



Australian
National
University

Essay Writing Strategies

ANU Academic Skills

- What makes a great essay?
- Looking at the list – what's most important?



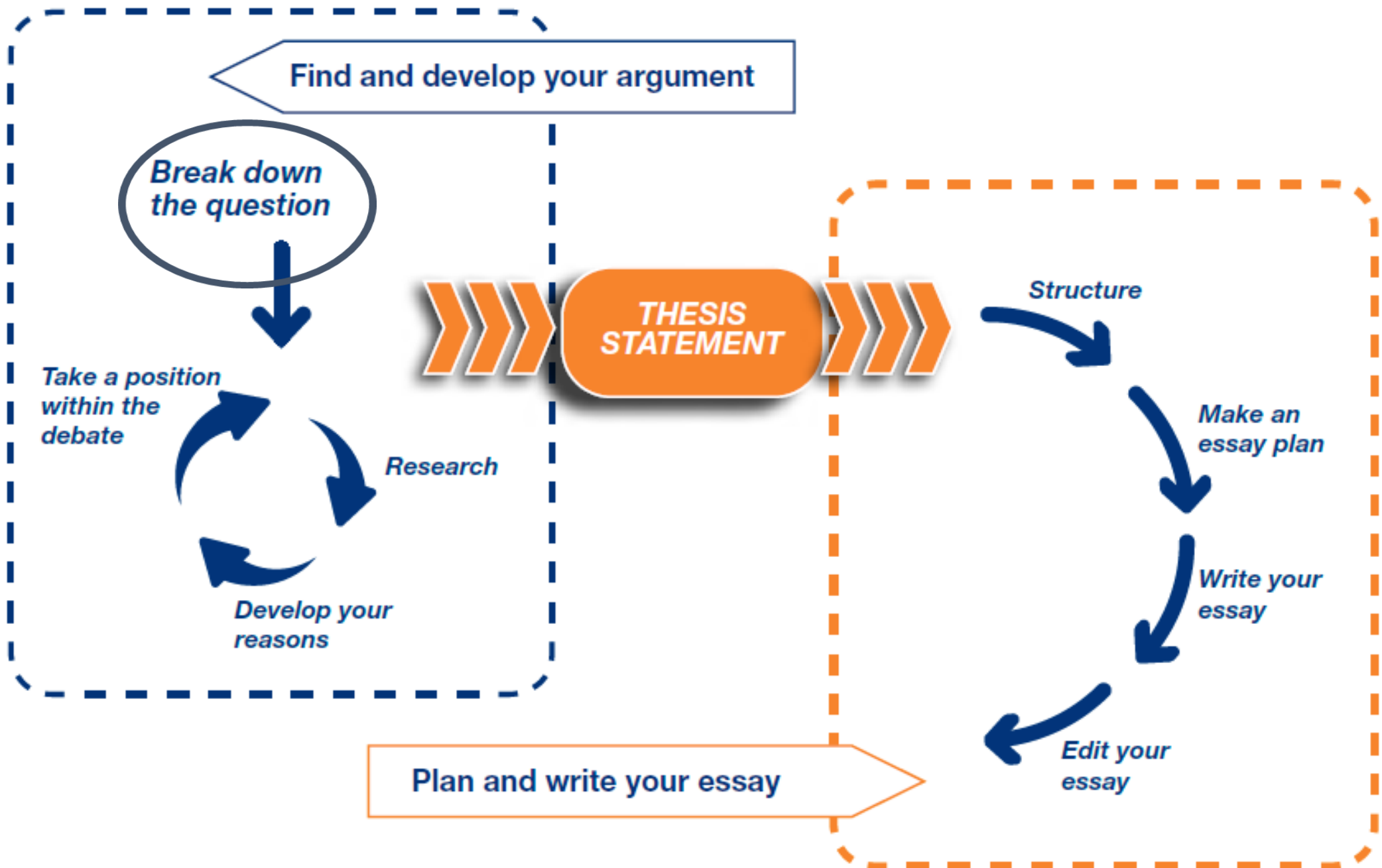


Argument

Structure

Paragraphing

Expression



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?

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.

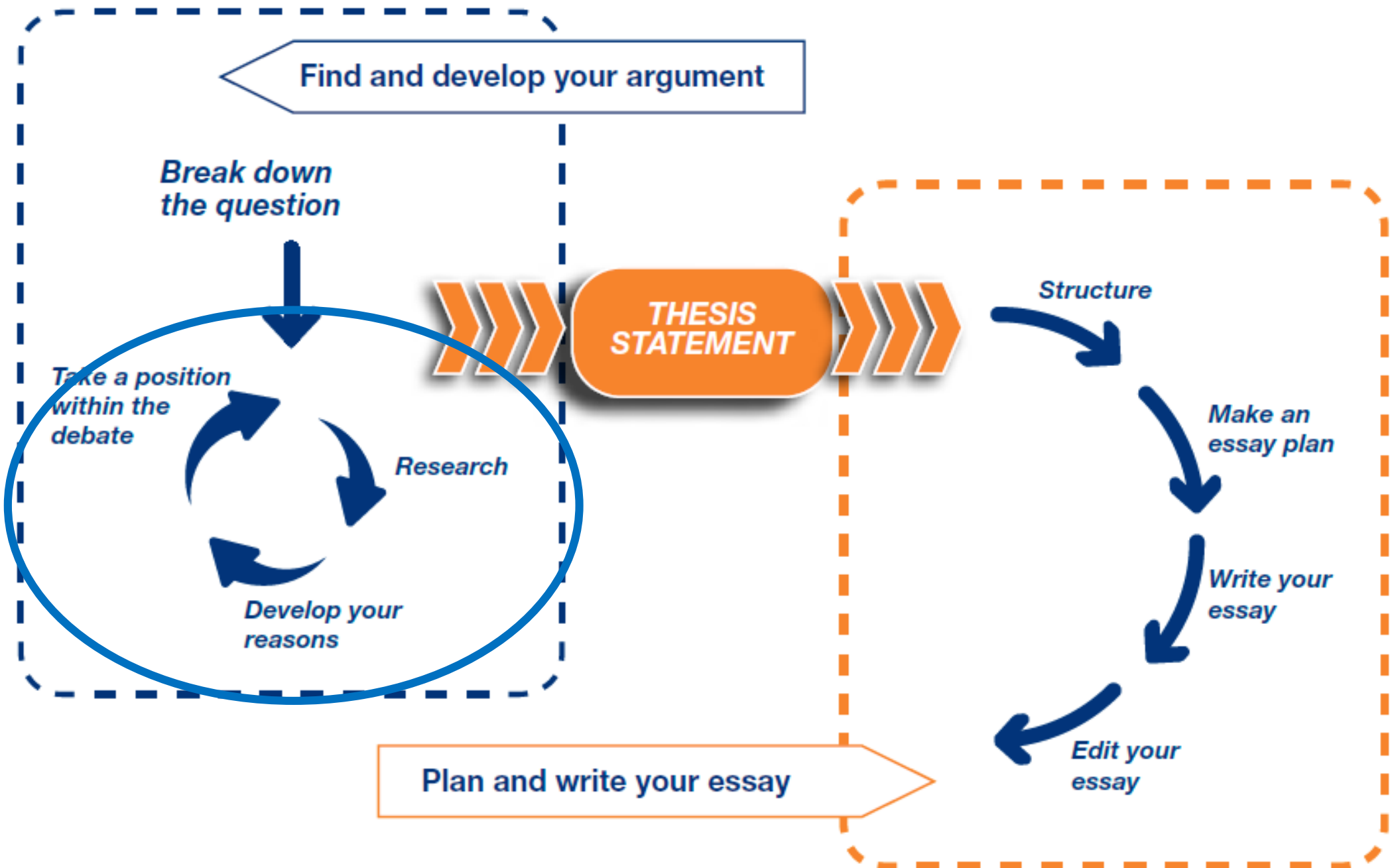


Always, always argue...

