

Effort Certification

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Overview

Effort Reporting is a federally mandated process required when an individual is compensated by or contributes time to a sponsored project. This federal regulation located in the Uniform Guidance, requires that the University confirm that the percentages allocated to each activity represent a reasonable estimate of the work performed on federal and federal flow-thru grants and contracts. FIU has chosen to apply this standard to all sponsored projects.

What is effort?

Effort is defined as the amount of time spent on a particular project or activity. This includes the time spent working on the project and directly charged to the project as well as the time contributed to the project (cost shared effort).

What is effort reporting?

Effort reporting is the federally mandated method used to certify to the funding agencies the effort charged or contributed to a sponsored project.

Why is Effort Reporting necessary?

Federal circular 2 CFR § 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) is the federal government's cost principles for colleges and Universities. It defines what costs are allowable and allocable to federal grants and other "assistance" agreements. In addition, this Circular sets guidelines for sponsored procedures such as effort certification.

Federal circular 2 CFR § 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) requires that institutions develop a mechanism to determine or confirm how individuals actually expend effort during a specified time period. These effort reports must be performed on a regular schedule and must be certified by individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the employee's compensated activities.

A failure to manage and certify effort correctly could jeopardize the University's federal funding and lead to penalties for FIU.

Effort Certification Process: More than just Certification

The purpose of effort reporting is to certify an individual’s overall effort during a specific period of time. The process begins at the proposal stage of a project and continues through the lifecycle of the project (*Figure 1*).

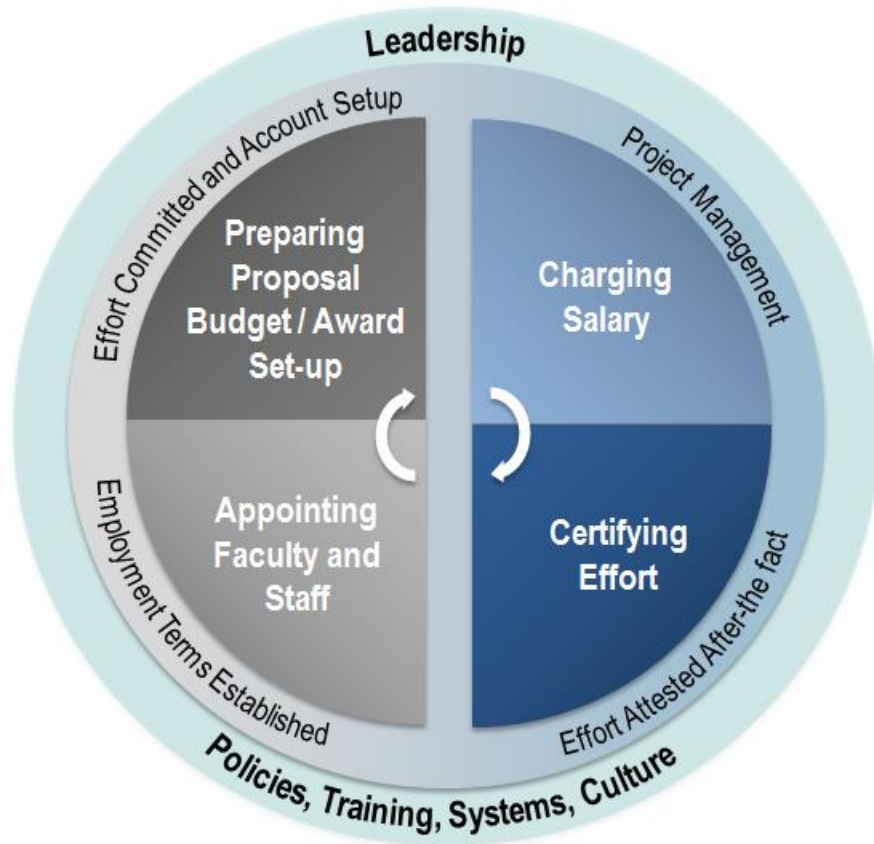


Figure 1 (courtesy Huron Consulting)

Appointing Faculty & Staff

During this phase Employment terms are established. Institutional Base Salary (IBS) is established and any additional compensation is identified.

Proposal and Award Phase

The principal investigator determines the amount of time that is anticipated to be spent on a given project when preparing the initial budget request. This is when a commitment is made to the sponsor.

Once the sponsor’s award notice is received by the University, the Post-Award representative will generate the award in the financial system.

Project Management Phase

Once the award is made and the payroll data is established, the project management phase begins. In this phase Salary is charged (or cost shared), consistent with the activity. Adjustments may be made, *shortly* after-the-fact.

