

## Effort Certification

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## Overview

Effort Reporting is a federally mandated process required when an individual is compensated by or contributes time & effort to a sponsored project. This federal regulation, located in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) 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 applies this standard to all sponsored projects.

## What is effort?

**Effort** is defined as time spent on a particular project or activity. This includes the time spent working on the project directly charged to the project as well as cost shared effort, time contributed to the project. Effort statements must reasonably reflect the total activity for which the employee is compensated, not exceeding 100% of compensated activities.

## What is effort reporting?

**Effort reporting** is federally mandated to certify to the funding agencies that the effort charged or contributed to a sponsored project has been performed as promised.

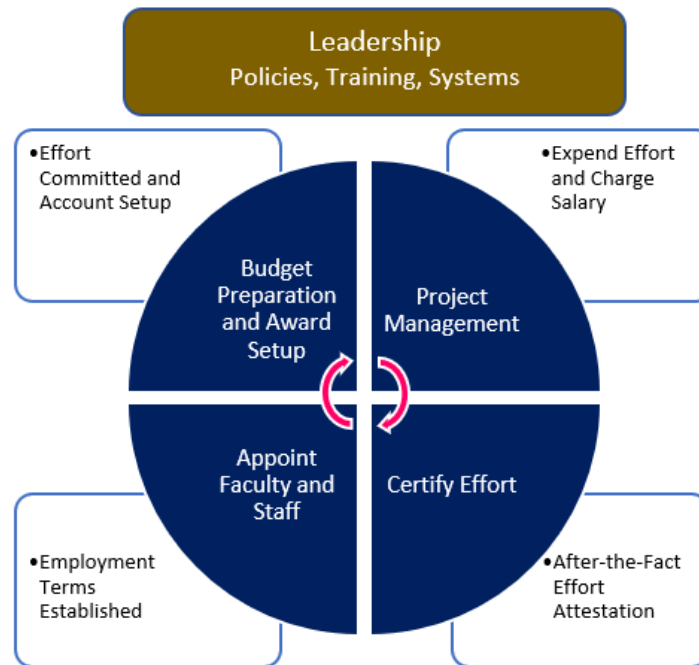
## Why is Effort Reporting necessary?

The OMB Uniform Guidance contains the federal government's cost principles for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and sets Standards for Documentation of Personnel Expenses.

Charges to sponsored projects for salaries and wages must be supported by records that accurately reflect the work performed, providing reasonable assurance that the charges are accurate, allowable, and properly allocated. 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**

Effort reporting provides verification to the project’s sponsor that effort committed on a sponsored project has been performed as promised by certifying 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**

**Appoint Faculty and Staff**

Employment terms, including Base Salary (IBS), are established and any additional compensation is identified.

**Budget Preparation and Award Setup**

The amount of time that is anticipated to be spent on a given project is determined when preparing the initial budget and effort commitments are made to the sponsor once the sponsor’s award notice is received by the University. The Post-Award representative will generate the award/project in the financial system.

**Project Management**

Salary is charged, or cost shared, consistent with activity performed.

**Effort Certification**

Per FIU policy, effort must be certified after each semester using the University’s effort certification system: Effort Certification Reporting Technology (ECRT), 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.

ECRT generates effort statements and requires effort certifications for employees paid from or contributing effort to a sponsored project (*Figure 2*). Effort certification statements are required to be electronically certified by the deadline established by ORED.