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*



Understand the debate

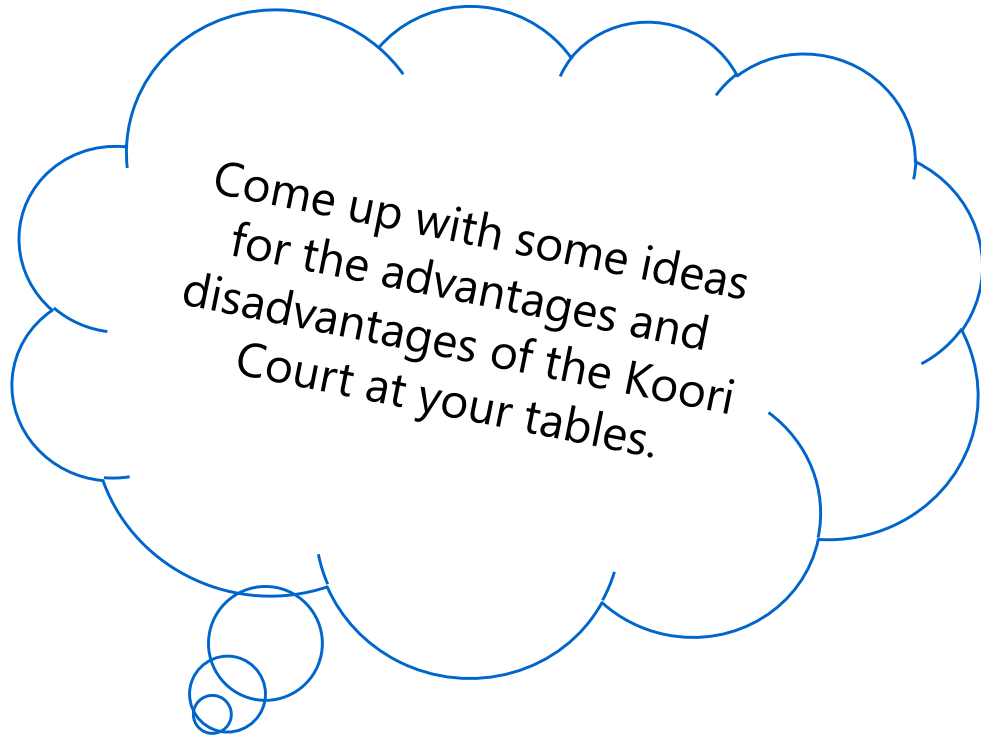


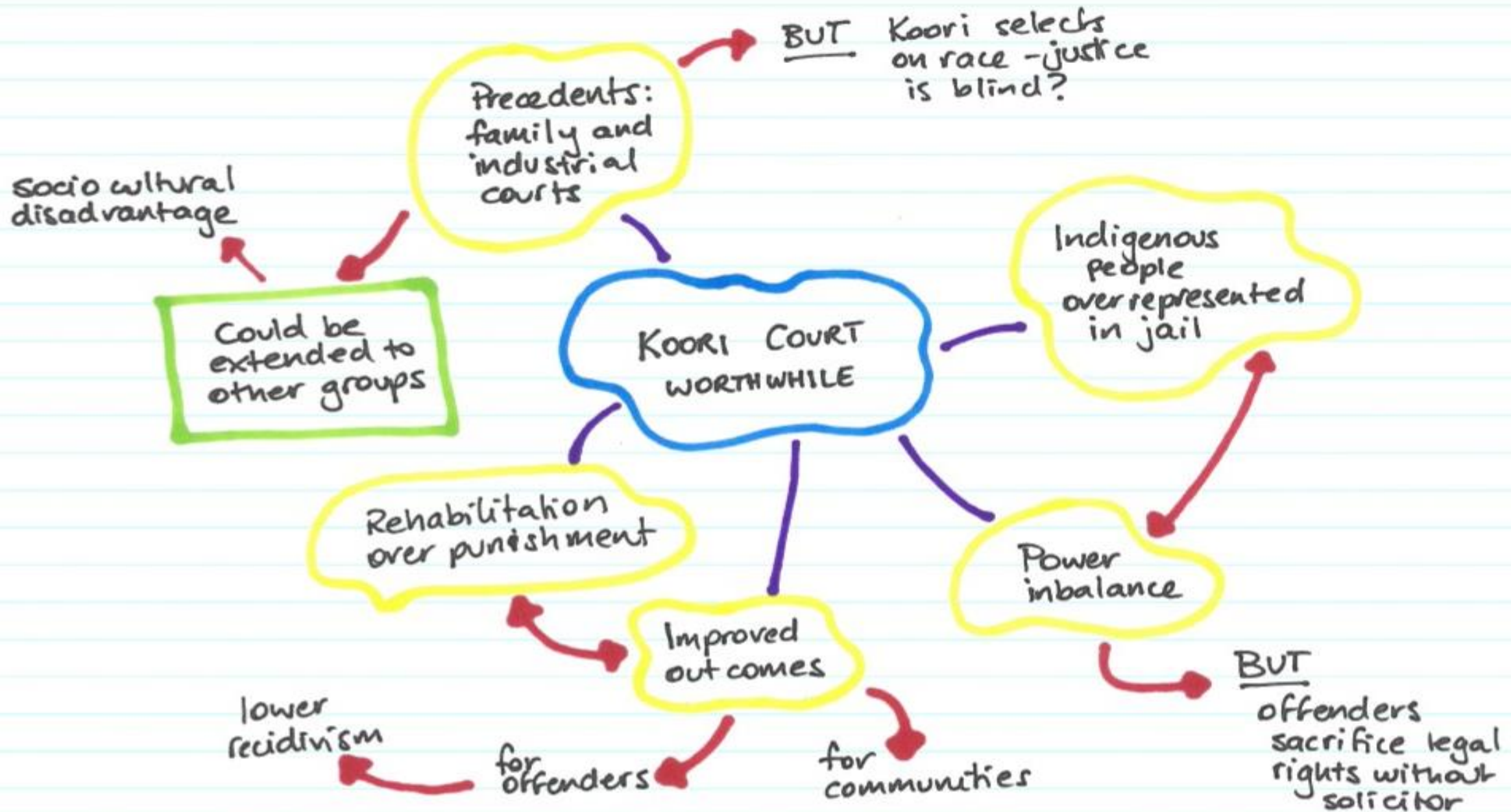
Pros?



