Critically analysing a media release

University students are sometimes asked to critically analyse an academic article or a book chapter as part of an assignment task; however for some Degrees such as in Media or Journalism, students may be required to analyse different types of texts. Examples include:

- a news article (online or paper-based)
- a website
- a podcast
- a television episode
- a design publication

- an amateur recording of an event (e.g. mobile phone footage of an event)
- visuals (e.g. advertisement, social campaign, image)
- media release

Not all commonly used critical thinking and reading questions are relevant to these types of texts. Before analysing a text, ensure that you understand the task expectations, the type of text(s) you are required to critically analyse, and who the intended audience is.

Critically analysing a <u>media release</u> for your assignment tasks

Critically analysing a media release might involve any of the following:

- Who is the intended audience for this media release (e.g. radio station, television station, local, international, etc.)?
- Is the information new/relevant/interesting/appropriate for the intended audience? How so? Why is this important?
- Is the media release written effectively to engage its intended audience? How has this been done (e.g. concise, useful, accurate, factual information, appropriate formatting, relevant style and tone, etc.)?
- What type of media release is it (e.g. announcement news, response news, special matters, etc.)? Is this effective and appropriate for the intended audience? Why or why not?
- When was the media release sent? Was this timely? Why or why not?
- If a quote from a spokesperson has been included, are quotation marks used appropriately, and is the quote attributed to the spokesperson?
- Is the quote(s) appropriate and does it effectively engage the intended audience? How so?
- Is the language in the media release appropriate (e.g. avoids journalistic expressions, is grammatically correct, etc.)?

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Writing critically about a <u>media release</u>

Once you have critically analysed the media release using appropriate critical thinking questions, use your notes to form written paragraphs which demonstrate your analysis. Look at the example task and paragraph below:

Example task
Identify and critically analyse the use of imaginaries in the media release provided by your tutor.

In this example, the student has been asked to analyse a media release in relation to a specific concept (i.e. imaginaries). When scrutinising the media release, the student might ask:

- Who is the intended audience?
- What is made explicit in the media release? What do these statements hide or disguise?

Example paragraph demonstrating critical analysis

The concept of 'imaginaries' is noted in this media release, particularly where reference is made to 'local people' and their role in decision-making processes. *In the section 'Giving local people a direct say on how budgets are spent', it is implied that local people have power to inform and enforce change in the dispersion of funds. However, it is not clear whether 'local' refers to the local state or beyond. The examples used by the author hides the fact that such a power shift to 'local people' can also apply to councillors within the same political party as the national government.* <u>Therefore, while the press release may have used a specific example to highlight the voice and 'power' of 'local people', it also cloaks the underlying complexities and tensions which often exclude democratic subjects themselves from participating actively in the construction of democracy itself.</u>

Adapted from:
Farrelly, M 2010, 'Critical discourse analysis in political studies: an illustrative |

Topic sentence (focus):
- The paragraph will focus on the imaginary of a 'power shift to local people' in the media release.

Development/explanation/ support of focus
- What is implied when referring to 'local people'?
- What is hidden or disguised by this imaginary?

Conclusion
- Closing statement (the imaginary oversimplifies the reality).