# The Analysis of Mandatory TOEFL Test Policy in University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA

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**Abstract**

This research was conducted to find the urgency of implementing the mandatory TOEFL test policy. This policy requires students who will take the final examination to have a TOEFL certificate with a minimum score of 450. This research used a qualitative research method with 114 students as the sample. Furthermore, triangulation was utilized by using close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, and also structured interviews. Data obtained through questionnaires and interviews were analyzed qualitative descriptively. From the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that the TOEFL test policy with a minimum score of 450 as one of the mandatory requirements for students who will register for final examination was welcomed by students and was expected to be implemented immediately. This cannot be separated from external factors, such as globalization and future job demands. However, students also hope that they will be facilitated academically in order to achieved the minimum score of 450. These facilities were expected to come in the form of training or TOEFL Preparation courses which can provide provision and training so that a score of 450 can be achieved relatively easily without the students having to repeat the test many times.

**Keywords:**
Policy analysis, TOEFL, test.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important aspects in the life of every human being. Education can increase the level of competence and quality of the individual in terms of cognitive, affective, and also psychomotor. Education is also a factor in improving the quality of a

country's human resources (Disas, 2017). In the educational process, several types of learning are given, one of which includes teaching a foreign language, namely English.

English, according to Drubin and Kellogg (2012); Narahara (1383), is one of the global languages that is often used in the world. As an international language that has an important role in human life, English is studied as an aspect of education that must be present in every country, including Indonesia. The process of English education does not only take place at the high school level, but also at tertiary institutions. Higher education institutions continue to compete in increasing the competency and knowledge of their graduates regarding English.

One of the media to find out a person's English ability is the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or what is often called the TOEFL. This is a type of test that measures and examines a person's level of ability and understanding of English academically. Philips (2001); Sharpe (2007), explains that over time, the shape of the TOEFL always changes as shown in Figure 1.1. TOEFL started from a Paper Based (PBT) based test, then Computer Based (CBT) based, and finally became IBT or Internet Based TOEFL. TOEFL is also often an obligation at the tertiary level in Indonesia, one of which is the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA. Students who wish to take the thesis exam are required to have a minimum TOEFL score of 450. This decision was taken, bearing in mind the importance of students' English skills and competence, because English is a language that is often used all over the world. The obligation to carry out the TOEFL at University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA is also useful in evaluating the English language skills of its students. As stated by Herwandar, Safryono and Haryono (2012), that the TOEFL is a test that prioritizes the evaluation of student competency at the tertiary level with the aim of improving each individual's English skills.

Furthermore, the TOEFL test was launched as a way to find out and evaluate graduates' English skills. The TOEFL test according to Ginther and Elder (2014) is a form of test developed in the 1960s with the aim of testing someone's foreign language skills, which in this case is English. The same thing was conveyed by Sharpe (2016), she stated that the TOEFL test is a test that measures a person's level of proficiency in English, which is often found at the tertiary level. Because of this, University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA implements the TOEFL test through existing policies. The tertiary institution considers that the TOEFL test can assist the tertiary institution in deciding the feasibility of the graduates' English skills. Furthermore, the TOEFL test is not only used to determine the feasibility of graduates from English study programs, but also graduates from various other study programs who generally do not have a linear understanding of the content of the TOEFL test material.

On the other hand, Policy analysis is a process of thinking and reasoning that has been around for a long time. Referring to McRae in Sari et al., (2021), Policy analysis is an applied scientific field that uses rational arguments using facts to explain, evaluate, and generate thoughts in the context of efforts to solve problems and public issues. Policy analysis is also referred to as a method or procedure for utilizing human understanding in solving policy problems (Suryadi & Tilaar in Suyahman, 2016). Suryadi and Tilaar in Suyahman (2016), and Simatupang (1992) also explain that policy analysis is a field of social science that uses inquiry and argumentation methods that have the aim of producing and utilizing policy information in a decision-making process that is political in nature in order to solve policy issue. The same thing was also stated by Dunn (2003), Dunn stated

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that policy analysis is human knowledge and competence in the framework of decision making by paying attention to various aspects, perspectives, and also the facts that are present in making decisions about a policy to be implemented.