It is during this phase of the sponsored project's life cycle that Effort Certification occurs (Figure 2). As per FIU policy, effort must be completed each semester, using the University's effort certification system: Effort Certification Reporting Technology (ECRT).

ECRT will generate an effort statement for any researcher/certifier who is paid from or contributed effort to on sponsored project. Effort certification statements are required to be electronically certified by the deadline established by the ORED Central Unit.

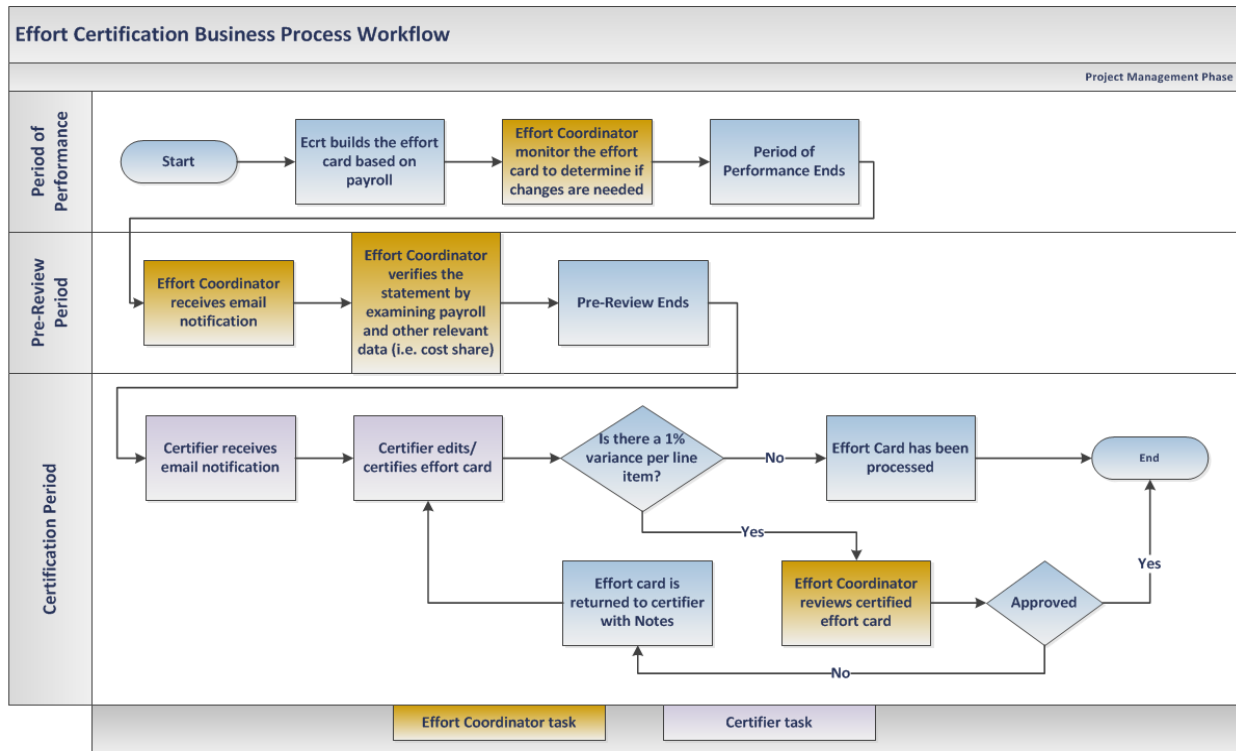


Figure 2

Before the Effort Certification Period Opens: Period of Performance

This is the time period for which individuals are required to certify. During this time, effort is spent on sponsored projects, payroll and cost share amounts are recorded and people, project and payroll data is loaded into ECRT (Figure 3).