KOORI COURT

Cons?



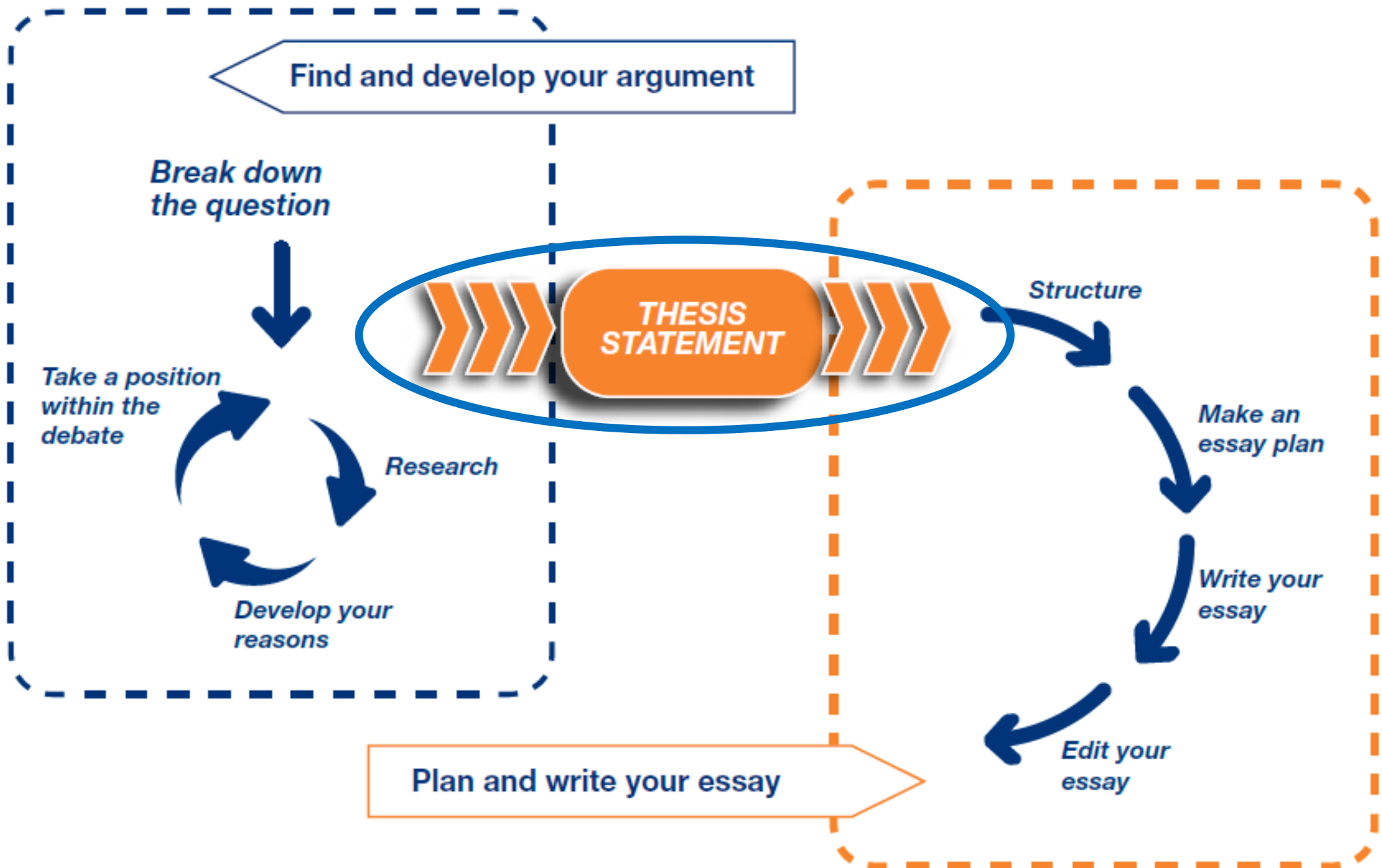


Arguments for:

- Urgent need to address Indigenous Australians' disadvantage
- KC addresses power imbalance between legal system and Indigenous Australians
- KC provides improved outcomes for both the offenders and the community
 - Lower recidivism
 - Involvement of Elders more effective
 - Deals with underlying problems through rehabilitation
 - Greater acceptance by the Aboriginal community

Arguments against:

- The sacrifice of rights by offenders further disadvantages Indigenous Australians
 - Role of the offender's solicitor is marginalised
 - Move from formal processes may threaten the impartiality of outcomes
- KC undermines 'justice is blind' and all people are equal
 - Other special courts are potentially open to all
 - Court is not the place to address inequality



Thesis statement

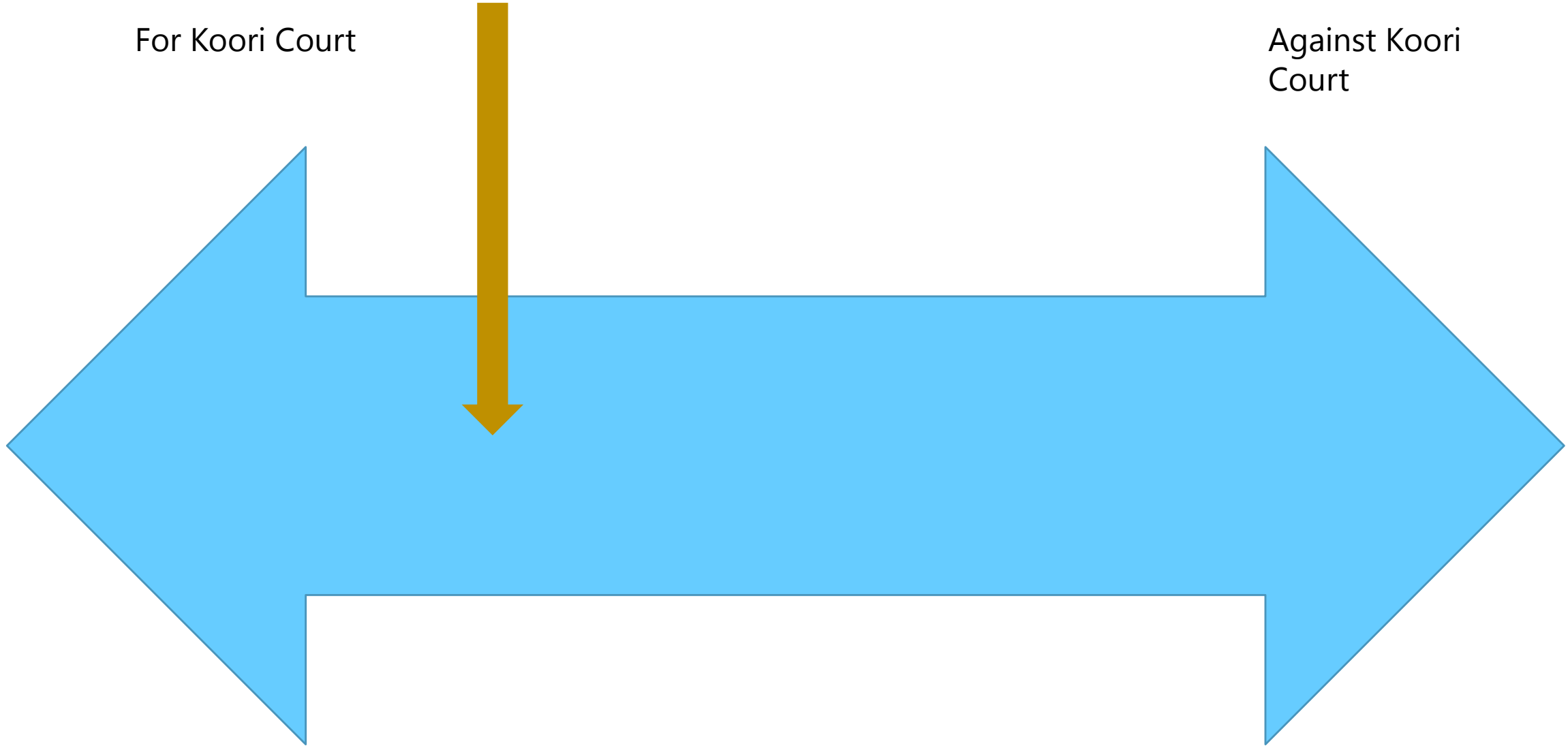
- ...is a **concise summary** of your position and its supporting argument(s).
- Every essay **must** have a thesis statement.
- Should not be longer than two or three sentences.
- Often signals the counterarguments and rebuttals.

