

Effort Reporting Q&A

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1. What is Effort?

Effort is the proportion of time spent on research, teaching, administration, or service by an employee of Salem State University or individual appointed by a Salem State University faculty member. Effort does not include any service or activity performed outside the contract or terms of employment at Salem State University.

2. What is Effort Reporting?

Effort reporting is the percentage of total professional activity devoted to the supported service. Payroll distributions refer to individual salary, while effort distributions are reports of activity dedicated to an individual project. Salem State University's effort reporting process includes payroll distributions providing general reminders of the projects on which an individual's salary was charged during the certification period. Completing effort reports are required to identify other areas of effort not supported by salary and to evaluate accurate distribution of effort in all activities and services.

3. Why is Effort Reporting Important?

Salem State University must assure sponsors that the effort and associated salary, and fringe benefit costs to projects are in compliance. The Effort Report is the document that Salem State University uses to track the percentage of effort contributed to projects. Signed Effort Reports are considered legal documents. Inaccuracies in Effort Reports can result in the misallocation of costs. A discovery of improper allocation of costs may result in severe sanction and cost disallowances against Salem State University.

4. Who is subject to Effort Reporting?

Every individual involved in sponsored activities, paid or unpaid, is subject to effort reporting.

5. What is 100% effort?

The total amount of effort expended to accomplish the sponsored activities of Salem State University (including all faculty, staff, and graduate students). This normally includes all effort expended on Salem State University-compensated sponsored activities. One hundred percent effort is not a standard number of hours since all efforts will likely vary among individuals.

6. Can the total effort listed on the Effort Report be less than or greater than 100%?

No. The effort percentages on the Effort Report must total 100%. All compensated effort must be accounted for. The individual effort categories can neither exceed or be less than 100%.

7. Are there some sponsored projects where I can report 0% effort?

Anyone listed as key personnel or principal investigator are expected to commit some level of effort with the exception of equipment and instrumentation grants, doctoral dissertation grants, student supplement grants, and institutional/individual training grants (for faculty mentors). Effort may be minimal but there must be *some* effort reported on projects for which an individual is responsible.

8. Who should sign the Effort Report?

The person completing the Effort Report must be a person who can verify effort reported. Faculty must sign their own individual effort reports. Effort reports for other employees may be signed by the employee herself, the principal investigator, or a responsible official (administrator or chairperson) keeping in mind the person signing must be able to verify efforts reported. This means the effort reporter must have first-hand knowledge of all the effort reported on behalf of others. Delegating to department administrators or department secretaries who cannot personally verify efforts may not sign any effort reports.

9. How often are Effort Reports completed?

Reports are required for faculty, graduate students, and all administrative and professional employees paid on sponsored projects for the following periods: September 1 through November 30, December 1 through February 28 (or 29th), March 1 through May 31. Summer effort reports (June 1 through August 31) are only necessary for faculty members conducting summer research.

10. What if my effort on an externally sponsored project changes?

The effort reporter is required to certify that the effort are reasonable estimates of the actual work performed. A change in effort noted on the Effort Report must be accompanied by a change in payroll or cost sharing. Changes to previously certified effort discredit the whole certification process as well as the certifier. Changes to a certified Effort Report are not allowed except in limited circumstances. For a description of these circumstances please refer to the Sponsored Projects and Research Administration Office.

11. How do I report cost-sharing of effort?

All effort expended on an activity must be reported, whether or not that activity or service is funded by an outside source (even if the individual does not wish to charge any salary for the effort). This rule applies only to effort expended on a sponsored project.

12. How long should departmental copies of Effort Reports be kept?

Based on federal record retention guidelines, the Sponsored Programs and Research Administration Office is responsible for retaining all copies. However, it is strongly recommended that departments retain signed/certified Effort for at least three years after the close-out date of the project.

13. What kind of documentation or supporting evidence is needed as back-up to the Effort Report?

Support the Effort Report could include include appointment letters, personal schedule, class schedules, and any other document proving efforts on research projects. These supporting documents should be kept with Effort Reports for at least three years after the close-out date.