Therefore, this research is expected to show the level of English proficiency for each graduate from all study programs, which can be used as evaluation material for further development. In addition, this research is also expected to provide benefits and reference materials or considerations to the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA. This consideration refers to the implementation of a policy which requires every graduate from all study programs to take the TOEFL test. In addition Ris Nowreyah A. Al-Nouh, Muneera M. Abdul-Kareem & Hanan A. Taqi, (2014) stated that a further analysis is needed to evaluate the policies applied regarding the TOEFL test at University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA.

## METHOD
### Design
This research utilizes the qualitative design to find the result. As stated by Sugiyono (2010), qualitative design is a research design that utilizes the empirical of the researcher. It also make use of the researcher as the main instrument in the research. Furthermore, the methodology that was used in this research was divided into 3 (three) stages. The implementation of the TOEFL policy analysis begins with the preparation of proposals and the development of concepts about the research to be carried out. The proposal is then developed in such a way by taking into account the empirical aspects whose existence is visible. Furthermore, in the second stage, data collection will be carried out, this data will be used as the main source and main material in this study. In addition, the data that has been previously obtained will be analyzed using a predetermined method, and used to obtain results that are in accordance with the content of the results of the analysis. As a continuation of the data analysis process, the results obtained were examined further, and conclusions were drawn regarding the TOEFL test policy within the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA.

The populations in the study regarding the policy analysis of the TOEFL test were students who had taken the TOEFL test at the UHAMKA Language Laboratory before. As for the research sample, referring to Lunsford (1995); Bhardwaj (2019), they stated that research sample is a small portion of the population that has been selected and determined from the total population in the study. In this study using a purposive sampling technique which in essence emphasizes sampling based on considerations related to certain matters (Ahyar et al., 2020).

### Data Collection
This study utilizes a form of data collection in the form of data triangulation. Sugiyono (2010) states that the data triangulation technique is a technique for retrieving pre-existing data sources. Furthermore, the data collection will be carried out with the process, as follows:

### *Questionnaire*
Arikunto (2002) explains that a questionnaire is a number of questions or statements used to obtain information. The questionnaire used in this study is a list of statements that

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refer to the previous students' TOEFL test results. The questionnaire used in this study was also divided into 2 types, namely an open questionnaire and a closed questionnaire. Afriansyah (2016) and Damayani (2014) explained that an open questionnaire is a questionnaire that gives respondents the opportunity to answer freely, while a closed questionnaire is a questionnaire that requires respondents to answer according to predetermined answers. Some of the questionnaire items used in this study were adapted from research conducted by Nowreyah et al. (2014). In addition, the expected number of respondents to fill out the questionnaire is 30 students, but the greater the number, the better, as explained by Cohen, et.al. (2007).

### *Semi-structured Interview*
This study utilizes semi-structured interviews to collect data. Semi-structured interviews are types of interviews that are carried out more freely and openly than structured interviews. This type of interview also gives freedom to the person being interviewed, so that the information and ideas that the person wants to convey will be more easily conveyed (Sugiyono, 2013). Even though this interview is free, it still has a limited theme and flow of discussion, so that it becomes a flexible but controlled interview.

This study uses a data analysis method in the form of descriptive qualitative. Abdussamad (2021); Salim and Syahrum (2012) revealed that descriptive qualitative research is a form of research based on the philosophical principles of postpositivism. In addition, Sugiyono (2012) also added that qualitative research is research conducted in natural conditions (natural). This requires researchers to look at things based on existing realities/phenomena/symptoms (Murdiyanto, 2020). Furthermore, the two survey data obtained through questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods on the basis of reality or the reality that occurred.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
After the instrument is given to more than 100 students at random, data can be obtained. This data is also expected to be one of the components whose existence is needed in an effort to answer the formulation of the research problem, namely the urgency in carrying out the TOEFL test for University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA students. This data was collected using instruments in the form of questionnaires and interviews. As a result of these efforts, this questionnaire managed to obtain data from 114 students from various study programs at University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA. The data that has been obtained through closed and open instruments is then analyzed and then explained in more detail.