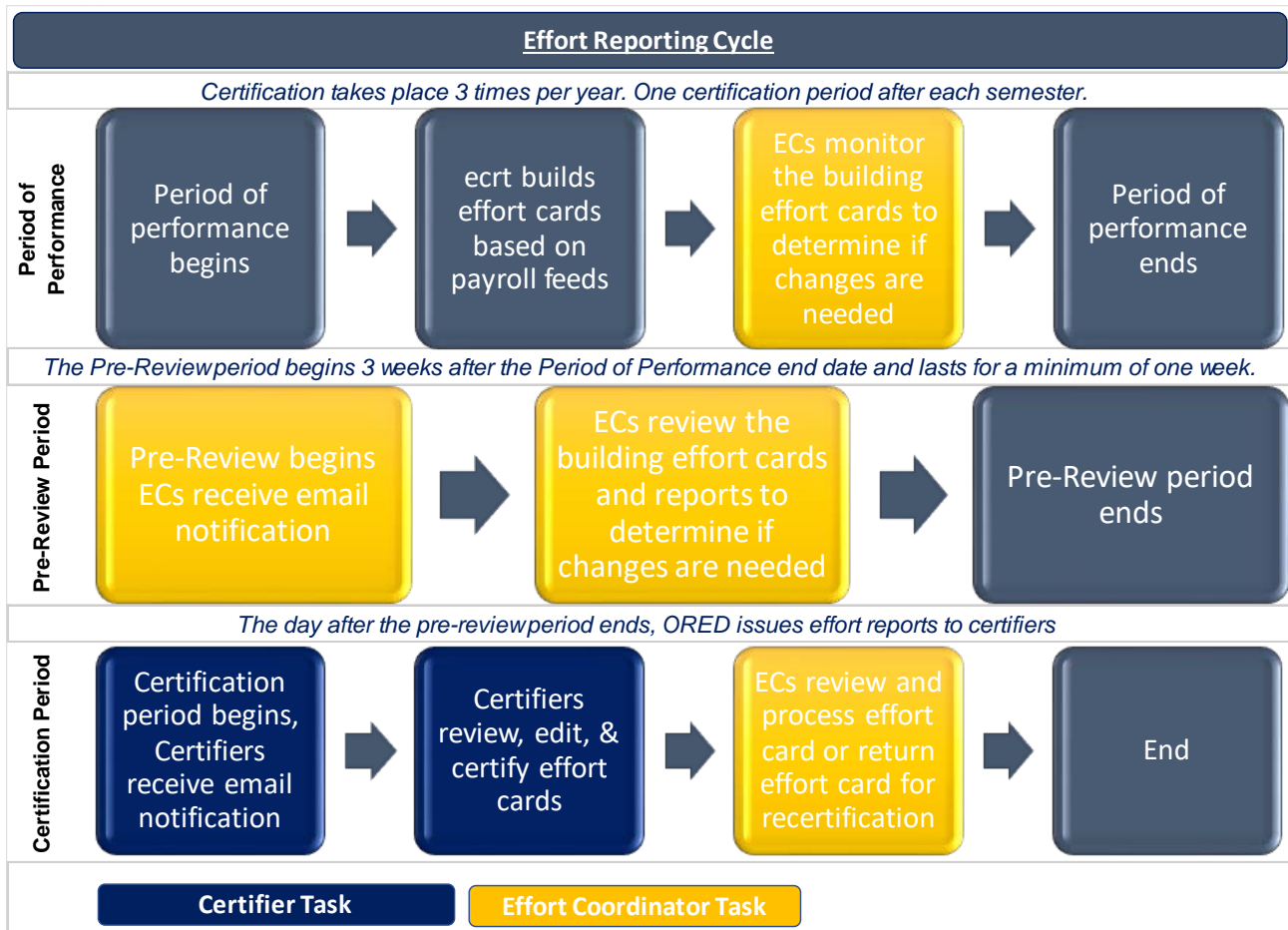
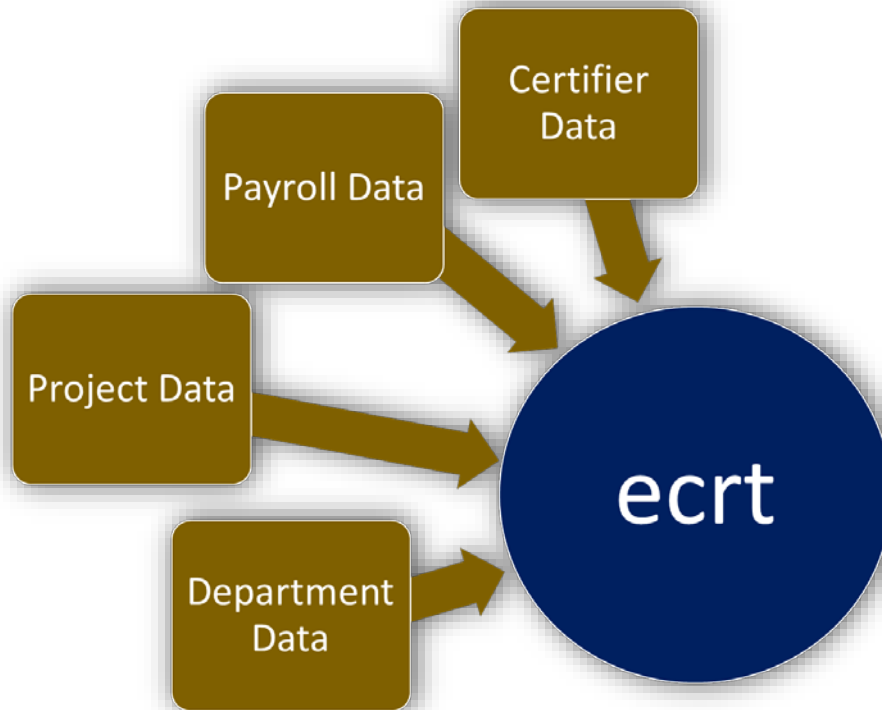


Figure 2

NOTE: Employees who enter the time they work on each sponsored project and/or non-sponsored activity in the FIU Panthersoft system on a bi-weekly basis for supervisor approval do not have their effort certified in the ECRT system.