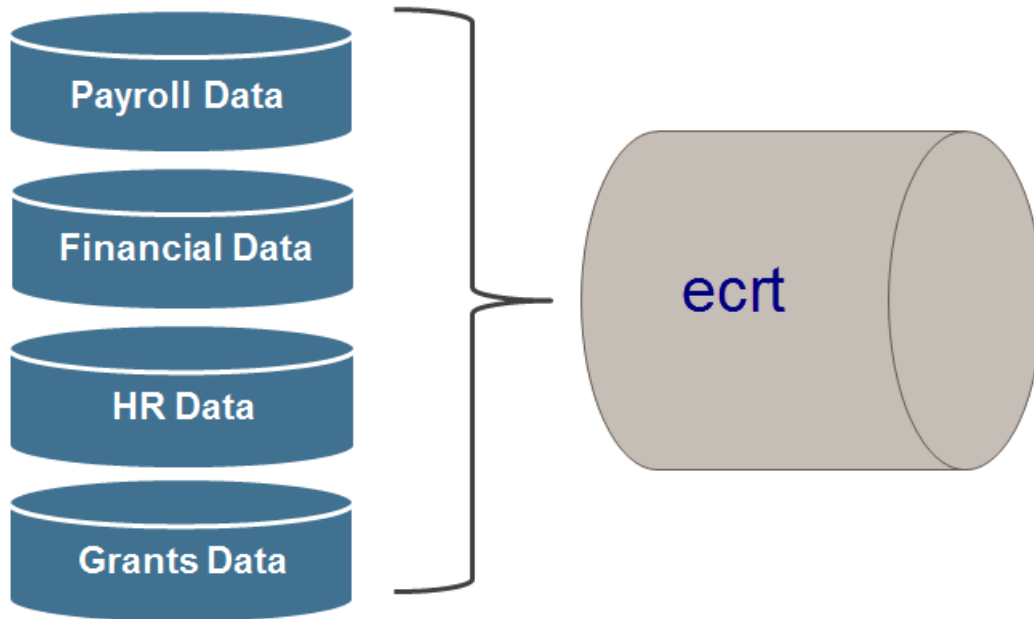


Figure 3 (Courtesy Huron Consulting)

During this time, effort coordinators are able to view the data in ECRT and verify the data is correct as it builds. This is the time frame prior to the effort reporting opening for certification. During this phase, it is important to note that although the effort coordinator may see the effort card building, some of the overall percentages may be incorrect because the effort period has not officially closed.

Before the Effort Reporting Period Opens: Pre-Review Period

Similar to the Period of Performance phase, effort coordinators are able to view the data in ECRT. However, during this 7-day period, the effort coordinators are able to see the data in its entirety.

At this time, the effort coordinator is able to verify the statements by examining payroll, cost sharing and any other relevant information.

Effort Certification: Certification Period

The Effort Certification Period will last **30 days**.

During this phase:

1. *Researcher’s Statement must be Certified:* According to OMB Circular: Uniform Guidance, activities must be confirmed by responsible persons with suitable means of verification that the work was performed. Therefore, the researcher, PI, or the researcher’s supervisor must view the researcher’s effort statement and certify that it accurately depicts actual effort for the Effort Reporting Period.

Person with suitable means of verification is the individual whom has some type of documentation of how the time was spent that is has certified. Documentation could be in the form of an email, calendar, project reports, etc.

If the effort statement is accurate, the individual certifies the statement. The percentage total **must** be 100%. If the effort statement does not accurately reflect the researcher’s effort, the certifier must change the statement’s effort percentages so that it accurately reflects his/her actual effort for that Effort Period.

2. *Effort Coordinators must Process any Statements which lie outside the 1% variance for each line item on the Effort Statement.* During this period the effort coordinator must review the certified statement. If changes were requested by the person with suitable means of verification, the effort coordinator is responsible for facilitating those changes. Once any changes are properly made and the statement’s data is accurate, the effort coordinator must process the statement. Once the statement is certified and processed, the statement is considered certified and this fulfills the effort reporting period’s requirements.

After the Effort Period Closes: Post Certification Period

All effort statements must be processed by the established deadlines for each certification period.

During this phase, the ORED – Central Unit is responsible for:

1. Verifying that all effort statements were processed.
2. Retaining effort statements as part of their institutional oversight responsibilities.

The Effort Certification and Reporting Technology (ECRT) System

FIU uses a web-based system, ECRT, to facilitate the institution’s effort reporting and certification process. ECRT is a web-based technology that intuitively guides certifiers and administrators through the various facets of the effort reporting and certification process on a semester basis.

The purpose of this guide is to guide you, the user, on the necessary steps to properly certify and process an effort card.

Who is required to certify?

Every FIU employee has an effort card in ECRT each semester. However, a certification is required only for individuals who have effort on one or more sponsored projects and are exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Certifications are triggered based on salary charges to sponsored projects and commitment data. A ‘certifier’ refers to an individual whose effort must be certified in ECRT.

There are two kinds of certifiers:

1. ‘Self-Certifiers,’ who must certify their own effort
2. ‘Non-Self Certifiers,’ who must have their effort certified by their Principal Investigator(s).

