Compliance Issue – Certification of Effort

Who Has to Certify Effort?

All full-time employees that have been paid through research funds are required to certify their effort on projects administered through the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). In addition to certifying their own effort, the PI must certify the effort of all students and postdocs working on sponsored projects.

How Do I Know if I Need to Certify Effort?

The e-Cert system (https://rf.osu.edu/secure/e-cert/) is the application the university uses to manage mandated effort certification. Effort is averaged over the number of months during each certification period. Therefore, percentages can look odd if effort has changed from month to month on a project during the certification period. The fall period is four months long (Sept-Dec), spring period is five months (Jan-May) and summer is 3 months (Jun-Aug). Monthly emails are sent from OSP to those employees that have effort that needs to be certified.

The All Uncertified e-Cert Reports (https://rf.osu.edu/secure/exceptionreporting/cert-report.cfm) is a university Office of Research tool that tracks employees who received their first email at least 45 days ago and have not yet approved their effort. If certifications are incorrect, the approver should contact the Principal Investigator on the project, grants manager, or HR person in their department or center and get the effort corrected immediately. You can also contact Michael Moses (moses.42@osu.edu, 292-3883) in the EHE Office of Research to help with correcting effort.

Requesting and Approving Changes to Effort – the PI’s Responsibility

If upon reviewing your eCert report you notice errors to your (or your staff’s) effort, corrections must be requested by the PI. For guidance on this process, please view this assist document: http://ehe.osu.edu/downloads/research/funding/DRD-Guidelines-090815.pdf. A “Direct Retro Distribution” (or “DRD” – and still referred to in some systems as “Personnel Expenditure Transfer” or “PET”) is used when correcting salary expenses on a sponsored project for a pay period that has passed. Effort certification and DRDs/PETs are linked – when a transfer is made via a DRD/PET, emails are automatically generated to all employees affected by the transfer. The employees will need to review the new effort reports and approve if correct.

If a DRD/PET is processed within 90 days of the date the effort occurred, then the change is made in the Human Resources System first and the PI has to approve the transfer through the e-PET justification system (https://rf.osu.edu/secure/e-petjs) after the fact. If the request is processed 90 days after the date of effort occurred, the PI has to approve these requests in writing before the change is made in the system. There is no online certification for DRDs/PETs that were created past the 90 day window.

PIs are emailed immediately when the system is updated based on the within 90 days PETs. The PI will continue to get monthly emails until approval or non-approval is indicated. The All Uncertified PET Justifications (https://rf.osu.edu/secure/exceptionreporting/pet-report.cfm)
report includes the list of the PIs that have received their first email at least 45 days ago indicating that a transfer was made and that approval is needed. The PI has two choices when reviewing the DRD/PET – yes or no. If “no” is selected, the transfer is reversed.

PI Portal: Reviewing Effort and PETs

If there are any questions about effort or transfers, the PI can review effort and PETs on individual projects by going to the PI Portal (https://eresearch.osu.edu/), clicking on the Profile tab, and then the e-Scan tab. A date range can be set as well as a specific employee and project. The report that is generated provides a monthly overview of all the people associated with each project and their effort as well as the PETs that were processed during each month.

EHE Office of Research Role

The EHE Office of Research will follow up with those listed on both reports – All Uncertified PET Justifications and All Uncertified e-Cert Reports – and help as requested to make sure that effort is reported correctly and that the college is complying with sponsor requirements. If you have any questions about effort or DRDs/PETs and the role of the EHE Office of Research in this compliance issue, please contact Michael Moses (moses.42@osu.edu, 292-3883).