**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 employee, project and payroll data is loaded into ECRT (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**

It is important to note that although users may view building effort cards, percentages are not final because the effort period of performance has not officially closed.

**Pre-Review Period**

Similar to the Period of Performance phase, users are able to view effort cards and reports in ECRT. However, during this period, effort cards are available reflecting calculations for the entire period of performance since all corresponding payroll for the period has loaded and the effort period of performance has officially closed.

During the Pre-Review Period, effort coordinators must review statements by examining commitments, payroll, cost sharing and add notes or attachments. Effort coordinators can also proactively initiate corrections, such as payroll transfers in the source system, when necessary. At this time, cost shared effort that does not have a cost share project ID can be manually added to an effort card to update computed amounts prior to certification.

### Effort Certification Period

The Effort Certification Period begins after the pre-review period and lasts a minimum of 30 days. During this phase:

- 1) Effort Statements must be Certified by the assigned certifier(s). This is the first step in the certification process in ECRT. Activities must be confirmed by responsible persons with suitable means of verification that the work was performed. A person with suitable means of verification is an individual whom has access to some type of documentation of how the time was spent. Documentation could be in the form of an email, calendar, project reports, personnel activity reports, etc. Therefore, the researcher, PI, or the researcher's supervisor must view the effort statement and certify that it accurately depicts a reasonable estimate of actual effort during the Effort Reporting Period of Performance. The assigned certifier(s) must verify the amounts in the certified effort fields. The certified effort percentage total must always be 100%. If the effort statement is accurate, the certifier can proceed with certification. If the effort statement does not accurately reflect the researcher's effort, the certifier must change the statement's certified effort amounts so that it accurately reflects actual effort for that period.
- 2) Effort cards with all lines certified within 1% of the computed amounts will be auto processed. Effort Coordinators must Process certifications with a difference of 1% or more between computed effort and certified effort for a line item and/or a note on the effort card. If changes were submitted by the certifier, the effort coordinator is responsible for processing the effort certification and coordinating any resulting corrections in the source system based on those changes. The effort coordinator can proceed with processing the certification, but must ensure any necessary corrections are completed. The difference between computed effort and certified effort must be less than 5%. Once the statement is certified and processed, the statement is considered certified and this fulfills the effort reporting period's requirements.

### After the Effort Certification Period Closes

All effort statements must be certified and processed by the established deadline for each certification period.

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

- Verifying that all effort statements are certified in a timely manner, with support from the departmental effort coordinators
- Retaining effort statements as part of their institutional oversight responsibilities.

### The Effort Certification and Reporting Technology (ECRT) System

FIU uses web-based, ECRT, to facilitate the institution's effort reporting and certification process.

This training guide will provide information on the necessary steps to properly certify an effort card.

### Who needs to certify?

Every FIU employee has an effort card in ECRT for each semester. However, 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** must certify their own effort and potentially employees with effort on their sponsored project(s) if they're a PI. *Only Self-Certifiers have the certifier role and effort certification responsibility.*
- 2) **Non-Self Certifiers** must have their effort certified by the Principal Investigator(s).

**Key Roles in ecrt**

- **Certifier** Users with the certifier role, determined by the source system if a user is the Principal investigator of a sponsored project, active/inactive. The individual who has ultimate responsibility for effort certified on the sponsored project(s), and is responsible for assuring compliance with the effort reporting policy.
- **Effort Coordinator** Departmental effort coordinators not listed as primary. Secondary effort coordinators can assist in the monitoring of effort cards. There can be multiple secondary effort coordinators assigned to a department/division. An effort coordinator associated to a department and not assigned as the department's PEC is considered a secondary effort coordinator for the department.
- **Primary Effort Coordinator** Departmental effort coordinator assigned as primary for the department. 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. Only one primary effort coordinator can be assigned for each department/division and only the primary effort coordinator receives the department's effort certification processing tasks. By processing the certification, the PEC is confirming that any other actions as a result of certified effort have been or will be undertaken.
- **FIU Super Users** ORED Central Unit users. 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.
- **Proxy** Is a certifier assigned when the default certifier is unable to certify. The proxy must also have access to some type of documentation of how the time was spent. Documentation could be in the form of an email, calendar, project reports, personnel activity reports, etc.