Key Roles associated with the effort certification process:

1. Principal Investigator: The individual who has ultimate responsibility for a sponsored project(s). The principal investigator (PI) identifies all individuals that work on a project and is responsible for assuring compliance with effort reporting policy.
2. Researcher/Certifier: An individual hired by the University (on the University payroll) who works on sponsored projects and may be responsible for the verification of all time spent on the project.
3. Primary Effort Coordinator: Primary effort coordinators are departmental administrators who are responsible for monitoring the effort certification progress of their department and facilitating the process for their departments. By processing the card, the effort coordinator is confirming that any other actions as a result of certified effort have been or will be undertaken. Only one primary effort coordinator can be assigned for each department/division.
4. Secondary Effort Coordinator: Secondary effort coordinators can assist in the monitoring of departments. There can be multiple secondary effort coordinators assigned to a department/division.
5. ORED - Central Unit: The unit within the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) with the responsibility for administering and monitoring the effort reporting system to ensure compliance. This includes initiating and monitoring the effort reporting process and loading payroll and other data files.

Effort Card: The Certifier’s View

During the Certification Period, the certifier must review and certify the effort statement. This is the first step in the certification process that must be completed in ECRT. Persons with suitable means of verification must access the effort statement and attest that the statement’s data is accurate.

If the statement is accurate, the individual must select all *Certify Checkboxes* and click Certify. If changes need to occur, the individual must manually change the numbers in the *Certified Effort* column, click the *Certify Checkboxes* and then click Certify.

How to Certify your Effort

1. ECRT is accessible at <https://ecrt.fiu.edu/ecrt/> or by going to the Effort Reporting webpage at <http://research.fiu.edu/effort/> and click on the ‘Log into ecrt’ button
2. To access ecrt, use your **Panther ID** and password credentials on the Login Screen (*Figure 4*)

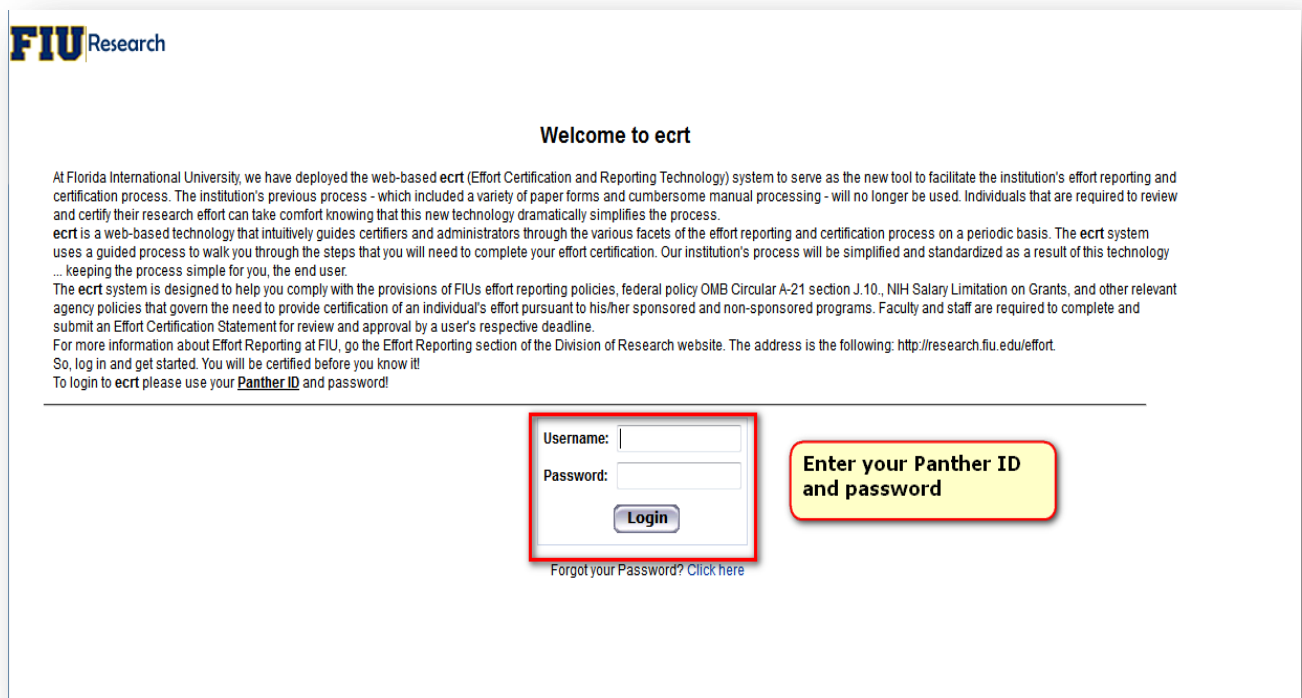


Figure 4

- Once the system has completed authentication, the *Work List* window (Figure 5) is displayed. The work list provides access to the effort statements that need certification.

Work List for Obi-Wan Kenobi

Welcome to the **ecrt** effort reporting system. The tabs below list all of the effort certification tasks that require your attention - whether it is certifying statements, processing statements, or following up on outstanding statements. To view and resolve the specific task, select the link in the task description.

