix (At a Glance)". These clarified roles, responsibilities, and definitions for me.
- **Do Practice Questions Early:** Use them to spot your weak areas but remember, practice questions might be scenario-heavy while the real exam could ask for simple definitions. We need to be ready for both.
- **Understand Key Concepts and Uniqueness –** for example: GPAI Obligations (Articles 53–55**):** If you're using general-purpose AI tools like copilots, understand what obligations apply to deployers and what's uniquely expected from GPAI providers.
- **Handwritten Notes Helped Me Most:** I created mind maps by hand and stuck them on my walls. That tactile memory helped me retain concepts long-term.
- **Don't Study Alone:** If you're using a course like Dr. Kyle David's, join the related Discord community. If you're in another program, find its learning group. Passive reading has value, but discussion accelerates true understanding.
- **Prep for Exam Day:** Bring two valid photo IDs with your full name and signature (passport + national ID is safest). Read all the IAPP exam-day instruction emails in advance, and arrive early.

- **Pick the Right Exam Time for You:** I chose a 9:00 a.m. slot because I get anxious. Earlier exams gave me less time to spiral and helped me stay grounded.
- **Trust Your Gut on the First Try:** On my first exam, I second-guessed and changed too many answers. Most of my changes were wrong. The second time, I trusted my instincts and did much better.
- **What Really Matters:** Active recall, deep understanding, and connecting the dots across all four domains. You don't need to memorize everything just make sure you *understand* how it all fits together.
- **Use Analogies from Your Own Experience:** I used to work in cosmetics and regulatory affairs. I saw the AI providers like manufacturers, deployers like distributors, and deployer responsibilities like product safety checks. That clicked for me and it stuck. (explained further on my [linkedin post](#))
- **One Final Encouragement**
  If you've worked in supply chain, product safety, or compliance, you probably already follow structured workflows: risk checks, audit logs, approvals, traceability. That mindset is AI governance - just applied to algorithms instead of ingredients or contracts. Don't underestimate how transferable your experience is. You're more prepared than you think.

7. Signs You Might Be Ready to Take the Exam

These are signals I noticed in myself and heard from others that often indicate exam readiness:

- **You can explain actor roles and lifecycle stages out loud.**
  If someone asks, "What must a provider or deployer do at each stage of the AI lifecycle?", you don't need to pause or reach for notes.
- **You're comfortable with key assessments like "DPIA", "conformity assessment" and "FRIA."**
  You understand when and why they apply, what triggers them, and what obligations follow.
- **You can mentally map actors to responsibilities.**
  You can visualize or talk through which AI actor is responsible for which tasks before and after deployment.
- **You no longer second-guess every question.**
  You don't need to reread questions three times by the first read, you understand what's being asked.
- **You've created your own memory cues.**
  Whether it's a visual diagram, analogy from your work, or spotting trick words in phrasing, you've built tools that help you navigate exam logic.
- **You're consistently scoring 90-95% minimum in practice exams.**

If most of these feel true, you might be closer to ready than you realize.
(Also see: Section 5 - Frequently Asked Questions if you're still unsure.)

8. Encouragement for First-Time & Repeat Takers

- Don't let one failed attempt define you. I didn't pass the first time either. Of course, I felt devastate for one afternoon but that didn't stop me. Paid for the second exam on the same night and rebooked.
- If your memory's still fresh, retaking sooner can help, momentum matters.
- You're already ahead. Just preparing for this exam puts you miles ahead of many people working in or around AI today.
- The knowledge sticks. Even if you don't pass yet, what you've learned will change how you lead, question, and advise.

- This exam is a stepping stone, not the finish line. The real value is in how it shapes your thinking, sharpens your language, supports your next chapter.