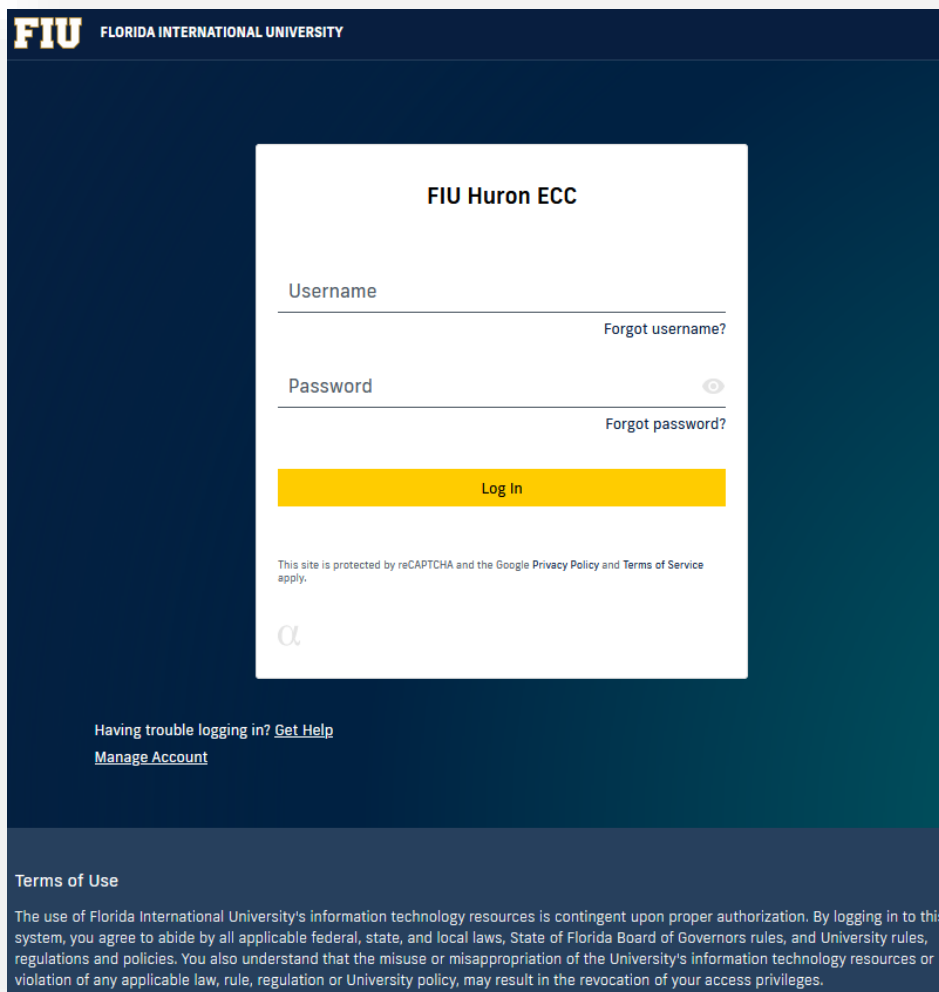
### Certifying Effort in ECRT

During the Certification Period, the certifier must review the effort statement prior to submitting the effort certification. Certifiers must access effort statements and attest that effort data is accurate.

Effort card calculations are based on commitment entries, payroll, and cost share, for which detailed data can be reviewed in the associated reports. Certified effort values are prepopulated based on computed effort. After verifying that the statement is accurate, the certifier can proceed with submitting the effort certification. If changes are needed, the certifier must manually change the numbers in the Certified Effort column, click the Certify Checkboxes, then click Certify and agree to the certification Attestation. Corrections to payroll can be done after the fact in the source system.

### Access and Sign on

- 1) ECRT is accessible from the FIU Research Effort Reporting webpage at <http://research.fiu.edu/effort/>, then click on the 'Log into ectr' button
- 2) Sign in to ECRT using your **FIU Account single sign on** credentials on the Login Screen (*Figure 4*)



**Figure 4**



- 3) Once the system has completed authentication, click on the 'continue' button to view the ecrt homepage (Figure 5)

**Work List for Al Einstein**

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 (5)

**Effort Statements**

Statement Owner	Department	Period	Due Date	Type	Status
Einstein, Al	100000123 - Research Department	08/12/2023-12/26/2023	2/23/2024	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed
		12/27/2023-05/11/2024	7/10/2024	Base	Building
Darwin, Chuck	100000123 - Research Department	08/12/2023-12/26/2023	2/23/2024	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed
Franklin, Ben	100000123 - Research Department	08/12/2023-12/26/2023	2/23/2024	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed
Newton, Sam	100000123 - Research Department	08/12/2023-12/26/2023	2/23/2024	Base	Not Certified, Not Processed

Figure 5

**Access Workcenter to Certify Effort**

- To open the workcenter and view/certify an effort statement, you may click either:
  - the **name** under the Statement Owner column
  - the **status icon/link** under the Status column
- The work center is divided into three sections (Figure 6):
  - 1) **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. In Progress effort cards are building and not available for certification.
  - 2) **Demographics and Effort Cards** This section displays the demographic information for the researcher selected as well as their current and historical effort cards.
  - 3) **Effort Card** This section is the actual effort card.