### 1. Close-ended Questionnaire
To collect the perceptions and paradigms of students who either have or have never participated in TOEFL test activities, an instrument in the form of a closed questionnaire is used. This questionnaire consists of 20 statements, each of which comes with 5 choices, namely: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA). Then, students were asked to fill out the questionnaire according to the facts. These details can be seen in the Table 1, below:

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## Table 1: **Participants' Responses**

| No. | Items | Responses | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 1. | The TOEFL test helps me find out my English skills. | 1 0.9% | 4 3.5% | 8 7% | 31 27.2% | 70 61.4% |
| 2. | The TOEFL test at FKIP UHAMKA must be carried out regularly, for example, once every 2 years. | 4 3.5% | 10 8.8% | 11 9.6% | 41 36% | 48 42.1% |
| 3. | I always study/prepare myself before taking the TOEFL test. | 1 0.9% | 5 4.4% | 23 20.2% | 46 40.4% | 39 34.2% |
| 4. | I believe the TOEFL test is effective in improving my English proficiency. | 1 0.9% | 6 5.3% | 14 12.3% | 46 40.4% | 47 41.2% |
| 5. | The TOEFL test is very useful and needed, for example to apply for a job or apply for further study scholarships. | 0 0% | 2 1.8% | 8 7% | 27 23.7% | 77 65.5% |
| 6. | All study programs at FKIP UHAMKA are required to hold a TOEFL test for their students. | 3 2.6% | 7 6.1% | 15 13.2% | 33 28.9% | 56 49.1% |
| 7. | I think the implementation of the TOEFL test at the Language Laboratory is excellent. | 0 0% | 3 2.6% | 18 15.8% | 46 40.4% | 47 41.2% |
| 8. | I know that the TOEFL score for the S1 standard is at least 450. | 2 1.8% | 5 4.4% | 23 20.2% | 33 28.9% | 51 44.7% |
| 9. | I am confident that I can achieve a TOEFL score of over 450. | 1 0.9% | 4 3.5% | 16 14% | 31 27.2% | 62 54.4% |
| 10. | I will take the TOEFL test several times until I score more than 450. | 1 0.9% | 5 4.4% | 22 19.3% | 41 36% | 45 39.5% |
| 11. | I think that the TOEFL test with a minimum score of 450 can be used as a requirement for students to register for their final project, either registering for a thesis trial or through the publication. | 10 8.8% | 7 6.1% | 21 18.4% | 31 27.2% | 45 39.5% |
| 12. | The policy that requires FKIP UHAMKA students to take the TOEFL test is very good. | 3 2.6% | 8 7% | 16 14% | 35 30.7% | 52 45.6% |
| 13. | It will be easier for me to take the TOEFL test if I take the TOEFL Preparation course before the exam. | 0 0% | 3 2.6% | 16 14% | 33 28.9% | 62 54.4% |
| 14. | I feel the TOEFL test is not effective in showing my English skills. | 32 28.1% | 40 35.1% | 24 21.1% | 13 11.4% | 5 4.4% |
| 15. | I never studied or prepared myself before taking the TOEFL test. | 38 33.3% | 32 28.1% | 23 20.2% | 16 14% | 5 4.4% |
| 16. | Even though my TOEFL score hasn't reached 450 yet, I don't want to take the TOEFL test again to increase my score. | 54 47.4% | 35 30.7% | 14 12.3% | 6 5.3% | 5 4.4% |
| 17. | After getting the final results of the TOEFL test, I always reflect on myself. | 1 0.9% | 3 2.6% | 29 25.4% | 50 43.9% | 31 27.2% |
| 18. | The unsatisfactory TOEFL test results made me want to study more deeply to improve these results. | 0 0% | 3 2.6% | 14 12.3% | 49 43% | 48 42.1% |
| 19. | I feel helped by FKIP UHAMKA's policy which requires students to take the TOEFL test. | 3 2.6% | 5 4.4% | 24 21.1% | 40 35.1% | 42 36.8% |
| 20. | If the TOEFL score is used as a condition for registering for a thesis trial, then a TOEFL Preparation course must be held as a provision for students. | 5 4.4% | 4 3.5% | 14 12.3% | 34 29.8% | 57 50% |