9. Study Materials I used and Resources Examples

These are the key resources that supported my learning.
Everyone's study journey is different, but I hope this list gives you a starting point:

a) Dr David's AI Governance Professional (AIGP) Certification Masterclass Course – <u>Link</u>
b) Thought leaders I followed on Linkedin: <u>Dr David's Linkedin Page</u> , <u>Oliver Patel</u>
c) On IAPP Website –> Resources Tab (check your account access):
   o "Key Terms for AI Governance" – glossary of how the IAPP defines essential terms
   o "EU AI Act Compliance Matrix (At a Glance)" – quick matrix showing responsibility by actor
d) EU AI Act Official full regulation: <u>https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/</u>
e) <u>Deloitte's EU AI Act: Navigating the EU's new AI Regulation Analysis</u> – great breakdown of key concepts
f) Practice Exam Questions from IAPP website & Dr David Course
g) Additional Practice Engine Created by a fellow AIGP candidate (community-shared resource)
   <u>Practice Questions Engine</u> . Please use community tools responsibly and always cross-check with the official Body of Knowledge.

10. Visual Learning Tip

I'll include samples of my handwritten mind maps at the end of this guide, but I encourage you to make your own version.
Use colors, analogies, or layouts that work for your brain. The process of drawing is what deepens the learning.