**[+] Effort Statement Instructions**

**Work List** 1

▼ Statements Requiring Certification

Einstein, AI	100000123 - Research Department
Darwin, Chuck	100000123 - Research Department
Franklin, Ben	100000123 - Research Department
Newton, Sam	100000123 - Research Department

▶ In Progress

▶ Recently Completed

**Einstein, AI**

▶ Statement Owner ★

▼ Effort Statements ★

▶ Needing certification ★

Base 2/23/2024 ⚠ Not Certified, Not Processed

▶ In progress ★

▶ Historical ★

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Einstein, AI - 1234567 (12 Month)    Base Effort Period: 08/12/2023 to 12/26/2023    Due Date: 2/23/2024    Status: Not Certified, Not Processed

3

Project/Activity IDs [ - ]	Committed Effort	Payroll	Cost Share	Computed Effort	Certified Effort	Certify?
<b>Sponsored</b>						
AWD100001 - Award One 810000000 - Project One	0%	0%	0%	0%	0% <input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Award Total:</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Sponsored Total:</b>						
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Non Sponsored</b>						
1000002123 - Non-Sponsored Department	0%	100%	0%	100%	100% <input type="text" value="100"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Non Sponsored Total:</b>						
	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Grand Total:</b>						
	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Get Help** **Save**

▶ Notes

▶ Attachments

Figure 6

**Certify My Effort Statement**

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

**Work List**

Statement	Department
Einstein, AI	100000123 - Research Department
Darwin, Chuck	100000123 - Research Department
Franklin, Ben	100000123 - Research Department
Newton, Sam	100000123 - Research Department

**Einstein, AI**

- Statement Owner
- Effort Statements
  - Needing certification
    - Base 2/23/2024 Not Certified, Not Processed
  - In progress
  - Historical

**Effort Card: Einstein, AI - 1234567 (12 Month)**

Base Effort Period: 08/12/2023 to 12/26/2023 | Due Date: 2/23/2024 | Status: Not Certified, Not Processed

Project/Activity IDs [-]	Committed Effort	Payroll	Cost Share	Computed Effort	Certified Effort	Certify?
<b>Sponsored</b>						
AWD100001 - Award One	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
810000000 - Project One						
<b>Award Total:</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Sponsored Total:</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Non Sponsored</b>						
1000002123 - Non-Sponsored Department	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Non Sponsored Total:</b>	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	
<b>Grand Total:</b>	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Buttons: Get Help, Notes, Attachments, Certify, Save

