Below is a brief example of how your DATA7002 essay might be structured, formatted, and referenced. This introductory section should explain and contextualise the real-life case you are exploring. What is the issue, why does it exist, and what problems does it create?

After this background section, you can introduce your own analysis. Explain the main technical, legal, and ethical issues related to your chosen case. A good introduction usually includes an outline or overview of how your argument will be structured, explaining exactly what you will discuss in your essay and in what order.

This is followed by the main section of your essay. You can structure this however works best for your argument. If you are uncertain, breaking the issue up into its ethical, legal, and technical aspects may be a good approach. If you choose to structure this section in a different way, remember that legal, ethical, and technical aspects should feature relatively equally.

Finally, finish with a conclusion which asserts the goals of your essay, ties your key points together, and explains what you have concluded from your analysis. Avoid introducing any new information in the conclusion.

Note: footnotes are not included in the word count.

The essay below is only an example. You don’t need to start with quotations, use particular heading structures, or number your headings – do whatever works for your essay.

Lies, Damned Lies, and Queensland Crime Statistics

Hamish MacDonald, 42924795

*"Imprisonment is growing much faster than population—the rate of imprisonment in Queensland is currently higher than at any time since 1900."[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*"Drug offences made the largest contribution to the growth in the prison population (32 per cent) between 2011-12 and 2017-18."[[2]](#footnote-2)*

*"In direct financial terms, imprisonment costs the Queensland community almost a billion dollars every year. Its social costs, although harder to measure, are much greater. Incarceration has profound impacts on prisoners, their families and the community - loss of employment, housing, relationships, as well as mental health problems and potential criminogenic effects - all of which increase the risk of reoffending."[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Something is rotten in the state of Queensland. An astonishing 44% increase in imprisonment rates,[[4]](#footnote-4) with no evidence of a corresponding increase in crime,[[5]](#footnote-5) incurs massive financial and social costs for the Queensland community.[[6]](#footnote-6) To make matters more disturbing still, a significant majority of prison terms (65%) are for non-violent offences.[[7]](#footnote-7) Once incarcerated, individuals are significantly more likely to return to corrective services within 2 years, contributing to an ongoing cycle of institutionalisation and a spiral of repeat offending. [[8]](#footnote-8)

This article aims to shed light on the causes and effects of this staggering increase in incarceration rates. In the process, it will demonstrate that the Australian classification of criminal offenses for statistical purposes can obfuscate as much as it reveals, complicating the design of evidence-based policy. Criminal offences are classified using an outdated and poorly designed framework which makes it difficult to know what offences people are actually being imprisoned for. As scholars have noted, crime statistics can sometimes be interpreted in very different ways for very different objectives.[[9]](#footnote-9)

I will begin by looking at the “raw data”: how many people are being imprisoned in Queensland by offence type, and how this has changed over the past decade. I will then explore how offences are categorised for statistical purposes, and how this categorisation changes when one person is charged with multiple offences simultaneously. In this section, I make the case that the way these statistics are recorded severely undermines their usefulness. Finally, I will analyse options for fixing Australia’s statistical classification of criminal offences, and explain why this is essential for understanding and combatting Queensland’s incarceration crisis.

I. What do the statistics say?

[Evidence, research, and your arguments go here]

II. How are crime statistics calculated?

[More arguments]

III. Fixing the classification framework

[More arguments]

Conclusion

[Summarise your argument here, and reiterate your main points. Give your conclusion and what you want your audience to take away. This should be a few paragraphs long, and shouldn’t introduce any new information]

1. Queensland Productivity Commission, “Inquiry into Imprisonment and Recidivism, Draft Report,” Queensland Productivity Commission , 2019, https://qpc.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2019/02/Imprisonment-and-recidivism-Draft-Report.pdf, xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, xxiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, ii. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, x. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, xiv - xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Nancy Correa et al., “Parents' Perspectives on the Impact of Their Incarceration on Children and Families,” *Family Relations* 70, no. 1 (2020): pp. 162-170, https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12529, showing some of the common flow-on effects of incarceration [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Queensland Productivity Commission, “Draft Report”, xxiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David Beckman, Keris Jan Myrick, and Derri Shtasel, “Mental Illness, Addiction, and Incarceration: Breaking the Cycle,” *Racism and Psychiatry* (2018): 71-86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90197-8_5>, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jonathan Caulkins, and Eric Sevigny, “How many people does the U.S. imprison for drug use, and who are they?” *Contemporary Drug Problems* 32, no. 3 (2005): 405-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/009145090503200305. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)