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Table 1 shows that each student has varied perceptions and views in responding to the 20 statements given in the questionnaire. It should also be noted that statements number 14, 15 and 16 are negative statements, so that the STS options in these three statements have the same value as the SS options in the other statements. Of all the questions that were given and answered by the 114 participating respondents, the answers were recorded and categorized into 2 types, namely as follow:

Table 2: **The Sum of Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A)**

| No. | Categories | Item Number | Total % (SA+A) | Total % (N+D+SD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Supporting the TOEFL test policy with all its benefits within FKIP UHAMKA environment | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 19 | 77.51 | 22.49 |
| 2. | Supporting the existence of TOEFL Preparation training and courses before the test is carried out | 3, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 | 76.51 | 23.49 |

Table 2 reveals that respondents strongly support the TOEFL test policy within the FKIP UHAMKA environment. This can be seen from the number of strongly agree and agree which was 77.51%. Moreover, respondents also gave a very positive response to the TOEFL Preparation training before the test took place, and this was proven by the number of strongly agree and agree which reached 76.51%.

## 2. Open-ended Questionnaire and Interviews
In contrast to a closed questionnaire which provides options to respondents, an open questionnaire and interviews give respondents the opportunity to convey aspirations, views, and also perceptions from their own minds regarding the reality or issues faced by each question presented. These open questionnaire and interviews, in addition to giving freedom to the respondent, also has another function, namely as a support for the respondent's answers to the closed questionnaire. In the open questionnaire and interviews, each question can be categorized into 2 types, which are similar to a closed questionnaire, namely: 1) asking for the respondent's views on policies that require the TOEFL test with all the benefits that are also present in the campus environment, and 2) asking for respondents' views on TOEFL training and preparation courses before carrying out the test.

### a. Perception towards mandatory TOEFL test policy
Based on the first, second, third and fourth questions asked to the respondents, it can be concluded that the respondents have a positive view of the policy and strongly agree with the policy. This positive view is created for reasons classified into five points: (1) benefits (Exposes the English abilities Useful for the job, To complete a requirement, Discover a new knowledge and experience), (2) Globalization, (3) Easy accessibility, (4) Improve the quality of the university, and (5) Language features (Vocabulary and Grammar).

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Reflecting on the answers given by the respondents, a policy that requires the TOEFL test for all students should be implemented because with this policy, students get many benefits. These benefits are not only obtained by students who participate in the test, but can also be felt by campus itself. Referring to the views of respondent 36, respondent 61, respondent 70, and respondent 114 who believe that the TOEFL test can clearly show their English proficiency. In addition, they also consider that the TOEFL test can make it easier to find a job and is also useful in completing a number of requirements that may be needed at one time. Furthermore, the respondents thought that the essence of this test was to give them new knowledge and experiences about English. This view is recorded as follows:

> I agree, because apart from being useful for thesis or journal requirements, it is definitely also useful for us to apply for jobs or take the BUMN test or the civil servant test or PPPK test. Because of that, you really have to ask where the TOEFL certificate is. So, if we graduate from college, we don't have to be tired and pay again to take the TOEFL test elsewhere. Just take the TOEFL test from campus. *(Respondent 36, open-ended questionnaire, May 20, 2023)*
>
> Can hone my English and for the world of work and become my experience in the TOEFL test. *(Respondent 61, open-ended questionnaire, May 23, 2023)*
>
> Must. With the TOEFL, it will add insight into English, especially for individuals. As well as, for the requirements if you want to apply for work. *(Respondent 70, open-ended questionnaire, May 25, 2023)*
>
> It is required because to see students' English language skills, as well as the certificates given later will help students as an aid to apply for a job or study aboard. *(Respondent 114, open-ended questionnaire, June 4, 2023)*
>
> To find out how much students' English skills are. Later, if we work, even if we don't become teachers, we will definitely encounter situations where English is commonplace and many jobs require a TOEFL certificate. *(Respondent 110, interview)*