Statements Awaiting Certification (3)						
Effort Statements						
Statement Owner	Department	Period	Due Date	Type	Status	
Kenobi, Obi-Wan	G5623-G5623-Kashyyyk	08/19/2014-12/31/2014	3/2/2015	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed	
		01/01/2015-05/18/2015	12/31/2020	Base	Building	
Benatar, Pat	G5623-G5623-Kashyyyk	08/19/2014-12/31/2014	3/2/2015	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed	

Figure 5

Certify My Effort

- To open a the effort statement you may either:
 - Click the name under the Statement Owner column
 - Click on the Not Certified, Not Processed Icon under the Status column
- Your work center will now open. The work center is divided into three sections (Figure 6):
 - Work list*: This section is divided between statements requiring certification and recently completed statements. All cards listed in the *Statements Requiring Certification* section need to be certified.
 - Demographics and Effort Cards*: This section displays the demographic information for the researcher selected as well as their current and historical effort cards.
 - Effort Card*: This section is the actual effort card that requires certification.

Effort Statement Instructions

Work List

- Statements Requiring Certification
 - Kenobi, Obi-Wan
 - Benatar, Pat
- Recently Completed

Kenobi, Obi-Wan - B573222

- Statement Owner
- Effort Statements
 - Needing certification
 - Base 3/2/2015
 - Historical

Kenobi, Obi-Wan - B573222 (8 Month Faculty) Base Effort Period: 08/19/2014 to 12/31/2014 Due Date: 3/2/2015 Status: Not Certified, Not Processed

INFO - Check all certify checkboxes to show the certify button.

Activity/Project IDs [-]	Committed Effort	Payroll	Cost Share	Computed Effort	Certified Effort
Sponsored					
999999999 Hit Me with Your Best Shot					
3956BBY Wide Awake in Dreamland					
<i>Award Total:</i>	13.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0%
Sponsored Total:	13.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0%
Non Sponsored					
111111111 Funhouse	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50%
M11329 Corella	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50%

Figure 6

Certify My Effort

In the statement (*Figure 7*) is where the payroll, cost share, and effort related data requiring certification must be verified. Scrutinize the statement to ensure:

Activity/Project IDs [-]	Committed Effort	Payroll	Cost Share	Computed Effort	Certified Effort	Certify?
Sponsored						
999999999 Hit Me with Your Best Shot						
3956BBY Wide Awake in Dreamland	13.00%	0.00%	30.00%	30.00%	30%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Award Total:</i>	13.00%	0.00%	30.00%	30.00%	30%	
Sponsored Total:	13.00%	0.00%	30.00%	30.00%	30%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Non Sponsored						
111111111 Funhouse	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
M11329 Corellia	0.00%	50.00%	-30.00%	20.00%	20%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Non Sponsored Total:	0.00%	100.00%	-30.00%	70.00%	70%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grand Total:	13.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Figure 7

- Sponsored and non-sponsored activities** are all listed. Sponsored activity will appear at the top, and any non-sponsored activity will appear on the bottom. All Non-Sponsored activity will be at the category total level
- Committed Effort** column is the effort commitment established based on the award negotiation and/or acceptance of the award
- The Payroll* column represents how you were paid on each activity, based on average over the effort period's pay periods. This column will total 100 percent.
- Cost share** column represents the costs NOT paid for by the sponsor. If cost sharing is present a positive number will be associated to the project where the effort is contributed, while a negative number will be associated to the non-sponsored activity paying for the effort. These two rows of data will cancel each other out to total zero for this column.
- Computed effort** column is an ECRT calculation that adds the payroll column plus the cost share column. This column will total 100.
- Certified Effort** column is your primary focus as it captures your time or effort spent throughout the last effort period. By default, ECRT will populate this column by taking the data from the "computed effort" column and round it to a whole number, since effort may only be certified by using whole numbers. This column will total 100.
- Optional - Notes** allows users the ability to enter further comments, justification, and other relevant notes that will serve as a communication tool to other users. *This information will always be collapsed. Click on the arrow icon to expand and view the data.*

8. **Optional - Attachments** allow users to upload additional documentation. This functionality is most commonly used for attaching manual effort certification statements and/or further documentation of justification, additional approvals or legal attestation of a recertification of effort. All attachments ***must be*** saved in the proper format which includes: PDF, JIF, TIF or JPEG. *This information will always be collapsed. Click on the arrow icon to expand and view the data*
9. **Reports** - This icon in the header above the **Activity/Project IDs** column and allows use to view related payroll and cost share information.
10. If the data is accurate, certify your effort by selecting the **Grand Total** checkbox in the *Certify* column. Doing so will automatically select all checkboxes at once.
11. Click **Certify**

After clicking Certify, the legal attestation page will appear as a reminder that effort statements are auditable and legal attestation that the work was performed according to what appears on the statement. Click 'I Agree' (Figure 8).