DOMAIN (1) Coming from a non-AI background, I found Domain 1 especially tough to grasp. After my first attempt, I created this mind map while rewatching Dr. David's course and it was a total game-changer.
Sometimes, just seeing the connections laid out visually can make everything click together.
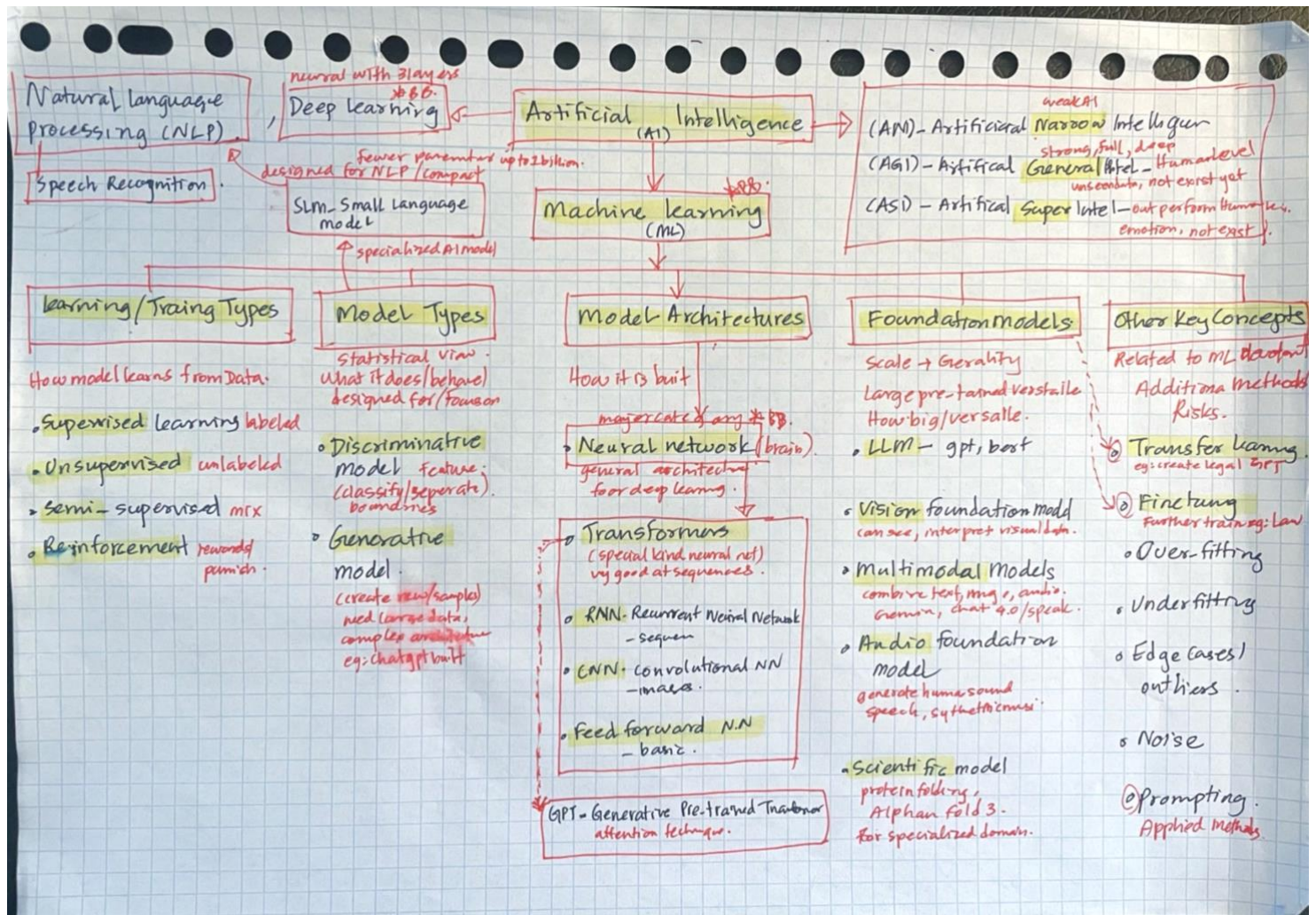
I didn't use fancy digital tools for mind maps- drawing them by hand is how I absorb concepts best. I tried using other people's study notes, but it didn't click until I mapped things out myself. That process of making the notes helped me truly understand.
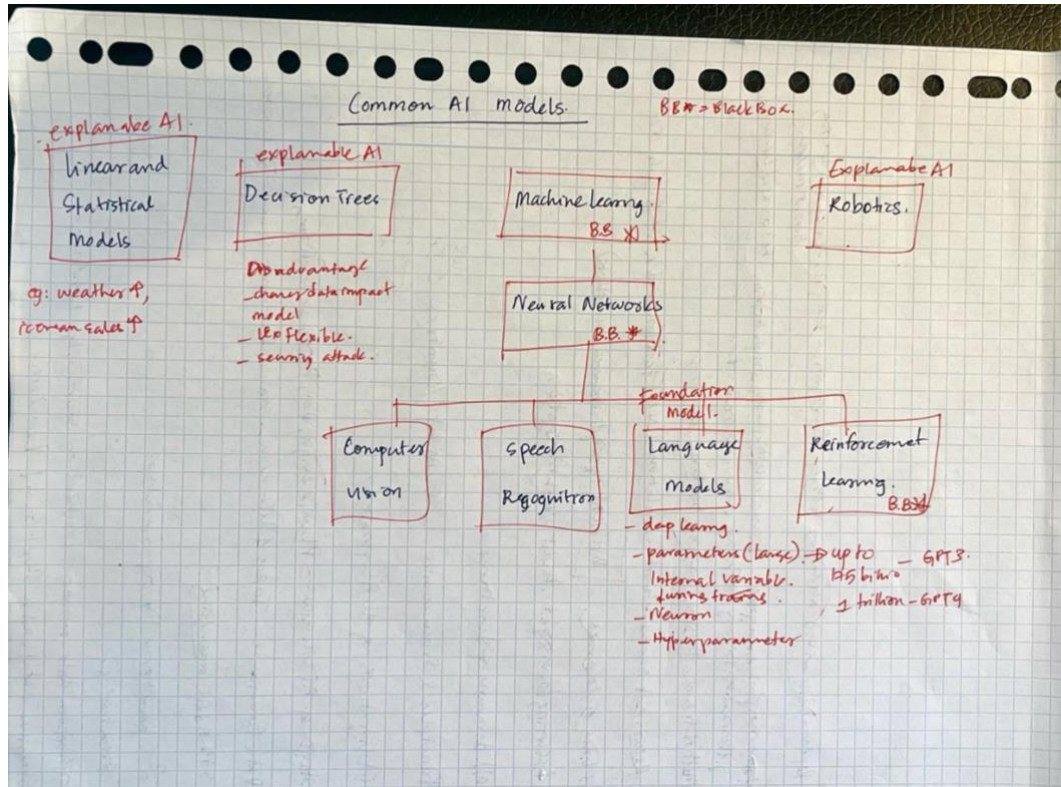

