Critically analysing a website

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)
- a 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 **website** for your assignment tasks

Critically analysing a website might involve any of the following questions:

- What type of website is this (e.g., government, organisational, etc.)? Might this impact the ideas which are included? How?
- Who contributed to its content? Is this clearly visible?
- Who is likely to view this website (i.e. who is the intended audience)?
- Is the website navigation user-friendly? Why or why not?
- Does this website present its ideas/arguments effectively for the intended audience? Is it convincing? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- How is the information presented on the website (layout and design)? Is this effective? Why?
- Is there any evidence used to support the ideas presented on the website/webpage? What is it?
- Is this website funded or sponsored by an external party?
    - How might such funding or sponsorship impact the use and presentation of evidence?
    - Does this create any bias?

NOTE: A website is often less text heavy than other types of sources such as academic journal articles or news articles. Therefore, your critical analysis might focus not just on language, but also on design, layout, and visuals.

Writing critically about a <u>website</u>

Once you have critically analysed the website 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

Analyse the website provided by your tutor. How has the author engaged the audience through ethos, pathos and logos?

In this example, the student has been asked to look at a website in relation to ethos, pathos and logos. When analysing the website, the student might ask:

- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the website navigation user-friendly?
- Does the website use ethos, pathos and logos to engage the audience? Is this done effectively through the use of layout, design and the presentation of ideas? How so?

Example paragraph demonstrating critical analysis

Pathos is evident throughout the website, particularly with its use of colour and imagery. *In the top left corner of the website is an image of Australia with 'Welcome to Australia' written beside it. Attention is drawn to the red of both the image of Australia and the letter 'o' in 'Welcome'. This colour emotionally engages viewers, as red denotes a sense of passion and urgency. Furthermore, the white heart in the centre of the 'o' proposes a notion of care as it is the 'heart' of Australia. This heart, representing the 'voice' of passion and positivity, plays with the viewers' sentiments, making them more inclined to support WTA's vision of welcoming new arrivals. In direct contrast, logos is the least used technique in convincing audiences to support WTA. Claims which the organisation makes in the 'about' section such as, 'thousands of Australians…don't care too much for politics' are not substantiated by any source and therefore weaken the argument. However, the website attempts to detract from this by engaging the emotions of Australian readers, and claiming that despite a lack of interest in politics, the Australian public 'care about people'.* <u>In most instances on the website, where logic is not substantiated, pathos is used to compensate through linguistic persuasion, which essentially does have a strong effect.</u>

Topic sentence (focus):
- The paragraph will focus on pathos, which is used extensively on the website.

Development/explanation /support of focus
- Colour and images on the website are used to generate emotion and empathy.

<u>Conclusion</u>
- Pathos compensates where there is no logos via emotive or persuasive language.