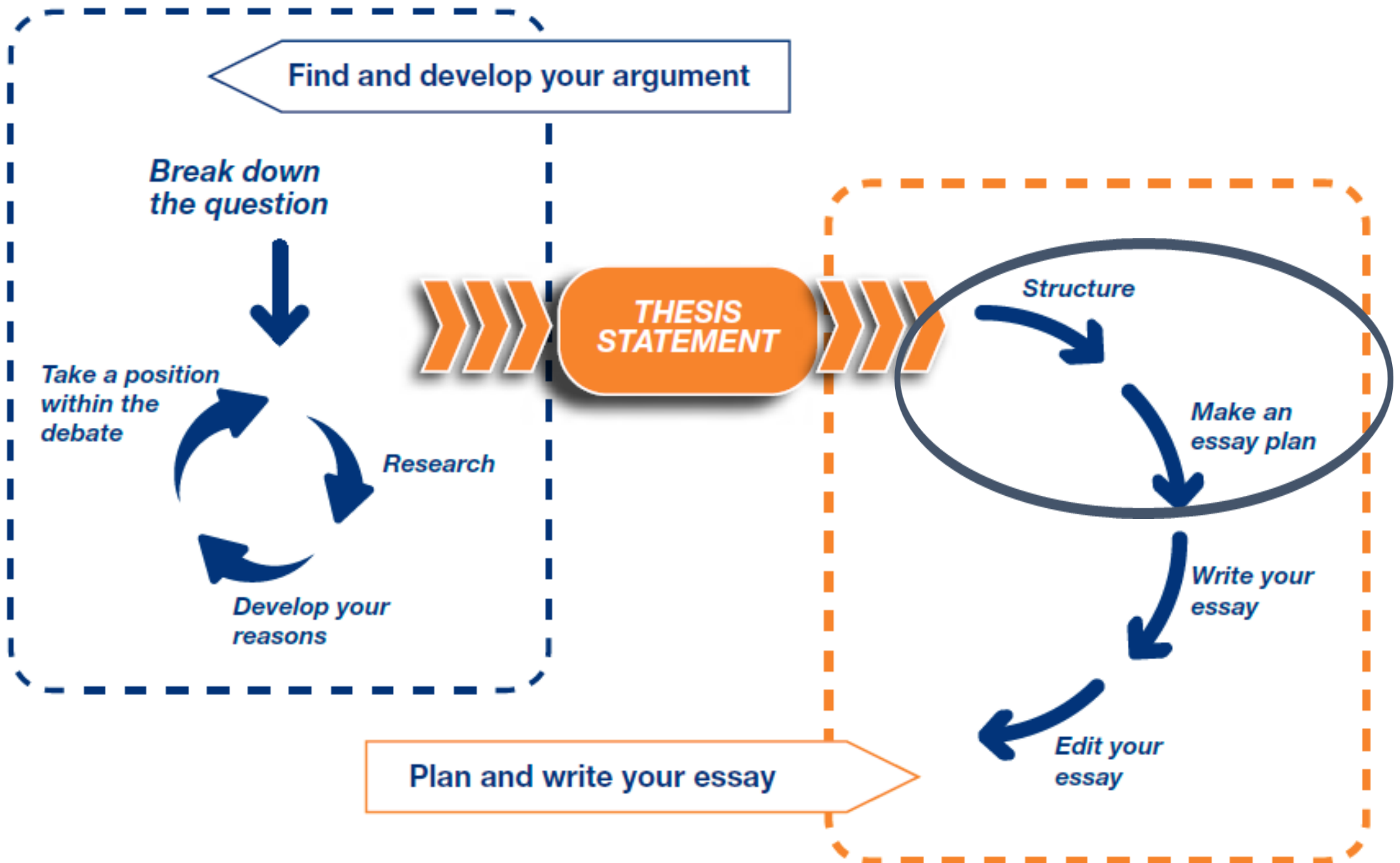
Koori Court thesis statement

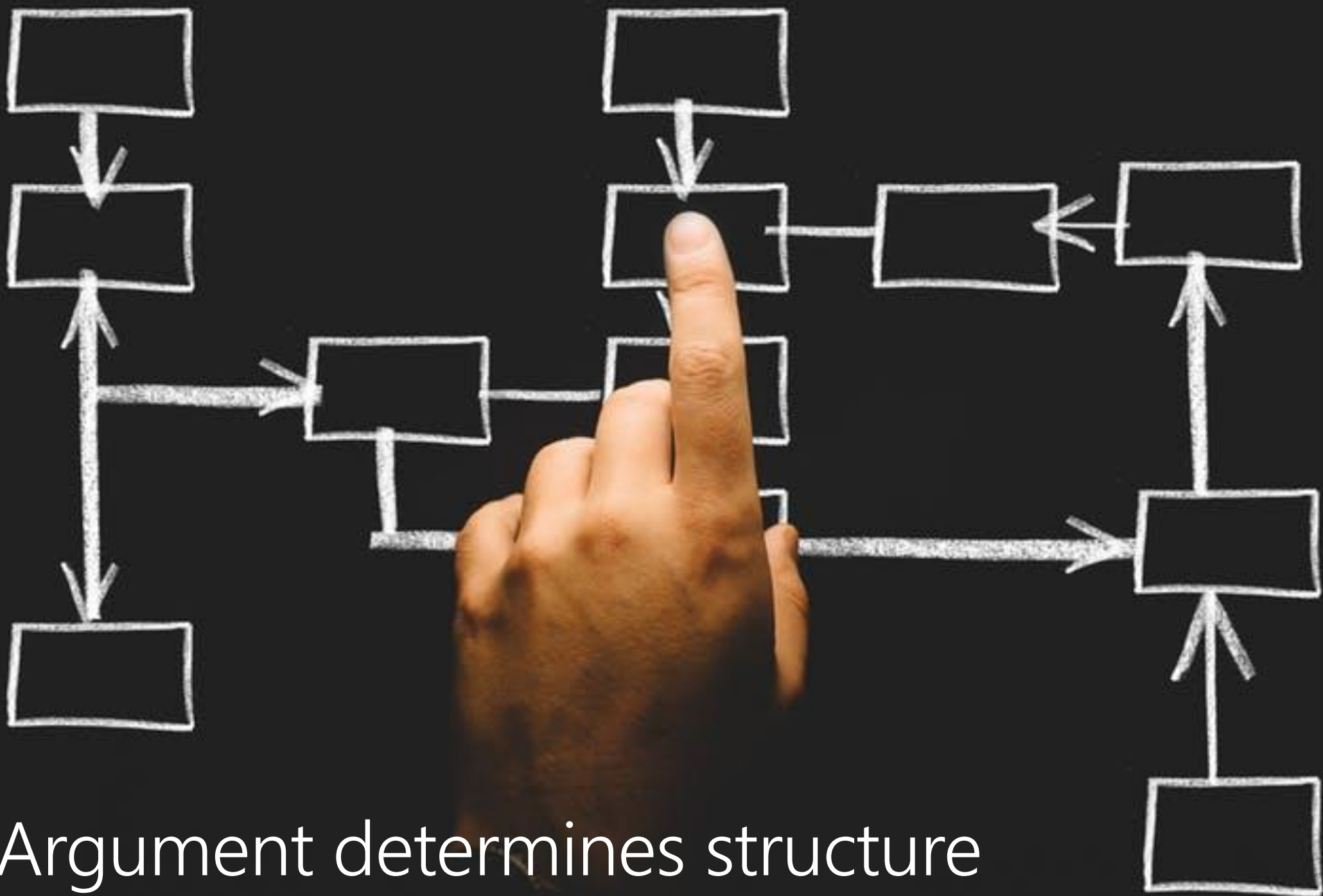
There is **a place** for such programs **because**, while creating a separate court appears culturally divisive, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group and there is an urgent need to address this imbalance. There are numerous precedents for special courts in Australia which addresses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

For Koori Court

Against Koori
Court







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

Introduction

- Broad introduction to the context
- Indication of debate or issue
- Your argument
- Signposting of the logical structure of your argument

Point 1 –

Only if needed →

- Sub point 1
- Sub point 2
- Sub point 3

Point 2 –

- Sub point 1
- Sub point 2