DOMAIN (2) I printed the entire EU AI Act from official website and cross read with Dr David Course.
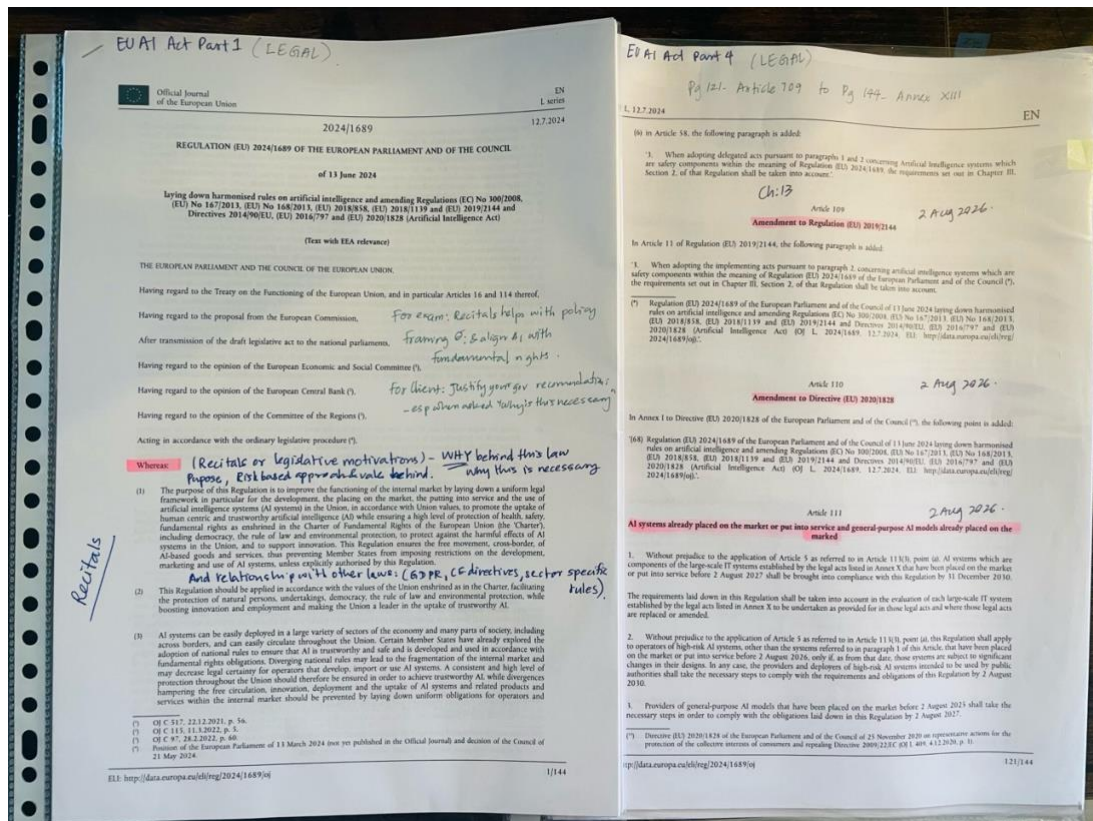
My AI Value Chain Analogy (FMCG Style). This sketch helped me visualize the AI actors under the EU AI Act using a cosmetics distribution chain. If you're from FMCG, pharma, or other regulated industries, this might feel familiar.
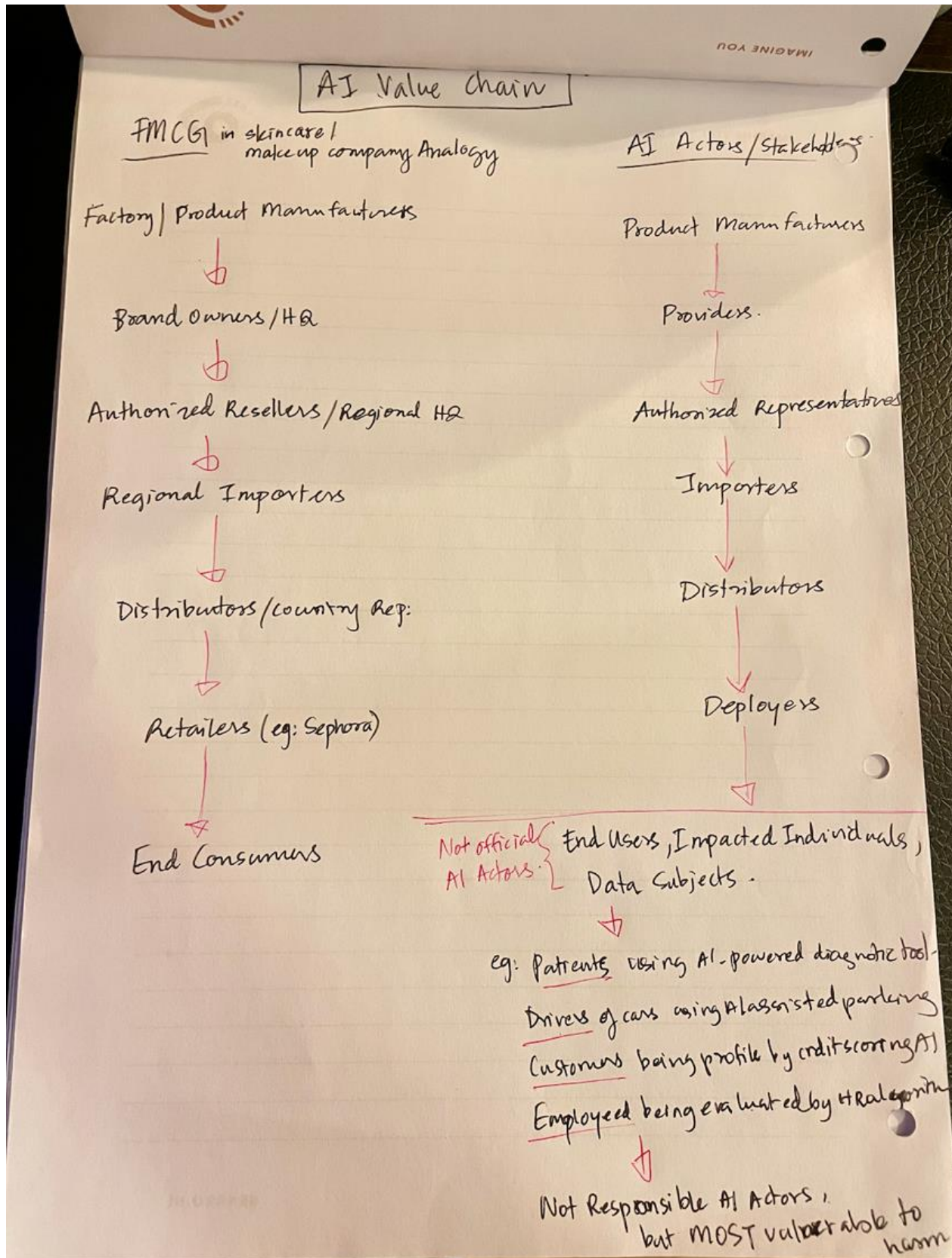
DOMAIN (3 & 4) Creating my own side-by-side AI Development Lifecycle map helped me most. Mapping the stages visually made it easier to understand what happens when and who is responsible.
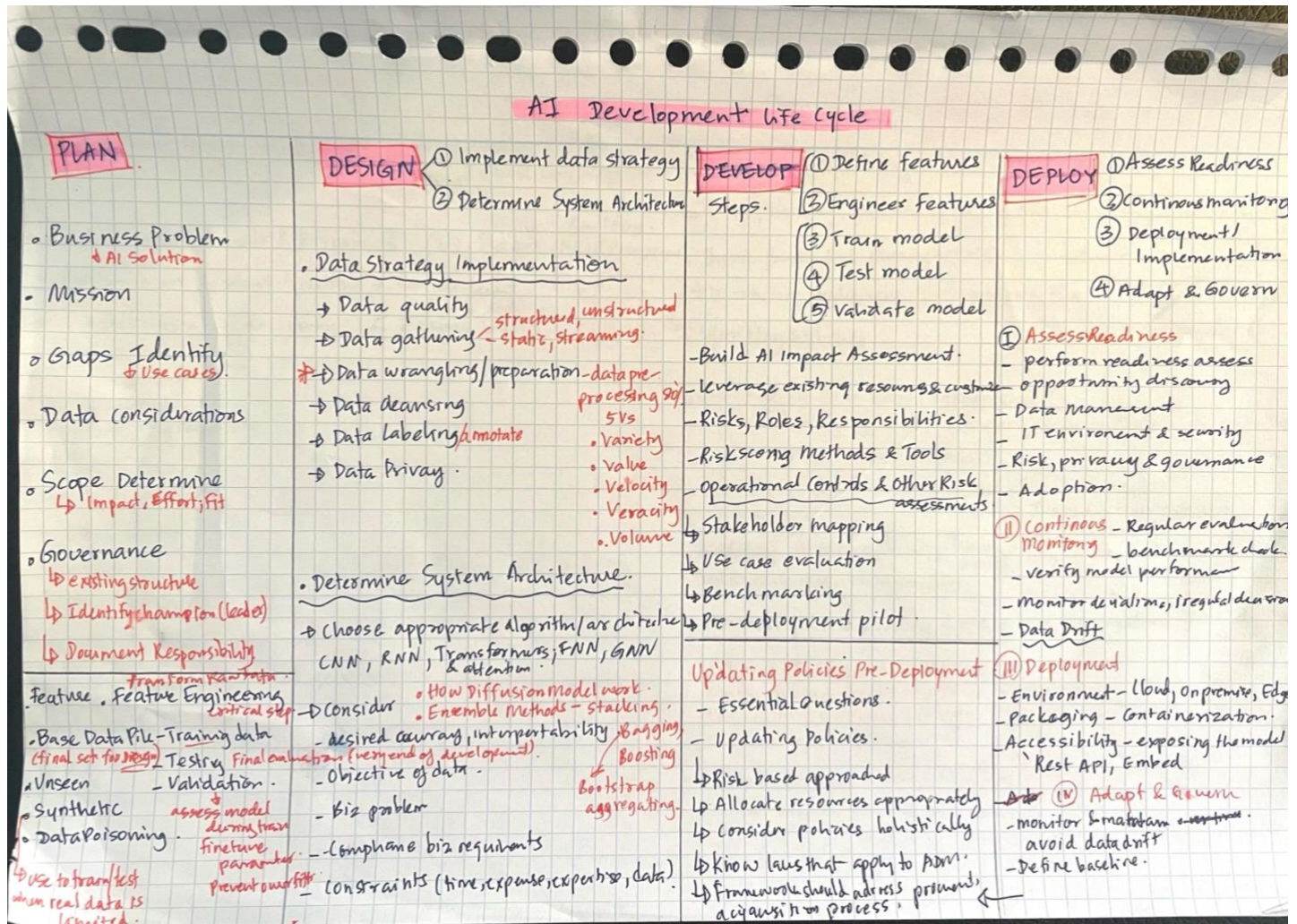
11. Disclaimer & Usage

This guide reflects my personal experience preparing for the AIGP exam in July 2025.
It is **not official guidance**, nor is it affiliated with or endorsed by IAPP or any training provider.

I created this resource to respond to recurring questions from fellow learners and to promote open, peer-driven learning.
For formal requirements, please always refer to the **IAPP website, the Candidate Handbook**, and official training materials.

Parts of this guide were structured with the help of AI tools under my direction. However, all insights, reflections, and practical advice come from my lived experience.

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Thank You & Final Note

If you've made it this far, thank you for reading!
I hope this guide gave you more clarity, confidence, or at least the
feeling that you're not alone.

This exam is not only about knowledge.
It's also about managing doubt, showing up even when you're unsure,
and choosing to keep learning.

Whether you're preparing for your first attempt or bouncing back from a
tough result, I'm rooting for you.

You've got this.
And if this guide helped you, feel free reach out. I'd love to hear how
your story unfolds.

Wishing you strength, focus, and peace of mind in your AIGP journey.
You are exactly where you need to be.

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