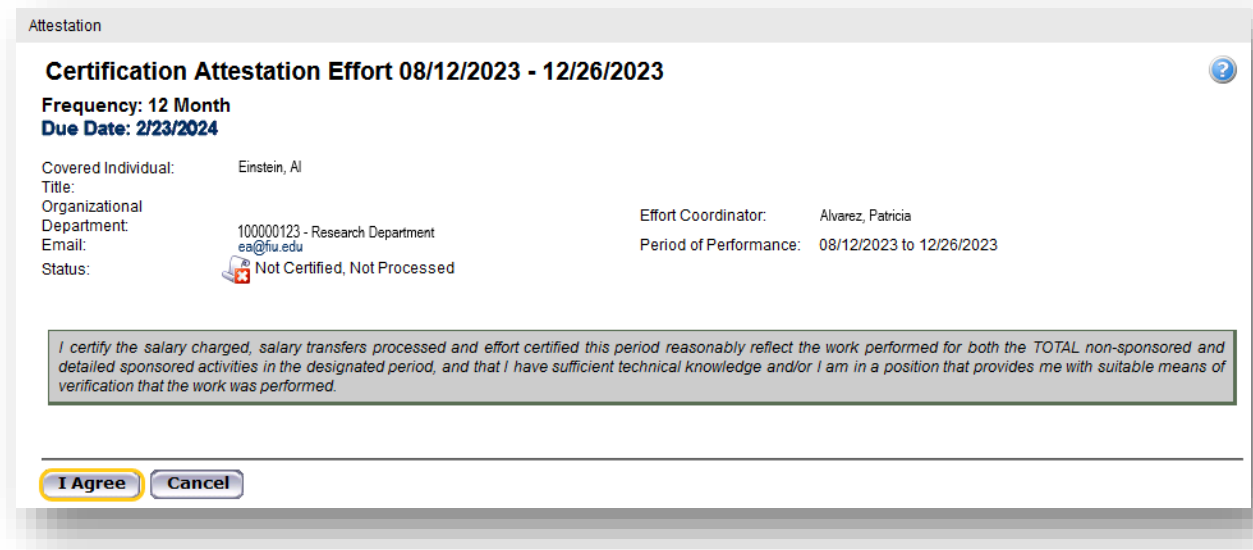
**Figure 7**

- 1) All **sponsored and non-sponsored activities** for the specified period are listed on the effort card. Sponsored activity appears at the top and is certified at the project line level. Non-sponsored activity, the remainder of grand total minus the sponsored total, appears on the bottom and is submitted at the non-sponsored category total level.
- 2) **Committed Effort** is the prorated effort commitment based on the award negotiation and/or acceptance of the award and the period of performance timeframe. This amount should never exceed 100 percent total.
- 3) The **Payroll** column displays how much was paid from each ID, displayed as a percentage of the total for the period of performance. The payroll grand total will always be 100 percent, though you may see just over or under 100 percent due to rounding.
- 4) The **Cost Share** column displays amounts for project effort costs NOT paid for by the project's sponsor, and that do not have a cost share project ID for this purpose. If cost sharing is present, a positive number can be populated on the project where the effort is contributed, while a negative number will be populated on the non-sponsored source paying for the effort, therefore the from ID must have enough payroll to cover the cost share. Cost share can be added by an effort coordinator or assigned certifier using the add cost sharing form within the system. The two rows of data will cancel each other out to total zero for the cost share column, updating the computed effort for each of the affected lines.

- 5) **Computed Effort** is the column that adds the payroll column plus the cost share column. If there is no cost share present, computed effort equals payroll. This column will total 100, though you may see just over or under 100 percent due to rounding.
- 6) **Certified Effort** is the certifier's final focus before proceeding with the effort certification submission. ECRT populates certified effort based on the computed effort column, but the fields must be updated by the assigned certifier(s) prior to certification if changes are needed. Once the effort card has been saved by a user, the certified effort fields will no longer automatically update. Effort may only be certified using whole numbers. This column must total 100 when submitting an effort certification.
- 7) **Optional - Notes** allows users the ability to enter comments, justification, and other relevant notes that may support the effort certification. This information will always be collapsed. Click on the arrow icon to expand and view the notes. Click on the notes icon to add a note along with user and date/time stamp.
- 8) **Optional - Attachments** allow users to upload additional documentation. This functionality is most commonly used for attaching documentation of justification, supporting calculations, and additional approvals. 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 attachments. Click on the attachments icon to select the document from your files and attach it to the effort card, one document at a time.
- 9) **Reports** The reports icon is located in the header above the Activity/Project IDs column and allows the user to view related commitment, payroll, and cost share information. Reports can be viewed by clicking on the reports icon and then selecting the report name. The report parameters will be auto populated based on the effort card. Reports may also be exported to excel and/or PDF, if needed.
- 10) Once the certified effort fields have been verified, certify effort by selecting the **Grand Total** checkbox in the Certify column to automatically select all checkboxes available to you at once.
- 11) Click **Certify** and agree to the certification attestation statement.

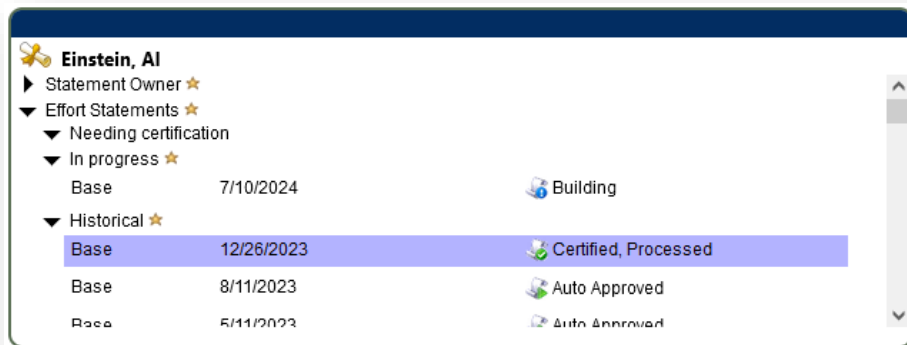
After clicking Certify, the legal certification attestation page will appear and must be agreed to in order to submit the certification. It serves as a reminder that effort statements are auditable and legal attestation that the work was performed according to what appears on the statement. Click 'I Agree' (*Figure 8*).

Note: Wait for the certification submission to be accepted by the system. Clicking on anything else will often cause the interference with acceptance of the certification. Make sure to allow your browser's requests to proceed.



**Figure 8**

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



**Figure 9**

If any line was certified with a 1% variation from the computed amount, the card will appear as '*Certified, Not Processed*' and the certification will route to the appropriate departmental Primary Effort Coordinator to be reviewed and processed and for any further action. If a note is present on the effort card, the certification will also route to the PEC for processing.