- Sub point 3

Point 3 –

- Sub point 1
- Sub point 2
- Sub point 3

Point 4 –

- Sub point 1
- Sub point 2
- Sub point 3

Conclusion

- Summarise the main points/findings from the essay and reemphasise the argument in the light of these points.
- Indication of the implications of your argument (but don't introduce new ideas).

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

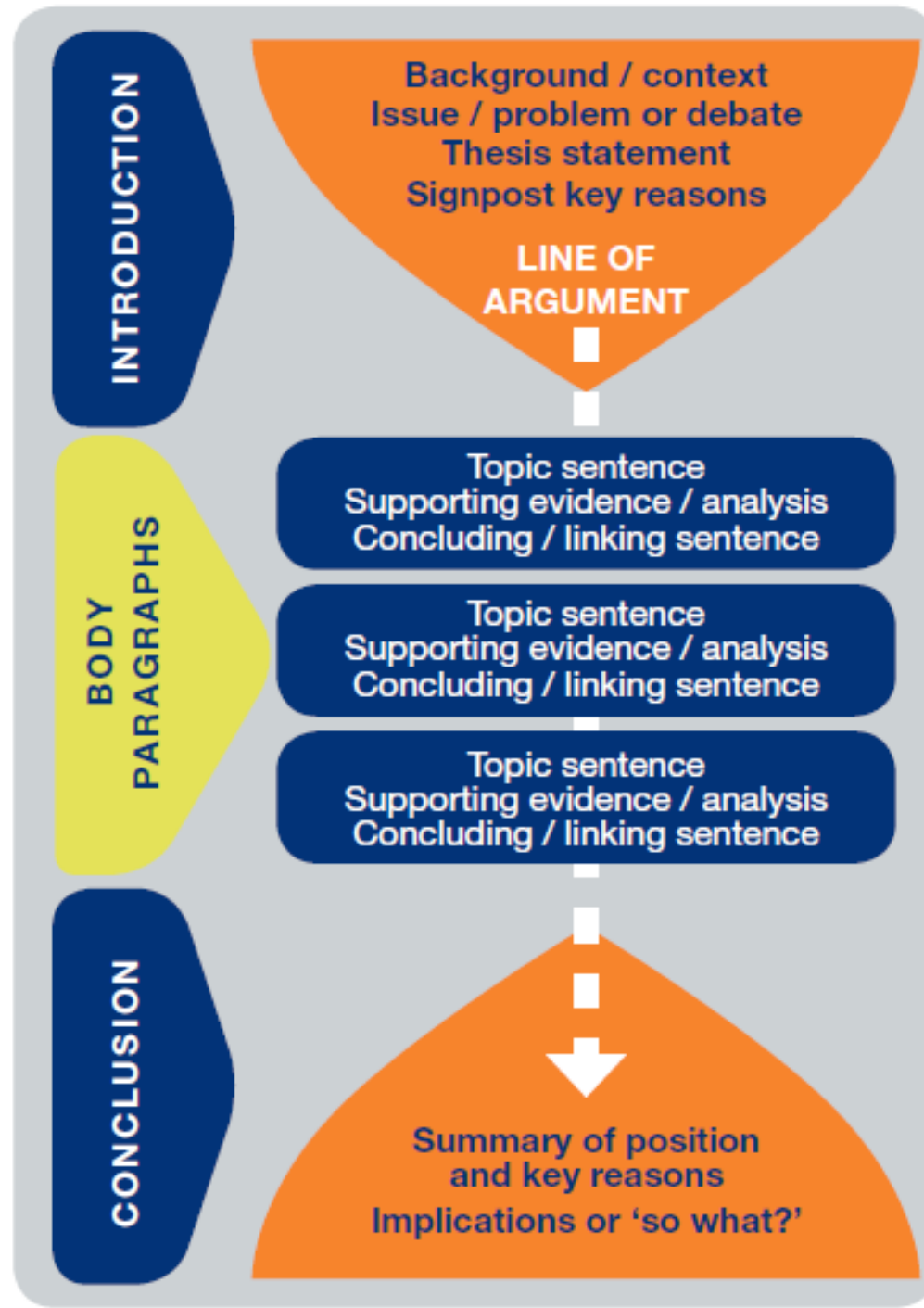
There is no place for programs such as the Koori Court as **justice should be independent of race**; all people should be equal before the law. Other specialist courts, such as the Family Court, are potentially open to all and **do not select on inherent characteristics** such as race or sex. **The courts are not the place to address inequality**; instead, measures that look at the underlying causes are needed.

