Essay Writing

ANU Library Academic Skills
The Australian National University acknowledges, celebrates and pays our respects to the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people of the Canberra region and to all First Nations Australians on whose traditional lands we meet and work, and whose cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngoonawal.

Yanggu ngalamanyin dhunimanyin Ngoonawalwari dhawurawari.

Dindi wanggiralidjinyin.
Find and develop your argument

Break down the question

Take a position within the debate

Research

Develop your reasons

Plan and write your essay

THESIS STATEMENT

Structure

Make an essay plan

Write your essay

Edit your essay
What is an Argument?

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Code: 8959 0338
Always, always argue...

Questions may include many different words:

- Discuss, explore, analyse, describe
- Evaluate this claim, to what extent?
- Critically review, compare and contrast
- Identify issues and provide points for and/or against.

⇒ All imply *taking a position and arguing for it*
Find and develop your argument

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In Victoria, Indigenous Australians who plead guilty to some offences can choose to be sentenced by the Koori Court rather than the Magistrates Court. The purpose of these Koori Courts is to make the legal system less alienating and more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal communities.

**Essay question:** Is there a place for programs such as the Koori Court in the Australian legal system? Should there be courts for other groups in our society?
1. Break down the question

• Have a clearly defined essay question
  • What is it asking?
  • What do you need to address?
  • What is excluded?

• Should Koori Courts exist in the ALS?
• What about other courts?
2. Identify the debate

• Identify issues, debates, controversies

• What is contentious?
• What is puzzling or counter-intuitive?
• Is there general consensus?
3. Research

• What information will you need to understand the debate?

  • Why is the question important?
  • So what? / What are the implications?

  • Koori Courts – why they exist and how they intersect with ALS
  • How other social groups are similar/different to Indigenous Australians
  • Other court systems, precedents
Understand the debate

Pros?

Cons?

1) Where would you locate literature?

2) Share pros and cons of this topic at

https://staffeducation.padlet.org/AcSkills/Essay
4. Develop your reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments for Koori Courts</th>
<th>Arguments against Koori Courts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urgent need to address Indigenous Australians’ disadvantage</td>
<td>The sacrifice of rights by offenders further disadvantages Indigenous Australians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role of the offender’s solicitor is marginalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Move from formal processes may threaten the impartiality of outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC addresses power imbalance between ALS and Indigenous</td>
<td>KC undermines ‘justice is blind’ and all people are equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australians</td>
<td>• Other special courts are potentially open to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Court is not the place to address inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC provides improved outcomes for both offenders and the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>• Lower recidivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Involvement of Elders more effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deals with underlying problems through rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater acceptance by the Aboriginal community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Koori Court: Worthwhile

Precedents: family and industrial courts

Could be extended to other groups

Socio-cultural disadvantage

Rehabilitation over punishment

Improved outcomes

Lower recidivism for offenders

Power imbalance

Indigenous people overrepresented in jail

BUT Koori select on race - justice is blind?

BUT offenders sacrifice legal rights without solicitor

for communities
5. Take a position within the debate

In Victoria, Indigenous Australians who plead guilty to some offences can choose to be sentenced by the Koori Court rather than the Magistrates Court. The purpose of these Koori Courts is to make the legal system less alienating and more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal communities.

*Essay question: Is there a place for programs such as the Koori Court in the Australian legal system? Should there be courts for other groups in our society?*

What are some of the positions could you take?

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What makes a position strong?

• Well-reasoned
• Backed by evidence
• Takes a stance, e.g.:

There is a place for the Koori Court but it should not be extended to other groups.
Break down the question

Take a position within the debate

Research

Develop your reasons

Find and develop your argument

Plan and write your essay

Structure

Make an essay plan

Write your essay

Edit your essay
6. Develop your argument

• Weigh up all the points of view
• Decide your position
• Write a thesis statement
Thesis statement

• ...is a **concise summary** of your position and its supporting argument(s).

• Every essay **must** have a thesis statement.
• Should not be longer than two or three sentences.
• Often signals the counterarguments and rebuttals.
Your answer to the question + A brief summary of your reasons → This is your thesis statement
Koori Court thesis statement

There is **a place** for such programs **because**, while creating a separate court appears culturally divisive, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance. There are numerous precedents for special courts in Australia which addresses the argument for special pleading. Although the Koori Court has **its limitations**, its **successes** provide a **model** for the broader Australian legal system.
Find and develop your argument

Break down the question

Take a position within the debate

Research

Develop your reasons

Plan and write your essay

Structure

Make an essay plan

Write your essay

Edit your essay
Argument determines structure
7. Plan your essay

• You can't have a plan without an argument.
• You can't have a focused argument without a plan.
Essay Plan

Work out your structure:

- How many words?
- How many points? What order?
- How many paragraphs per point?
- Identify supporting evidence for each point, counter-points and rebuttals
There is a place for such programs because, while creating a separate court appears culturally divisive, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance. There are numerous precedents for special courts in Australia which addresses the argument for special pleading. Although the Koori Court has its limitations, its successes provide a model for the broader Australian legal system.

Main points:
Indigenous people are disadvantaged and this must be addressed
Other specialist courts already exist, providing precedent for the Koori Court model
Despite limitations, the Koori Court provides better outcomes for offenders and a model for good legal practice
There is no place for programs such as the Koori Court as justice should be independent of race; all people should be equal before the law. Other specialist courts, such as the Family Court, are potentially open to all and do not select on inherent characteristics such as race or sex. The courts are not the place to address inequality; instead, measures that look at the underlying causes are needed.

