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Reconstruction Questions

A set of questions to help organizations assess whether they can reconstruct who held authority, what evidence existed, and how escalation worked at the time of decision.

Public resource · Reconstruction aid · Version 1.0

This resource helps teams test whether a decision pathway can be explained after the fact without relying on memory, assumptions, or retrospective rationalisation.

It is not legal advice, a technical audit, a compliance certification, or a substitute for internal governance review. Its function is to turn reconstructability into a concrete set of public-facing questions.

1. Why Reconstruction Questions Matter

In AI-assisted decision environments, the most important problem is not always whether a system formally decided. A more practical question is whether the organization can reconstruct how a technical output became human judgement and organizational action.

A pathway may contain policies, dashboards, approvals, logs, and sign-offs while still failing a reconstruction test. The organization may know what happened at the end, but not how the route formed under technical influence.

The central reconstruction question is:

Can we show, with contemporaneous evidence, how authority, evidence, discretion, escalation, and responsibility operated at the time of decision?

How to use this resource

Step	Action
1. Select one decision pathway	Choose one concrete route: an approval, rejection, prioritization, escalation, triage, review, restriction, or operational action.
2. Ask only evidence-backed questions	Mark unknowns honestly. Unknown is not failure; hidden uncertainty is the real risk.
3. Separate formal authority from practical authority	Do not stop at who signed. Ask who could understand, challenge, pause, override, or escalate.
4. Link technical records to decision records	Logs, workflow records, model outputs, review notes, and final decisions must connect to the same pathway.
5. Identify gaps before pressure arrives	The best time to discover a reconstruction gap is before audit, dispute, regulator, client challenge, or board scrutiny.

Pathway identification

Decision pathway	
Decision owner / accountable area	
Technical systems involved	
Operational effect	
Reason for reviewing this pathway now	

2. Authority and Ownership Questions

Authority reconstruction asks whether a named human or accountable function held real control at the relevant moment. Formal ownership is important, but it is weaker if the person could not see the evidence, challenge the route, or act before the decision became operationally binding.

Check	Reconstruction question	Notes / evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who held formal authority over the decision pathway at the time of decision?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who had practical authority to pause, challenge, modify, reject, or escalate the route before the decision took effect?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the human role reviewing a hypothesis, validating a recommendation, or merely confirming a pre-shaped outcome?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the organization show what the responsible human saw before acting?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was there enough time, interface clarity, and operational freedom for independent judgement?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If the human accepted a technical recommendation, is the reason for acceptance recorded?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If the human could override the system, is that override route viable, accepted, and evidenced?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can responsibility be separated between reviewer, approver, system owner, vendor, and accountable organization?	

Interpretation note

- If the answer is only "a human signed", reconstruction is probably incomplete.
- If the person accountable lacked access to evidence or practical discretion, formal authority may not be enough.
- If ownership is distributed across teams and vendors, the pathway needs a clear responsibility map.

3. Evidence and Contemporaneity Questions

Evidence reconstruction asks what existed at the time, what was visible to whom, and how it was transformed into judgement. The strongest record is not a polished explanation written after a challenge; it is a contemporaneous trail showing how the decision was formed.

Check	Reconstruction question	Notes / evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	What evidence existed at the time of decision?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What evidence was actually visible to the responsible human before the decision took effect?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What evidence was summarized, filtered, ranked, scored, highlighted, omitted, or deprioritized by a technical system?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the organization distinguish raw evidence, system interpretation, human reasoning, and final commitment?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were alternatives or rejected options documented where they materially mattered?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were uncertainty, confidence limits, missing data, disagreement, or exceptions visible before approval?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the rationale recorded contemporaneously, or written later after the outcome was questioned?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the record show why this decision, and not another plausible decision, was taken?	

Evidence gap signals

- The final conclusion exists, but the route from evidence to conclusion is thin.
- The system output exists, but its influence on human judgement is not documented.
- The organization can show activity, but not deliberation.
- The strongest explanation depends on people remembering what they meant months later.

4. Technical Influence and Escalation Questions

Technical influence reconstruction asks where AI, automation, analytics, scoring, ranking, alerts, summaries, or recommendations shaped the decision path. Escalation reconstruction asks whether uncertainty or risk could move the decision to a higher level before impact.

Check	Reconstruction question	Notes / evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where did a technical system enter the pathway: selection, prioritization, evidence presentation, recommendation, review, escalation, approval, or execution?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did the system output become a default option unless someone intervened?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the human reviewer shown the system logic, limits, confidence, uncertainty, or reason for flagging?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were technical records linked to the specific human review and final decision record?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What conditions required escalation at the time?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who could trigger escalation, and who could receive it?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the organization show when escalation occurred, was not required, was bypassed, or failed?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was there a point where the decision could still be paused before operational, legal, customer, employee, or risk impact?	

Escalation stress signals

- Escalation exists in policy but staff cannot explain when to use it.
- Low-confidence or exceptional cases are handled like routine cases.
- The organization knows who approved, but not whether anyone considered escalation.
- Post-decision review is disconnected from the original decision pathway.

5. Reconstruction Readout

Use the questions above to identify whether the pathway is reconstructible, partially reconstructible, or exposed. This is not a scoring system or certification. It is a structured first readout for deciding whether deeper review is needed.

Observed pattern	Practical meaning	Suggested next action
Authority, evidence, discretion, escalation, and final commitment can be shown with connected records.	The pathway appears reconstructible at a basic public-resource level.	Maintain documentation discipline and periodic review.
Some records exist, but technical influence and human reasoning are not clearly connected.	There may be a reconstruction gap.	Clarify ownership, contemporaneous records, and evidence links.
Formal sign-off exists, but practical authority, discretion, or escalation cannot be demonstrated.	The pathway may be exposed despite human approval.	Review the pathway before it is challenged externally.
No one can explain how system output became organizational action.	The pathway is likely not ready for scrutiny.	Request a structured diagnostic review of the route.

Minimal reconstruction statement

A pathway is minimally reconstructible when the organization can explain who held authority, what evidence existed, what the human saw, how technical influence entered the route, whether discretion was real, how escalation worked, and why the final decision became organizational commitment.

When to request further review

Request a diagnostic conversation when a material pathway cannot be reconstructed without speculation, memory, vendor interpretation, or after-the-fact rationalisation.

Do not submit confidential documents, personal data, or sensitive case files through a public form. Start with a bounded description of the pathway and the reason the route matters.

IDΔAC™ offers a 14-day Exposure Diagnostic for concrete AI-assisted decision pathways, focused on authority, evidence, discretion, escalation, and reconstruction.