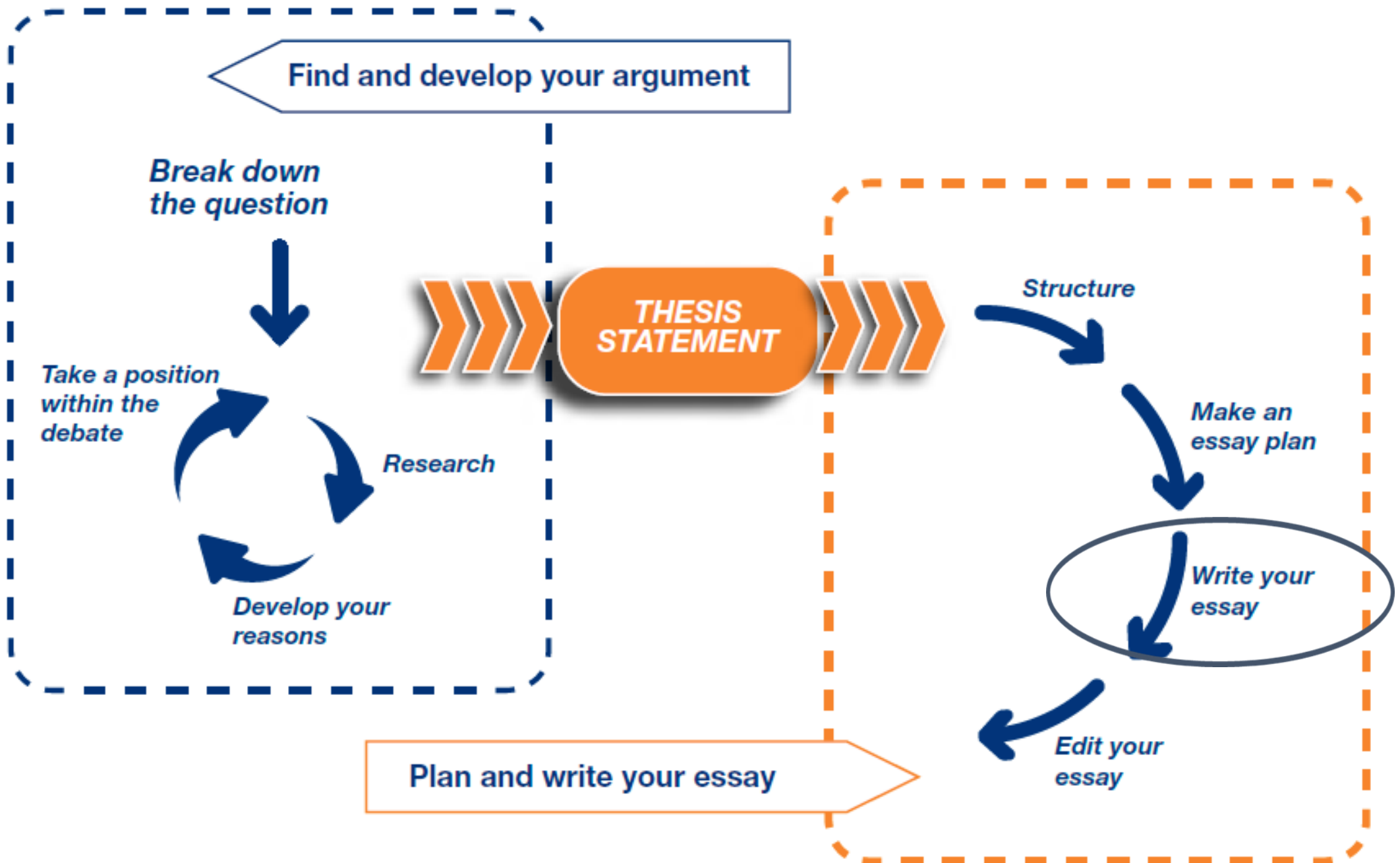
Main points:

Justice should be independent of race

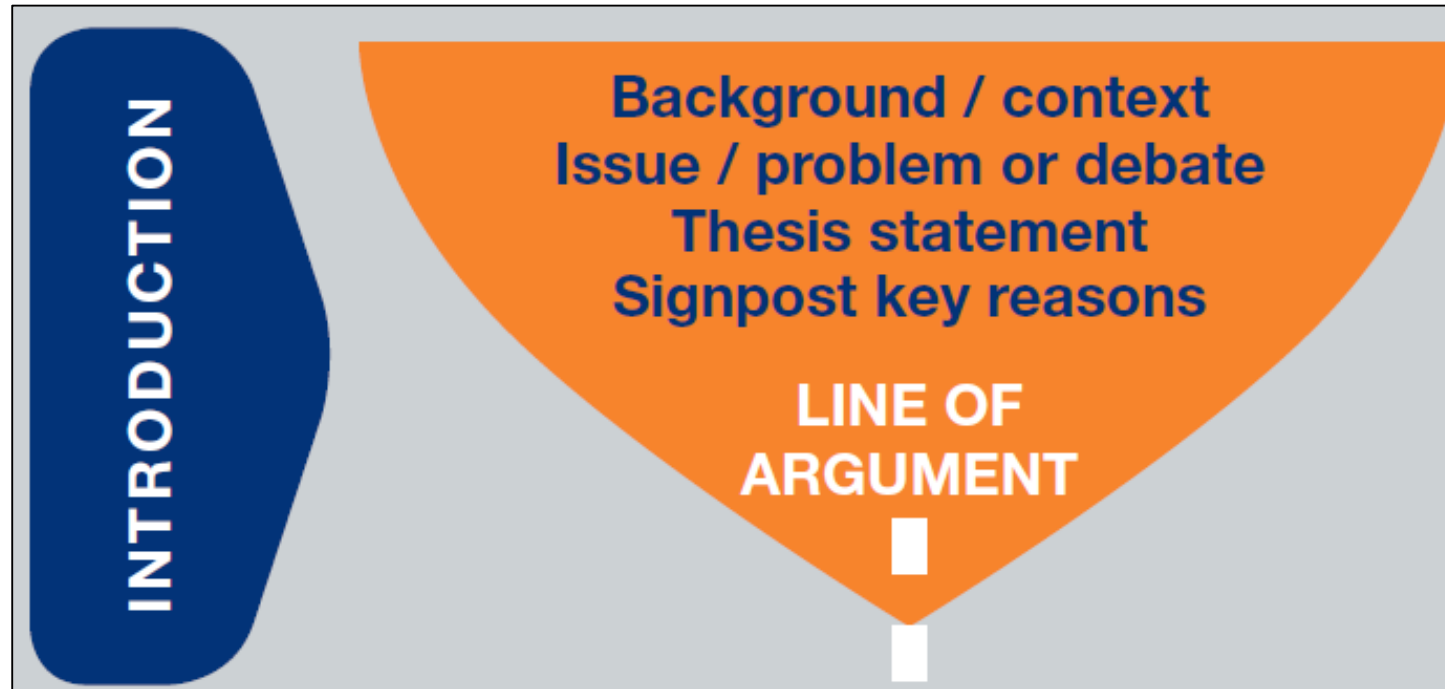
Other specialist courts do not select on inherent characteristics

Courts are not the place to address inequality; it is better done by examining the underlying causes





Introduction



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.