**Main points:**

Justice should be independent of race

Other specialist courts do not select on inherent characteristics

Courts are not the place to address inequality; it is better done by examining the underlying causes
The more specific planning, the better!

THE KOORI COURT

Essay plan

The following plan is for a 1500 word essay divided into nine paragraphs.

1. Introduction
   - Includes the thesis statement.
   - There is a place for such programs because, while creating a separate court appears culturally divisive, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance. There are numerous precedents for special courts in Australia which addresses the argument for special pleading. Although the Koori Court has its limitations, its successes provide a model for the broader Australian legal system.

2. Body
   - **SECTION 1** Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance
     - **Para. 2**: Australia’s first people are one of the most disadvantaged in the country. Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
     - **Para. 3**: Need to address the power imbalance between the legal system and Indigenous Australians. Reports cited above: Smith and Grove (2013)
   - **SECTION 2** Other specialist courts already exist and do not undermine the justice system
     - **Para. 4**: Other specialist courts provide precedent for the Koori Court model. Family Court justifies on need of kin relations
     - **Para. 5**: Even though Koori Court selects on race, it does not undermine the impartiality of justice as the legal system already discriminates.
     - **Para. 6**: Legal system discriminates against low education and income
   - **SECTION 3** The Koori Court of Victoria has limitations but provides better outcomes for offenders
     - **Para. 7**: Provides better outcomes as it addresses underlying problems. Lower rates of recidivism
     - **Para. 8**: Bilingual offenders by Elders is more effective than prison
     - **Para. 9**: Encourages the offender to deal with underlying problems through rehabilitation. Greater acceptance by the Aboriginal community.
   - **SECTION 4** Extending the Koori Court model can improve justice for all Australians
     - **Para. 10**: It can be extended to other disadvantaged groups who are suffering from imbalance of power.
     - **Para. 11**: For example, other groups facing social or cultural disadvantage

3. Conclusion
   - **Para. 12**: Wrap up the essay
Check your plan:

Your plan should consist of reasons, not topics.

**Bad plan example:**

**Intro:** Koori Court

**Point 1:** Specialist courts in the Australian legal system

**Point 2:** Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

**Point 3:** Royal Commission into Aboriginal Australian Deaths in Custody and Bringing Them Home Report
8. Write your essay
Introduction: 10% of the word count
The Koori Court is a Victorian initiative that seeks more appropriate legal processes and outcomes for Indigenous people. Poor legal outcomes are reflected in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the Australian prison system. The Koori Court redresses this imbalance through a more culturally sensitive approach to sentencing.

The Koori Court’s model appears to some to undermine Australia’s universal justice system (see Kahler 2012). However, there is a place for such programs because, while creating a separate court appears culturally divisive, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance. Numerous precedents for special courts exist which addresses the argument for special pleading. Although the Koori Court has its limitations, its successes provide a model for the broader legal system.
Body Paragraphs

1. Topic sentence
   - Supporting evidence / analysis
   - Concluding / linking sentence

2. Topic sentence
   - Supporting evidence / analysis
   - Concluding / linking sentence

3. Topic sentence
   - Supporting evidence / analysis
   - Concluding / linking sentence
Paragraph Structure

• A paragraph addresses **one** main theme/idea
• 150 – 200 words typically
• Contains
  1. **Topic sentence**: main idea and argument
  2. Analysis and evidence
  3. Concluding and linking sentence
Arguments
Reasons
Evidence
Argument
Argument
Topic Sentences

• not just factual
• states a reason in relation to your thesis statement

Example: Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance.

Bad example: Indigenous Australians are over-represented in the prison system.
Conclusion: 10% of the word count

Summary of position and key reasons
Implications or ‘so what?’
Your writing process
Develop what works for you?
Reflect what can change?
Find and develop your argument

- Break down the question
- Take a position within the debate
- Research
- Develop your reasons

THESIS STATEMENT

Plan and write your essay

Structure
- Make an essay plan
- Write your essay
- Edit your essay
How much time do you spend on editing and proofing?

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Code: 2980 6818
9. Polish and Edit

ARGUMENT
- Is your thesis statement clear?
- Does it take a position and outline your supporting argument?
- Does it answer the essay question?
- Are your key reasons signposted in the introduction?
- Are they summarised in the conclusion?

STRUCTURE
- Is your argument sustained through the essay body?
- Do your topic sentences contribute to your argument?
- Are your paragraphs in a logical order?
- Does the order of your reasons in the introduction match the order of your paragraphs in the body?

PARAGRAPHING
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence and one main idea?
- Do your paragraphs have too much evidence and analysis? If so, should they be split?
- Are your quotations accurate?
- Is the evidence you use correctly cited?

EXPRESSION
- Do your sentences flow together?
- Are there any long sentences that could be shortened?
- Are there any redundant phrases or areas of repetition that could be cut?
- Have you used synonyms to create variety in your writing?
- Have you eliminated spelling and grammatical errors?
- Is the essay formatted according to the course requirements?
Find and develop your argument

Break down the question

Take a position within the debate

THESIS STATEMENT

Research

Develop your reasons

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Write your essay

Edit your essay
Individual consults to support your academic writing and research skills

**LEARNING ADVISERS**
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THANK YOU

Contact Us

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