Figure 1. TOEFL Benefits in Some Ways

Furthermore, one of the main reasons why the TOEFL test policy must be implemented is the demands of globalization. In this era of globalization, where English is an international language, students are required to master English well. Therefore, English is one of the keys to success in this era. Thus, the TOEFL test can be used to measure the individual's English proficiency, and the final results can be used for self-reflection, and further improve their abilities. This perception was conveyed by Respondent 83 and 81 as follows:

> In my opinion, the TOEFL test itself can be of added value in this globalization era. Because in this era English skills are needed, the world of work always demands that

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employees can speak English fluently. *(Respondent 83, open-ended questionnaire, June 1, 2023)*

If we take TOEFL, we can find out our abilities in English where in today's world, English is very, very important for all of us to learn. *(Respondent 81, interview)*

Figure 2. **TOEFL in Globalization Era**

In addition, one of the reasons why this policy is required is to make it easier for students to find places to take tests that are accredited and credible. If the campus implements this policy, students won't have to look for another place to take the TOEFL test. This was conveyed by Respondent 58, along with the explanation:

Yes, because it helps students effectively to get tests on campus so they don't have to look outside and help improve students' abilities. (*Respondent 58, open-ended questionnaire, May 22, 2023)*

Figure 3. **Effectiveness of TOEFL in the University**

Furthermore, the implementation of this policy can also boost and improve campus quality. This can happen when all students take the TOEFL test, then when they get the final score, students reflect on themselves. The self-reflection process is expected to encourage and motivate students to improve their knowledge of English. Improving students' English skills will have an impact on improving the quality of campus-owned human resources, which directly improves the campus' quality. This was conveyed by Respondent 47 and 50, along with the explanation:

This policy must be implemented in order to create graduates who can compete with other graduates, especially with graduates from other countries. *(Respondent 47, open-ended questionnaire, May 22, 2023)*

I really agree with this policy, because it can have an effect on UHAMKA graduates. These graduates can later compete with graduates from other public or private universities, which automatically raises the quality of UHAMKA itself. *(Respondent 50, open-ended questionnaire, May 22, 2023)*

Figure 4. **TOEFL in Improving Students' and University's Qualities**

Meanwhile, other reasons were also present and became one of the most important reasons in implementing this policy. The reason for this is the respondent's belief that the TOEFL test can improve their English language skills, especially in the areas of grammar and vocabulary. It is believed that these three areas of English can improve after undergoing a series of TOEFL tests. Therefore, Respondent 17 and 20 explained it as follows:

Because in writing English we are not only required to understand the meaning of the English language itself, but there are many aspects that must be considered when we write, especially the grammar used in the TOEFL test. Apart from that, the reading

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section also often sharpens our vocabulary comprehension. *(Respondent 17, open-ended questionnaire, May 18, 2023)*

Apart from being a requirement for a thesis trial, the TOEFL test can also improve our listening, grammar and vocabulary skills when taking the test. Because each part of the TOEFL test tests each element of the language being studied. (*Respondent 20, open-ended questionnaire, May 1, 2023*)

Figure 5. **TOEFL in Improving Knowledge about English Itself**

With this, it can be concluded that the respondent's view of the policy of carrying out the TOEFL test on campus is very good. Respondents welcomed this because of the various benefits that this activity could bring, which of course will continue to have a positive impact on both students and the campus.

**b. Perception towards TOEFL Preparation course before taking the test**
Referring to the respondents' answers to the TOEFL Preparation training and courses before the TOEFL test took place, two major reasons were found: (1) Preparing and improving the students' knowledge, and (2) Facilitate the students (Providing tips and Guiding the students).