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.

Context

The Koori Court's model appears to some to undermine Australia's universal justice system (see Kahler 2012).

Debate

However, there is a place for such programs because, while

Thesis
statement

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.

Reasons

Introduction

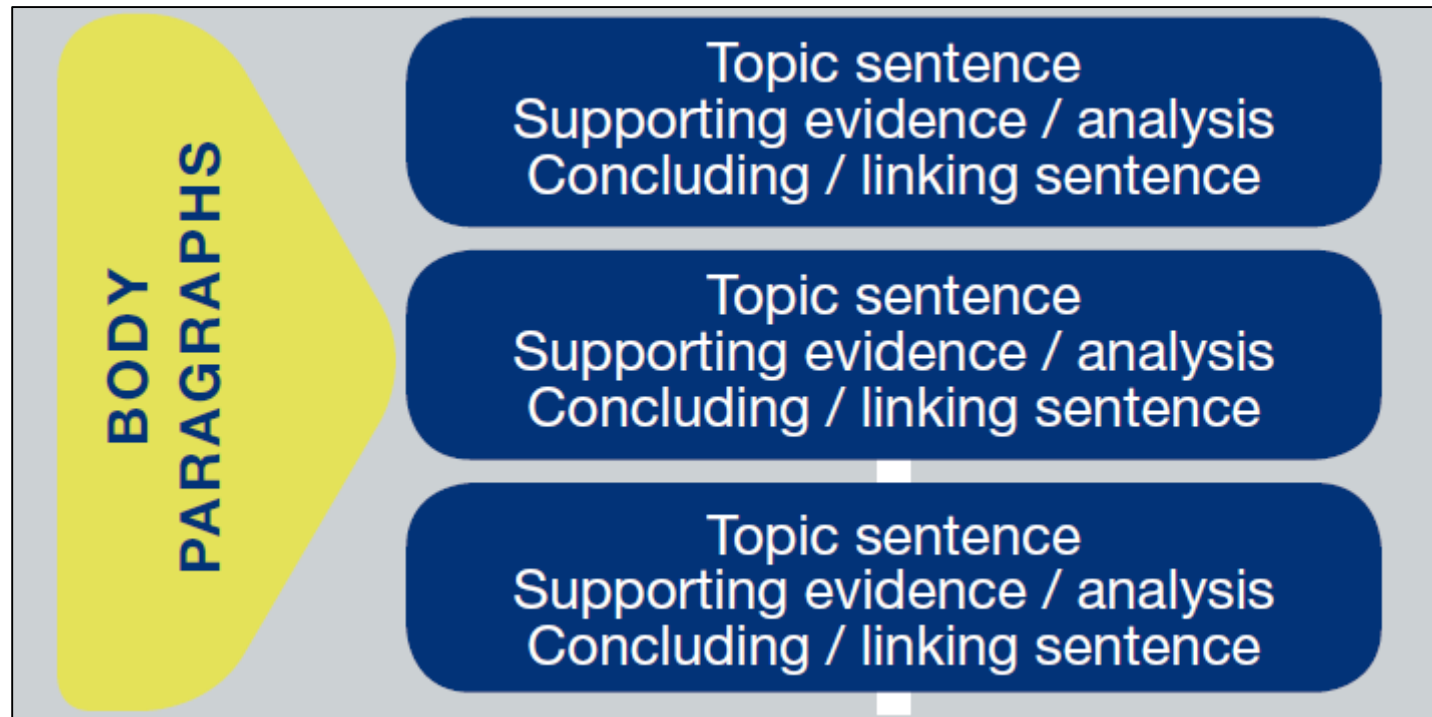
Read the introduction of the sample essay.

- Can you identify the 4 parts?
- Are the **debate** and **thesis statement** clear?
- Does the **signposting** indicate how the argument will be developed in the body of the essay?
- What, if anything, could be improved?



Traditionally, military roles and combat have been considered the exclusive domain of males, particularly in western societies. Women have only recently been allowed into the military and, in the majority of armies, are still not allowed to participate in front-line fighting. Gender differentiation in the military can be considered from two perspectives: sociobiological or cultural explanations. These two points of view will be used to examine whether women have the biological and emotional attributes required to be competent soldiers; and whether culture and society, inside and outside the military, provide the best opportunities for women to be competent soldiers. I argue that it is not more 'natural' for men to do frontline fighting, since women do have the capability to be competent soldiers. I find that it is actually cultural gender roles and stereotypes – inside and outside the military – that currently restrict their capacity to be effective as they could be. Further, I suggest that the very malleability of gender roles could offer a way out of this predicament.

Body Paragraphs



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

Topic Sentences



Read the topic sentences of the sample essay.

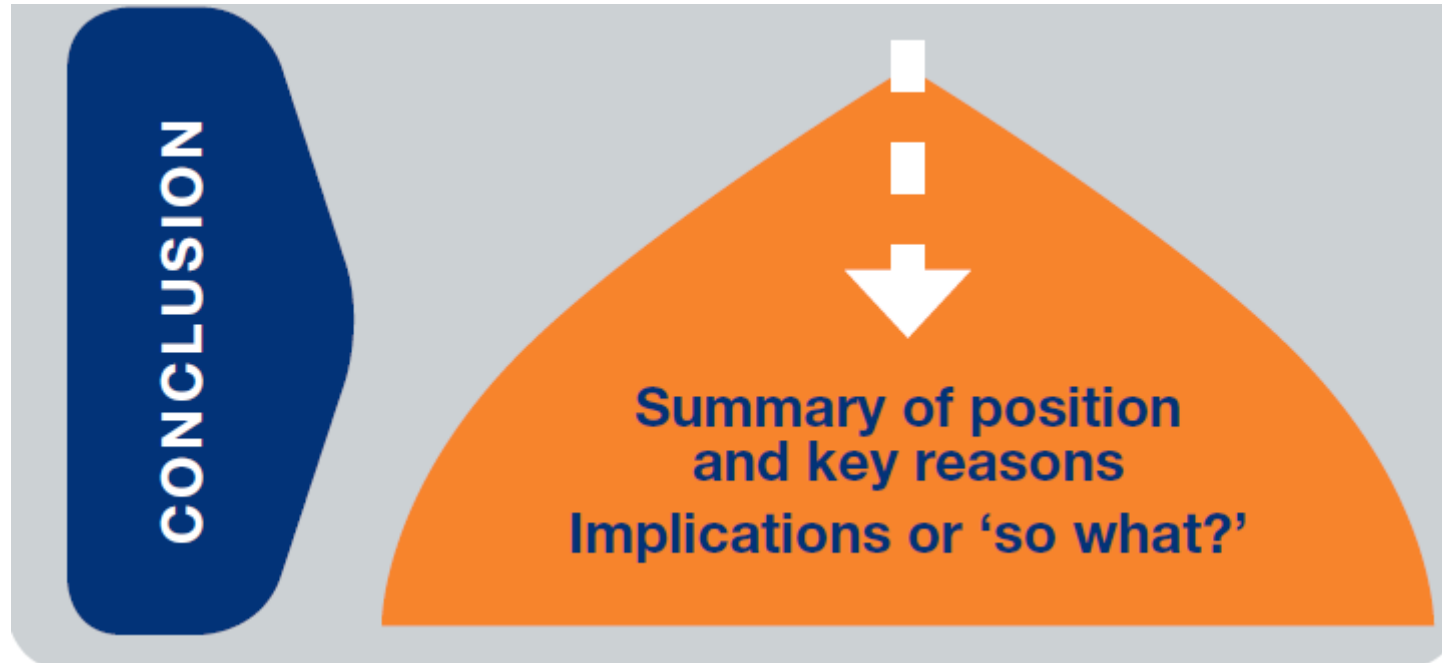
- What do you notice about them?
- Do they do a good job of indicating what the **main idea** of the paragraph is? Do some do a better job than others?
- Do they indicate how the paragraph supports or connects to their overall **argument**? When read in order, do they provide a logical and coherent narrative?