If certified effort is submitted within 1% of the computed effort and there are no notes on the effort card, the card status will appear as '*Certified, Processed*' and no further action is needed.

**Certifying Effort of Others**

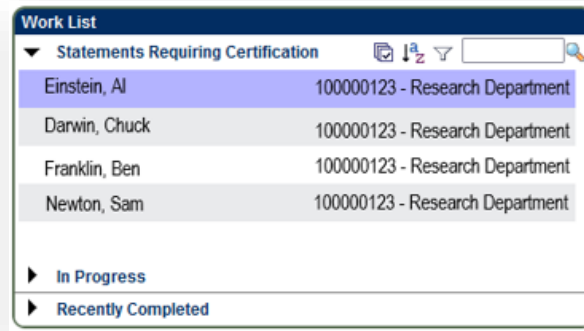
PIs are responsible for certifying the effort of researchers with effort on their sponsored project(s) who do not have the certifier role.

Access an effort statement from the homepage worklist by clicking either a:

- 1) **Name** under the Statement Owner column
- 2) **Not Certified icon link** under the Status column

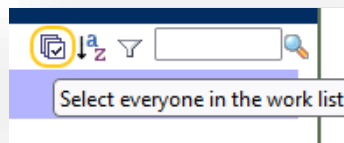
The individuals whose effort statements need to be certified are listed in the **Work List** box in the upper left corner:

- To certify statements one at a time, click an individual's name in the **Work List** (Figure 10).



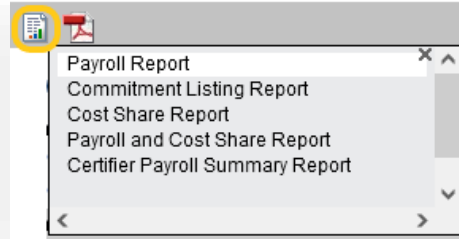
**Figure 10**

- To certify all the individuals, click the checkmark icon (Figure 11). As you scroll down and effort statements load, up to 10 effort statements will appear at one time.



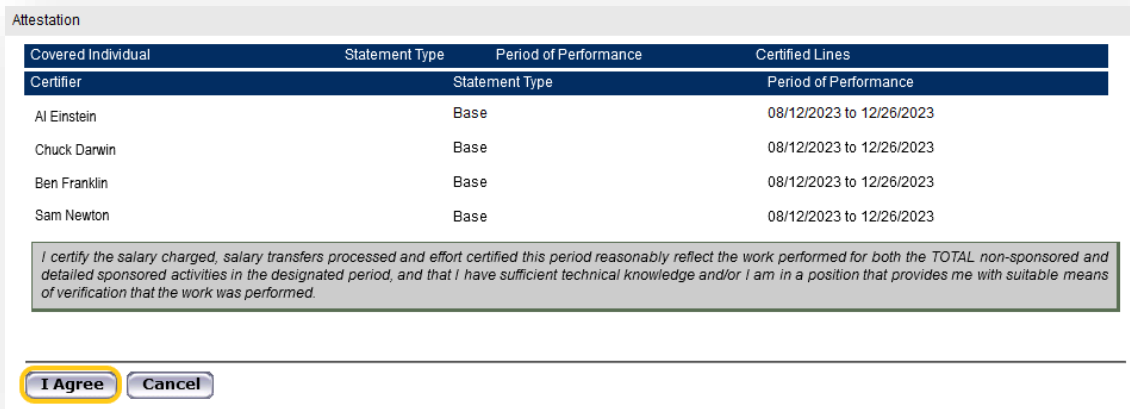
**Figure 11**

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



**Figure 12**

- For the displayed effort statement(s) click the checkbox for each line item or click the ‘Check All’ button
- Click **Certify Checked** and click OK for any browser messages to proceed
- Read the certification attestation statement and click **I Agree** (Figure 13)



**Figure 13**

- The effort certification is submitted once the certification attestation ‘I Agree’ button is clicked and the window refreshes back to the workcenter. Make sure to approve any requests from the browser to proceed.