Referring to the responses that have been given by the respondents, the policy to regularly implement training and courses on the TOEFL Preparation has been welcomed positively by the respondents. Respondents described how positive this program would be if it was actually realized, and hoped that this policy would be immediately implemented by the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA because this policy has benefits which include preparing and increasing student knowledge about the series or flow and also the material that will be tested in the TOEFL test. This can happen because not all students are familiar with the TOEFL test, therefore preparations such as training and courses are essential for these students. In addition, this is also useful because it is difficult for students to obtain or find valid and credible learning resources, therefore training or courses on TOEFL Preparation on a regular basis are very positively welcomed. The following is a detailed description based on Respondent 38 and 53 as follows:

This is necessary because doing the TOEFL requires skills such as how to read text quickly to answer questions, and how to answer listening questions so that students are not surprised when the exam takes place. *(Respondent 38, open-ended questionnaire, May 20, 2023)*

Agree that the average FKIP student is 450. But in my experience and my friends, getting to 400 is quite difficult. so regular practice is needed and students look for other sources. *(Respondent 53, open-ended questionnaire, May 22, 2023)*

Figure 6. **TOEFL Preparation Course in Improving Students' Knowledge**

Apart from that, training activities and TOEFL Preparation courses can also be a means of facilitating students in the test. The facilities provided can be in the form of giving tips or tips, as well as guidance on tests that students will face. These tips can be

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any material that has the possibility of showing up on the test. Meanwhile, guidance can be in the form of a flow or series that will be presented in the TOEFL test. This was explained by Respondent 25, 52, and 70 as follow:

> Yes, it is necessary, because the ability of students is different. There are those who can learn on their own, there are those who must be guided from the basics. Therefore, it will be optimal if TOEFL courses are held, with the condition that the lecturer must create a calm and pleasant class atmosphere so that there is minimal possibility that students will be absent from the course. *(Respondent 25, open-ended questionnaire, May 19, 2023)*
>
> Very very necessary. So that students can find out what form the TOEFL test will take in the future, teachers are also needed who are quite painstaking in explaining the meanings of sentences in TOEFL test questions that students have never understood. *(Respondent 52, open-ended questionnaire, May 22, 2023)*
>
> This is very necessary, because if there is no TOEFL Preparation course it will be very difficult to understand TOEFL success tips, even if you learn from YouTube or other channels. *(Respondent 70, open-ended questionnaire, May 25, 2023)*

Figure 7. **TOEFL Preparation Course in Giving Tips and Guidance**

Even though the TOEFL Preparation course is highly sought after by students, it turns out that there are students who hope that its existence will not increase the number of existing credits. Instead, this course replaces the Al Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan courses which according to students have too many credits.

> As for the subject, I really agree with preparing for the TOEFL test. However, if possible, there are other courses that can be replaced, such as the AIKA course, if I look at the English Language Study Program, there are too many, perhaps it could be replaced with the TOEFL Preparation course because we in the English Language Study Program should focus on English itself, both in literature or education. So, for me I really agree if there is a TOEFL Preparation course. *(Respondent 99, interview)*

Figure 8. **TOEFL Preparation Course Credits**

As the answers of the respondents that have been shown above, more than 75% of the respondents gladly accepted the implementation of the regulations. This was also supported by the result of the interview which some of them mention that "TOEL test as a requirement has to be a must since it will help us evaluate our proficiency in English". Furthermore, the rest of the students thought that "TOEFL test is really needed because it is a requirement to get a job, so regardless when and how, we must take a test anyway, so the sooner, the better". From these statements, it can be concluded that the implementation of policies that present TOEFL Preparation training and courses are highly awaited and also expected by students. This is because TOEFL Preparation training and courses can help students understand the material and also the series of tests that will be faced. In addition, students also hope to learn tips and tricks on taking the TOEFL test, so they can achieve a final score above 450.

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## CONCLUSION

In short, this research has been conducted qualitatively and utilized various instruments. From these instruments, various responses were obtained from the many students who were respondents in this study. These responses become reference material in making decisions regarding the policy of implementing the TOEFL test for University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA's students. From the results of the data analysis that has been carried out on these responses, it can be concluded that the mandatory TOEFL test policy with a minimum score of 450 for students is very welcome and is expected to be implemented immediately. This is also inseparable from other external factors, such as globalization, as well as job demands in the future. Even so, students also hope to be facilitated by learning facilities that can help them achieve a minimum final score of 450. These facilities are expected to be present in the form of training and also TOEFL Preparation courses which can support the knowledge of students who will take the test.

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