Exercise – Handout



- Read the ★ paragraphs
- Discuss the following questions in small groups:
 - What kind of **evidence** is being used in the paragraphs?
 - Does the evidence convince you of the topic sentence?
 - How do the paragraphs **conclude**? Are they effective?

Conclusion



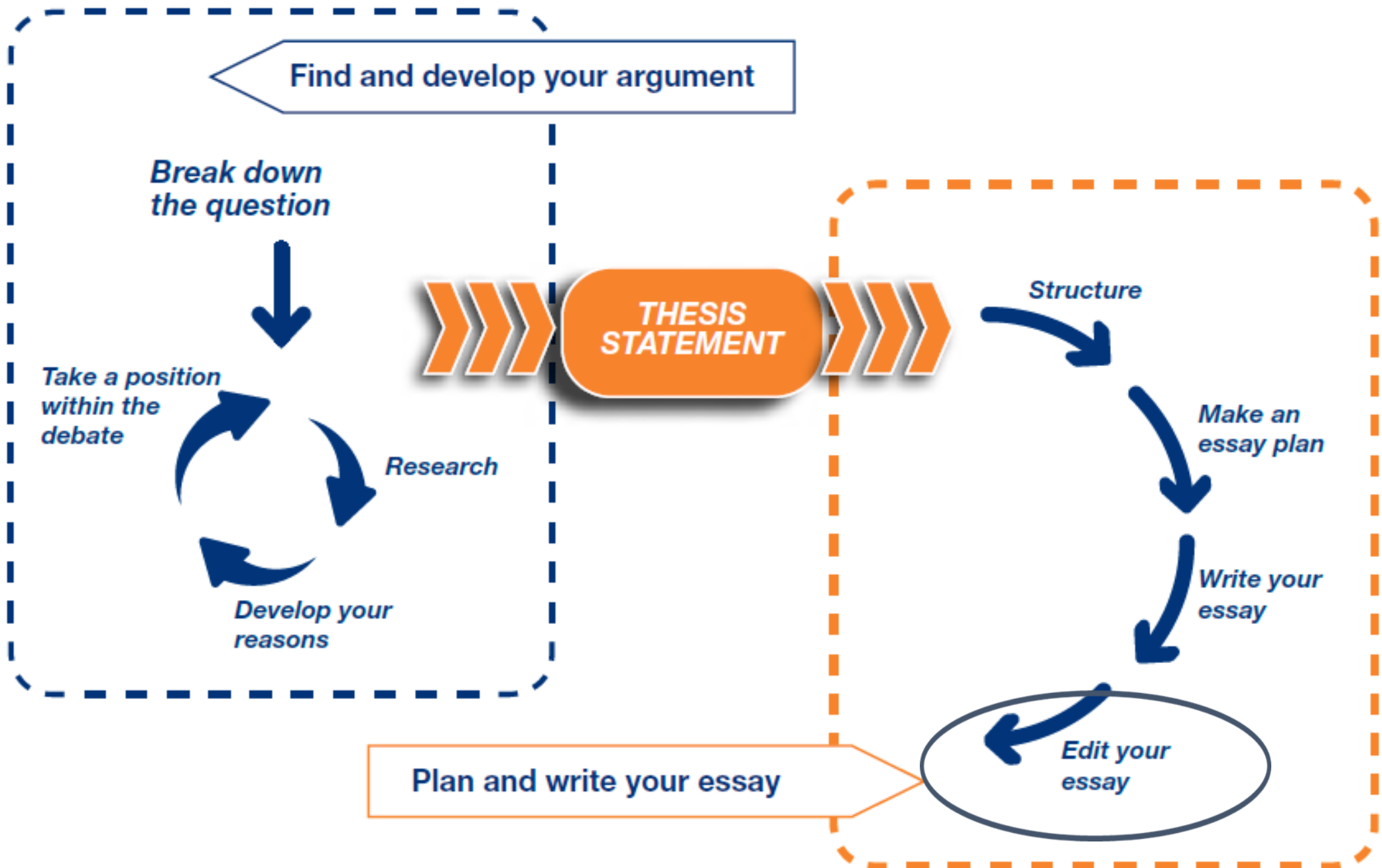
Conclusion

Read the conclusion of the sample essay

- Can you identify the 2 parts?
- Is a **summary of the main points** and **argument** provided?
- Does it answer the '**so what**' question?
- What, if anything, could be improved?



In reflecting on the role of gender in the military, both the sociobiological and cultural models have been considered. While there are some biological restrictions on the competence of female soldiers, there is little evidence to support the claim that women are inferior to men as frontline fighters. In fact, the common view of women's inferiority is based on sociobiological misconceptions about physical ability, social roles that exist in the military and cultural stereotypes. Therefore, to a large extent, social rather than individual restrictions limit how females perform as soldiers. There is no reason why female soldiers cannot be as competent as male soldiers or participate in direct combat situations. However, to reach these goals, the socialisation of women in society, and particularly in the military, will have to be adjusted so that individuals are measured on their ability alone rather than their gender.



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?

Questions?



From: <https://giphy.com/gifs/reaction-a5vil92PAF89q>

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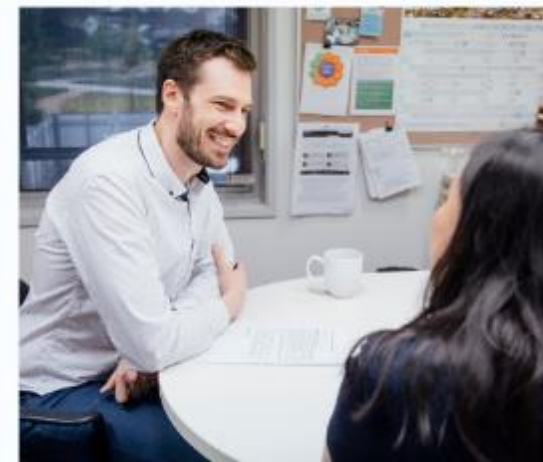
PEER WRITERS

10-15 minute
drop ins



WRITING COACHES

30 minute
booked
appointments



LEARNING ADVISERS

45 minute
booked
appointments



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Marie Reay Teaching
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1-2pm Mon-Fri
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5-6pm Mon
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