

Frequently Asked Questions about Effort Reporting and Electronic Effort Certification

1. Why must I certify my own effort?

Answer: Federal regulations require that effort reports be certified by “the employee, principal investigator, or responsible official(s) using suitable means of verification that the work was performed.” (OMB Circular A-21) The University has determined that, except in unusual circumstances, effort certification by the employee best satisfies the federal regulations.

2. What are the dates and term code for which I am certifying?

Answer: Effort reporting dates for each term are included at the top of the certification page and printed form

Term code examples: 2085 – Summer 2008 term
 2088 – Fall 2008 term
 2091 – Spring 2009 term

3. I signed a Faculty Assignment Report at the beginning of the semester. Why is that not sufficient?

Answer: The Faculty Assignment Report (FAR) is an agreement, or plan of action, signed by faculty and their Dean, Director or Chair at the beginning of each term. The duties often change during the course of the term. The Effort Report is an “*after-the-fact*” report of actual activities performed during the semester covered by the report and is *required* by federal and state statutes.

4. I can't see the My Self Service>Effort Certification Menu. What's wrong?

Answer: Employees who are terminated from UF for more than 30 days automatically have all PeopleSoft roles removed. These employees are unable to see this menu option, even though they may still have access to PeopleSoft. The department may request a Proxy Certifier (using the request form on the Effort Toolkit) or may print the effort certification form and have the employee (or designee) sign it.

5. I have more important things to do. Can someone else certify my effort for me?

Answer: Certification of effort is a *requirement* of the **federal government, the State of Florida and the University of Florida** for teaching faculty, those working in teaching departments or involved in instructional activities (i.e. grading papers, ordering textbooks, preparing rosters, etc.), and those paid from federal contracts and grants or other sponsored activities. Most salary-related cost sharing is collected from the Effort Reporting System and is downloaded to the official Cost Sharing Record of the University. Failure to certify effort could

result in forfeiture of part or all federal funding for a single project or the entire University, debarment of an individual researcher or the University from applying for federal contracts or grants for a period of up to 5 years, significant financial penalties and fines, and loss of State funding for teaching.

In unusual circumstances it is possible for your department to request permission to assign a "Proxy Certifier" to certify your effort for you. This request must be approved by the Provost's Office or by Cost Analysis within Finance and Accounting. Circumstances where a Proxy Certifier would be approved would include student employees who have graduated or left the University, those who have otherwise left employment by the University, and the incapacitation of an employee. Employees with internet access, who are on brief vacation or on assignment out of the country, etc., are generally expected to certify their own effort reports electronically.

6. How much time do I have to get this done?

Answer: You will receive an email notice informing you that your effort report is ready for certification and providing the navigation via the myUFL system to complete the process. If you have not certified the report within four calendar days, an email reminder will be sent to you with a copy to your Dean, Director or Department Chair. This process will be automatically repeated every four days until the certification is completed. Once a particular term has been closed for updating it is still possible to certify effort by printing and signing a copy of the report and forwarding it to your department's Effort Reporter. Remember, the longer it takes to certify a report the less value it will have for audit and other reporting purposes.

7. My effort report contains errors; how do I get it corrected before I certify it?

Answer: OMB circular A-21 requires a "reasonable estimation" of effort performed. But, if there are errors in your report that you feel must be corrected, please contact the effort reporter in your department who will make the corrections. You will be informed by email when your report is again ready to be certified.

8. When can an Effort Proxy Certifier certify for another employee?

Answer: Circumstances where a Proxy Certifier would be approved include student employees who have graduated or left the University, those who have otherwise left the employment of the University, and the incapacitation of the employee. (Note: Employees with internet access, who are on brief vacation or on assignment off-campus, or out of the country, etc., are normally expected to certify their own effort reports electronically.)

9. Who can act as a Proxy Certifier for another employee?

Answer: OMB circular A-21 provides that a principle investigator or other responsible official having “suitable means of verification” may certify an effort report. Acceptable proxies would include direct supervisors, PIs with suitable means of verification of all aspects of the employee’s activities, in some cases lab managers with suitable means of verification, or the Dean, Director or Chair of the department for terminated employees. The proxy certifier must attest to having the required suitable means of verification.

10. Do all certifications have to be completed before the Effort Authorizer can authorize the department?

Answer: No, while it is best to have all of the Effort Reports certified before they are authorized by the Dean, Director or Chair, all Effort records must be authorized by the closing date of the term.

11. What happens if I do not certify my effort before the term closes?

Answer: You will need to print and sign a paper copy of the effort report, and forward it as soon as possible to your department’s Effort Reporter.

12. Where do I get more information about this process?

Answer: Please consult the HR Effort Toolkit at <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/training/myUFL/toolkits/EffortReporting.asp> or email effort@admin.ufl.edu for assistance.

