

Effort Reporting Guidelines for Faculty

The University must assure sponsors of external funding that the assignment of time and effort associated with salary and fringe benefit costs to the projects they sponsor is fair, consistent and timely. The University fulfills this responsibility through the Effort Reporting System (ERS). Quarterly effort reporting is required of faculty and staff in Departments with sponsored funding.

1. Upon receiving email notification from your Department Administrator and/or the ERS system that your effort report is ready proceed to the ERS web site <https://ersweb.itcs.northwestern.edu/GenericERS/custom/index.jsp> to review/complete your effort report. Log in using your net id and password.
2. Click on the pending certification link in the “status/my do” box.
3. Click on your name.
4. For sponsored chart strings, review the column on the far left titled “plan” which indicates the time commitment indicated on the original proposal. Also, review the column titled “payroll %” which reflects the percent of your salary charged to that chart string for the quarter. Note that “cost sharing %” reflects the difference between “payroll %” and “plan.” Finally, distribute your effort to the individual chart strings in the far right “certified effort” column. For each chart string, this figure should reflect your actual effort and typically either matches or exceeds the “plan.” For a more detailed description on a particular chart string you can click on the chart string in the “sponsored accounts” column.
5. Effort that cannot be attributed to a sponsored chart string is reflected in the lower portion of the table under “non-sponsored accounts”. The grand total of effort, both sponsored and non-sponsored, must sum up to 100%.
6. Click “proceed” at the bottom of the page.
7. On the next page you will be asked to distribute the “non sponsored” activity among various tasks:
 - INSTRUCTION: If you taught a course during the quarter estimate the fraction of your total effort dedicated to course preparation and teaching. This category also includes undergraduate advising DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH: Effort on research that cannot be attributed to a sponsored chart string (examples are advising graduate students or attending a conference not directly related to a sponsored project).
 - ADMINISTRATION: Effort of departmental or University affairs (examples are proposal writing, committees, student recruitment).
 - OTHER: The other categories are rarely used by WCAS faculty
1. Click “proceed” to review. To revise any values click “return”. Click “certify” to finalize the effort report.
2. Click “exit form” or “next form” if there are more persons for whom you need to certify effort.
3. Continue by certifying effort for graduate students, post doctoral fellows or other personnel.