Important Note: Wait for the statement to process. Clicking on anything else will often cause the statement to not be updated or certified.

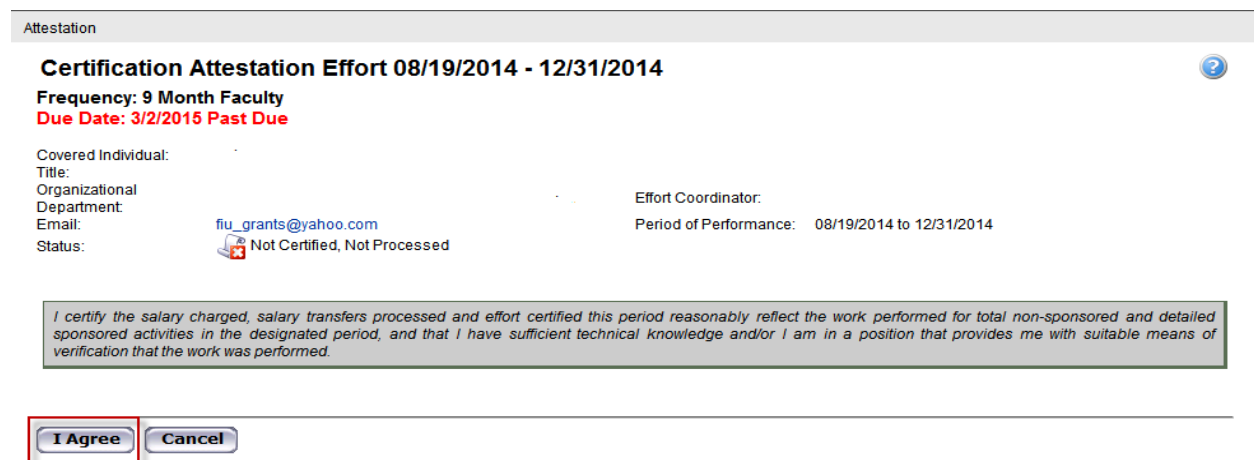


Figure 8

Once the statement is successfully processed, the statement's status will either appear as 'Certified, Not Processed' or 'Certified, Processed' (Figure 9).

If any line was certified with a 1% variation the card will appear as 'Certified, Not Processed' and the card will be routed to the appropriate effort coordinator for further action.

If no changes were made between the computed and certified effort, the card will appear as 'Certified, Processed' and no further action will be needed.

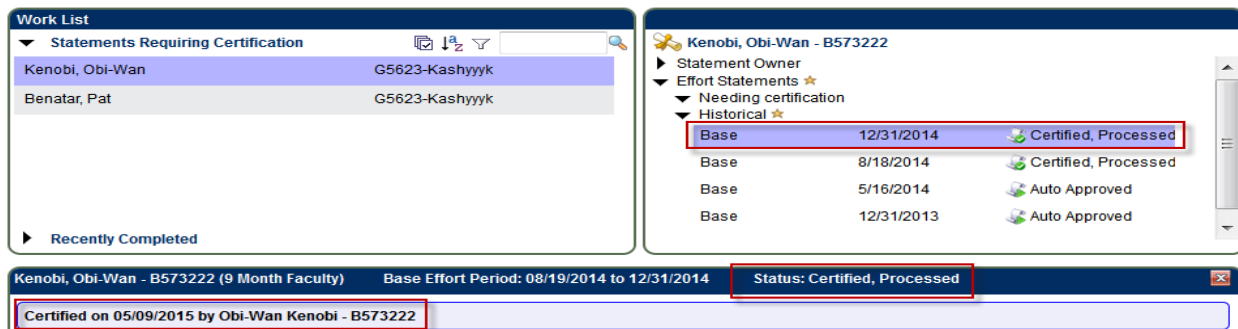


Figure 9

Certify my Staff

PIs are responsible for certifying the effort of research staff.

1. Access an effort statement by either:
 - a. Clicking a name under the **Statement Owner** column
 - b. Clicking a 'Not Certified, Not Processed' icon under the **Status** column
2. The individuals whose effort statements need to be certified are listed in the **Work List** box in the upper left corner:
3. To certify statements one at a time, click an individual's name in the **Work List** (Figure 10).