13. What if the employee is no longer at UF to certify his/her effort?

Answer: The departmental Effort Reporter may request a Proxy Certifier to certify for that individual. (Request template on the HR Effort Toolkit at this web site: (Please copy and paste to your address bar.) <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/training/myUFL/toolkits/EffortReporting.asp#security>

14. How often do I have to certify my effort?

Answer: Certification is on a per-term basis (three times per year).

15. Why have I never certified my effort before now?

Answer: In the past, Effort was allocated by the Effort Reporter and Authorized (certified) by the Dean, Director or Chair of the department. State auditors felt strongly that this did not adequately satisfy the requirements of federal regulations. For recent terms, employees were asked to certify their own effort by signing a paper report sent or delivered to them by the departmental Effort Reporter. Now, It is expected that electronic certification by the employee will greatly simplify what was a more difficult paper process.

16. How is this effort information used?

Answer: Information collected in the effort reporting system is used to document effort expended on sponsored grants and contracts (as required by

the federal government and other granting agencies), document payroll contributions to cost sharing, prepare reports to the Board of Governors and other agencies with a stake in Florida public education, and monitor compliance with University, State and Federal regulations. It is used in some departments to monitor fulfillment of assigned responsibilities, progression towards promotion and/or tenure, and document activities in fulfillment of the University's important three-fold mission of education, research and service.

17. Who is the effort person in my department that input this information for me?

Answer: A List of Effort Contacts for each department is available on the Effort Toolkit located here:

<http://www.hr.ufl.edu/training/myUFL/toolkits/EffortReporting.asp>

(Please copy and paste to your address bar.)

18. How long will I be able to access this data from the Effort Tracking system?

Answer: The effort data, along with electronic certification status, will be available for many years as supporting documentation for grants charged and other duties. After the initial reporting period is closed, you will only be able to certify the information by printing a copy, signing it and sending it to your departmental Effort Reporter.

19. Can my PI or supervisor certify my effort, or do I have to do it myself? What is the process? Is there a role involved?

Answer:

- a. In unusual circumstances it is possible for your department to request permission to assign a "Proxy Certifier" to certify your effort. The Proxy Certifier must be a "principal investigator, or responsible official . . . using suitable means of verification that the work was performed." (OMB Circular A-21) This request must be approved by the Provost's Office *or* by Cost Analysis within Finance and Accounting. Circumstances where a Proxy Certifier could be approved would include student employees who have graduated or left the University, those who have otherwise left employment by the University, or the incapacitation of the employee. (Employees with internet access who are on vacation or on assignment off-campus or out of the country, etc., are expected to certify their own effort reports on-line.)
- b. In order to perform the duty of a Proxy Certify the following security role must be requested by your departmental security administrator (DSA):
UF_ET_PROXY_CERTIFIER. The Effort Reporting Core Office must activate the security via request on a term-by-term basis. An **Effort Proxy Certifier Request** template is available on the HR Effort Toolkit page at:

<http://www.hr.ufl.edu/training/myUFL/toolkits/EffortReporting.asp>

(Copy and paste the address to your computer's address bar.)

Requests for a Proxy Certifier are valid only for a single effort term.

20. Why does my effort form total more or less than 100%?

Answer: Effort percentage totals less than or greater than 100% may be caused by several factors. These include receiving back pay from a prior term, holding multiple jobs during the term, overtime hours, or rounding differences during the calculation of effort data. Rounding differences +/- 1% in total effort are deemed insignificant. Remember, the effort is a "reasonable estimate."

21. What happens if my Job record is with one department, but I actually work in another department?

Answer: The *Effort Home Department* determines who is responsible for getting your certification. This is primarily based on the rank of your Salary Admin Plan in each department, FTE appointed, or effective date of your active job records during the term.

22. What do I do if someone is on my Master List that doesn't belong to my Department?

Answer: A person should only appear on your Master List if they had an active job record with your department during the term. You should ensure that the effort is certified by the individual or work with the other department to make sure they assume this responsibility. There is no system change made to the delivered Master List for either department.

23. What do I do if someone is in my department but not on my Master List?

Answer: The person should have an active job record with another department during the term. The other department has the responsibility to ensure that the effort is certified by the individual, unless you work with that department to assume this responsibility. There is no system change made to the delivered Master List for either department.

24. I'm the department Effort Reporter. How do I know who has certified his/her effort?

Answer: There are two ways to find out which employees have certified their effort for the term:

- a. The **Effort Master List** includes a column to indicate whether the employees' effort has been certified or not, although it is only updated nightly.
- b. The **Effort Certification-Admin menu** will provide the certified status of each employee to whom you have security access. This data is updated immediately as certifications occur electronically.
- c. You and the department Dean, Director or Chair (Authorizer) will also receive a **periodic email list** of employees who have not yet certified their Effort within

four calendar days of being fully submitted in the effort system. Once an employee certifies the effort report, their name will be removed from this list.