## Reviewing Effort Commitments

Committed effort is the amount of effort promised by the institution 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% research effort, or nearly 100%, 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 significantly change their effort on sponsored programs, please contact the project manager and/or post award manager to determine if the institution needs to notify the sponsor and receive prior 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

## Viewing commitment data within ecrt

There are two ways to view commitment data from an effort card

- 1) The first way to view commitment data is on the effort card under the '**Committed Effort**' column (*Figure 14*)

Project/Activity IDs [-]	Committed Effort
<b>Sponsored</b>	
AWD100001 - Award One	0 %
810000000 - Project One	0 %
<i>Award Total</i>	0%
<b>Sponsored Total:</b>	
	<b>0%</b>
<b>Non Sponsored</b>	
1000002123 - Non-Sponsored Department	0 %
<b>Non Sponsored Total:</b>	
	<b>0%</b>
<b>Grand Total:</b>	
	<b>0%</b>

**Figure 14**

- 2) The second way to view commitment data is by running the **Commitment Listing Report** accessible from the 'list of reports' icon on the effort card (*Figure 15*)



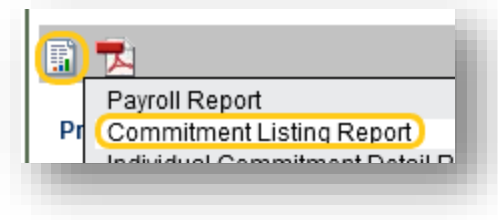


Figure 15

## Reporting

Certifiers can view some related reports directly from effort cards and can also review reports for their specified parameters from the reports section in the ECRT system. Many report results can also be exported to excel or PDF.

### Commitment Reports

#### Commitment Listing Report

The Commitment Listing Report allows a user to see a complete list of all awarded commitments for a specified date range. Commitments are entered and maintained in ECRT by ORED. You can run the commitment listing report by employee, department, or Project ID (active or inactive), and date range.

#### Monthly Commitment Summary Report

The Monthly Commitment Summary Report allows the user to view a 12-month commitments summary by month. Select the starting month and year, then enter the employee.

### Payroll & Cost Share Reports

#### Certifier Payroll Summary Report

The Certifier Payroll Summary Report allows the user to view a 12-month summary of payroll for each month, by ID, and the percentage distribution for each. Select the starting month and year, then enter the employee.

#### Cost Share Report

The Cost Share Report lists all cost share manually entered in the ECRT system. The report can be generated to show all transactions for an individual, to a specific Project ID, from a specific Activity ID, for a specific start and date, or any combination of the options.

#### 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 Project ID activity. The alternate way of setting the range is by selecting 'Employee Type' and selecting the period of performance date range. The user then must enter an employee's name.

#### Payroll Report

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

The date range for this 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 reporting periods but is more relevant to the Project ID activity. The alternate way of setting the range is by selecting 'Employee Type' and selecting the period of performance date range.

The report may be viewed by ID and breakdown by pay period or by pay period and breakdown by ID.

#### SPES (Sponsored Project Employee Summary) Report

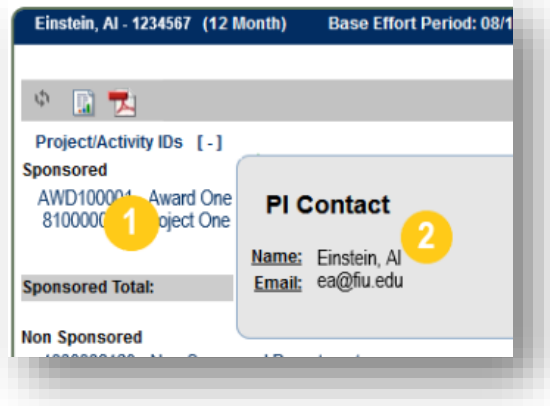
The SPES (Sponsored Project Employee Summary) Report lists the certifiers pay percent, cost share percent, commitment percent, computed percent, and populated certified effort percent for a specific Project ID.

You can enter the date range by first selecting to enter by Month and then selecting the start month and year to return a 12-month period. Alternatively, you may select to enter dates by employee type and then selecting the employee type and period of performance dates. You must then enter the Project in the quick search Account field, enter 3 or more characters to begin a search, and select 'Active' or 'Inactive' to select the appropriate ID.

## Quick Tips

### Hover Over Feature

Some fields in the **ecrt** system display information when hovered over with the mouse (*Figure 16*).



**Figure 16**

- 1) Hovering over the project
- 2) Displays the PI Name and Email address

### Browsers

The **ecrt** website is compatible with all common browsers

### Using ecrt Help

If you have any questions, you can use the Help links within the ecrt system or you can send an email directly to [ecrt@fiu.edu](mailto:ecrt@fiu.edu)

### Need Assistance?

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

- On-line training materials located at <https://research.fiu.edu/effort/training/>.
- To schedule a one-on-one training session, please send an email request to [ecrt@fiu.edu](mailto:ecrt@fiu.edu). We can also accommodate group sessions.

Each department has designated Effort Coordinators that you may contact. To find your department's designated effort coordinator, please go to <https://research.fiu.edu/effort/> for the list of effort coordinators at FIU by department.

[Ecrt@fiu.edu](mailto:Ecrt@fiu.edu) is the primary method of contact for ecrt effort reporting and certification at FIU.