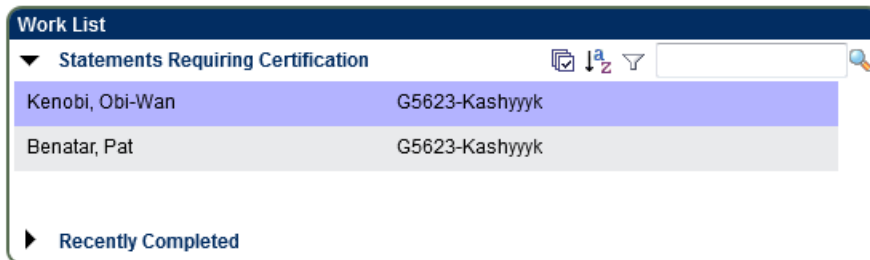


Figure 10

4. To certify all the individuals click the checkmark icon (Figure 11).

Up to 10 effort statements will appear at one time.

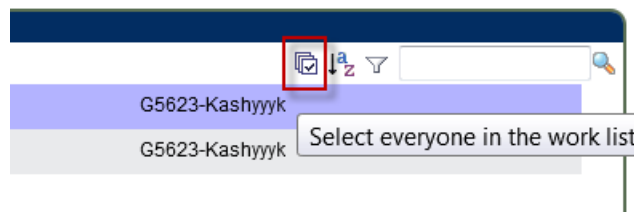


Figure 11

5. The selected statements will display below the work list
6. Review the effort statement(s)
7. To view related reports, click on the **reports** icon in the header above the **Activity/Project IDs** column (Figure 12)

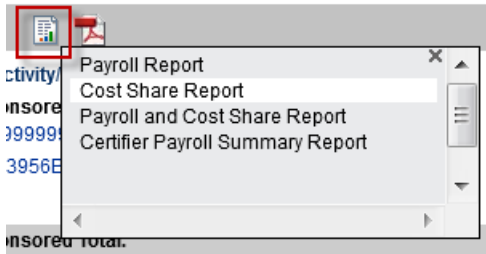


Figure 12

8. For the displayed effort statement(s) click the checkbox for each line item or click the 'Check All' button
9. Click **Certify**
10. Read the certification attestation statement and click **I Agree**
11. Click **OK** to confirm on the pop-up window
12. The effort certification is complete

The Effort Statement: Committed Effort

Committed effort is the amount of effort promised by the institution in the proposal or the amended effort included in the award documentation. The total distribution of effort dedicated to all institutional activities for an individual must not be greater than 100%, including cost share commitments.

Key Points for Committed Effort

- 100%, or nearly 100% research effort, is not realistically possible for individuals with significant non-research obligations to the institution (e.g., teaching, clinical and service)
- If key personnel intend to reduce their effort on sponsored programs by more than 20%, the institution needs to notify the sponsor and receive approval
- If the receipt of an award increases an investigator's committed effort to greater than 100%, the investigator must revise the level of effort requested by communication with the sponsor, reduce effort on other activities, or refuse the award

There are two ways to view commitment data within ecrt:

The first way to view commitment data is from within the effort card, under the column 'Committed Effort' (Figure 13)

Kenobi, Obi-Wan - B573222 (9 Month Faculty)		Status: Not Certified, Not Processed, Re-Opened
INFO - This Effort Statement has been previously saved.		
Activity/Project IDs [-]		
Sponsored		
999999999	Hit Me with Your Best Shot	43.00%
3956BBY	Wide Awake in Dreamland	43.00%
Award Total:		43.00%
Sponsored Total:		43.00%
Non Sponsored		
111111111	Funhouse	0.00%
M11329	Corellia	0.00%
Non Sponsored Total:		0.00%
Grand Total:		43.00%

Figure 13

The second way to view commitment data is by running the commitment Listing Report (Figure 14) which is accessible from the effort card.

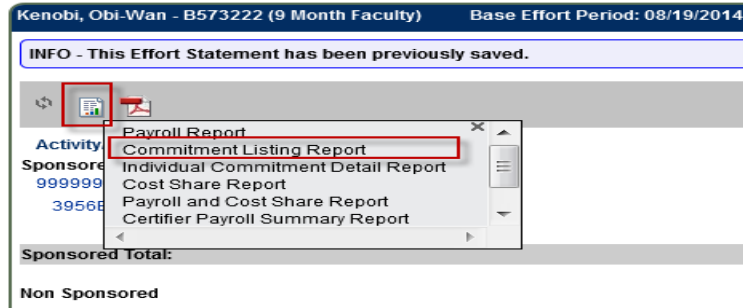


Figure 14

Reporting

Management

Certification Status Report

The Certification Status Report displays a list of all certification statements that have a specified status at the time the report is run. You must choose the status(es) to be included, employee type or date range, Organizational Department and/or roles to be included.

Certification Status Summary Report

The Certification Status Summary Report displays the number of certification statements for a specific employee type and a specific Period of Performance in each status throughout the institution grouped by Organizational Department.

Payroll/Cost Share

Certifier Payroll Summary Report

The Certifier Payroll Summary Report lists all of a certifier's accounts, the sum of the payroll for each month for a 12-month period, the total period for the 12-month period, and the percentage distribution for each account for each month and for the 12-month period.

Cost Share Report

The Cost Share Report lists all cost share entries that are in the system. The report can be generated to show all transactions for an individual, to a specific Activity/Project ID, from a specific Activity/Project ID, after a specific date, before a specific date, or any combination of the previous.

Payroll and Cost Share Report

The Payroll and Cost Share Report is a summary report showing all payroll and cost share transactions for a specific individual and date range.

The date range can be set one of two ways. First the report can be run by selecting a Start Date and an End Date. This allows the user to run a report that crosses effort periods but is more relevant to the Activity/Project ID activity. The alternate way of setting the range is by selecting 'Employee Type'. Selecting the employee type returns results for all employees that currently are assigned to that employee type. The user then must enter an employee's name.

Payroll Report

The Payroll Report is a payroll summary report for a specific individual, Organizational Department or Activity/Project ID and date range.

The date range for this can be set one of two ways. First, the report can be run by selecting a date range. This allows the user to run a report that crosses reporting periods but is more relevant to the Activity/Project ID activity.

The alternate way of setting the range is by selecting 'Employee Type'. This will prompt the user to select the type of employee, which will in turn determine the periods that can be reviewed. By selecting the employee type does not mean you'll only get data for those employees. The employee type select is to better provide a date range for the query.

To run the report, the user must then enter either an employee's name, the desired Organizational Department or Activity/Project ID. When entering an employee, Organizational Department or Activity/Project ID name, the system will provide options based on the letters as they are typed and the user will select the correct name when it appears.

Quick Tips

Hover Over Feature

Some fields in the **ecrt** system display information when the mouse hovers over them (*Figure 15*). Please note that if you are using Internet Explorer 8 as your browser, you will need to click on **Tools** and then **Compatibility Mode** (from the menu bar) to ensure that all hover-overs appear correctly.

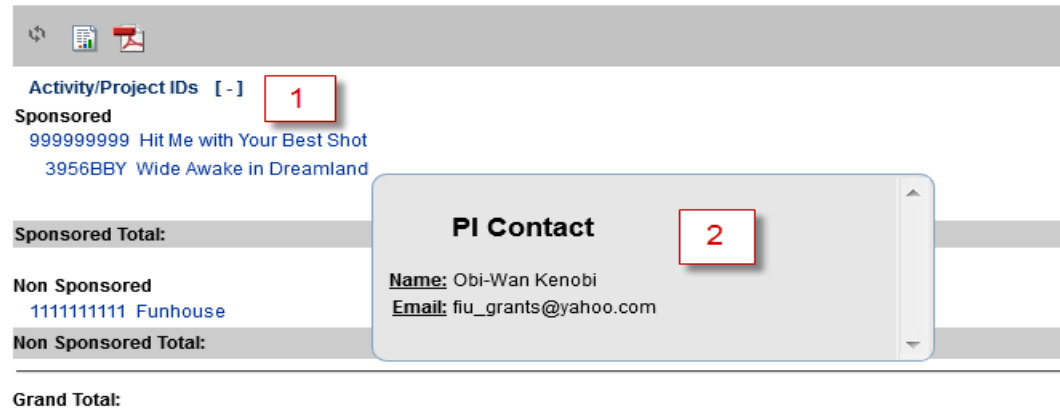


Figure 15

1. This is the field that was hovered over.
2. This is the information that was displayed.

Browsers

The **ecrt** software works with all common browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, etc.)

Using ecrt Help

If you have questions, you can use the Help links within the ecrt system or send email directly to ecrt@fiu.edu.

Need Assistance?

The Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) offers various training platforms:

- 1) On-line training materials, including documentation, may be found at <http://research.fiu.edu/effort/pages/training.html>.
- 2) To schedule a one-on-one training session, please RSVP through ecrt@fiu.edu. One-on-One sessions are offered for both certifiers and effort coordinators by appointment only. We can also accommodate group sessions.

Each department has a designated Effort Coordinator that you may contact. To find your designated effort coordinator, please go to <http://research.fiu.edu/effort/>.

In addition, you may seek additional assistance by contacting ecrt@fiu.edu.