Frequently Asked Questions for the Effort Reporting System (ERS)

1. How do I access the Effort Reporting system?

    Please sign into:
    https://ers.maximus.com/VirginiaTech/

2. How do I update the Department Coordinator in ERS?
    Contact OSP (ERS@vt.edu) to update the Department Coordinator.

3. Who can add a Sub-Department Coordinator?
    Only Department Coordinators can add sub department coordinators.

4. Who can add a pre-reviewer?
    The Department Coordinator and Sub Department Coordinator can add a Pre-reviewer.

5. How does a Pre-reviewer assign a PI to certify for the staff working on their projects (Graduate students, Post-doctoral associates and other similar persons)?
    This is done with the PI Line Assignment process using the following steps:
    -   Click on Management
    -   Click on Assignments
    -   Click on Change Assignments for Individuals
    -   Select your department (use the top text box to filter, if desired), then click Proceed
    -   Select your sub department(s) and click Proceed
        o   This lists all individuals in your sub department(s)
    -   Using the Status dropdown menu (found in the top right corner of the list), select "Eligible for PI line item" to see these individuals
    -   Select all these individuals and click Proceed
    -   Select "Enable line item forms" and click Proceed
    -   Review the results, or note any errors, then click Apply
    -   If error messages display, please contact an ERS central administrator at ERS@vt.edu.

6.   How does a Department Coordinator assign or change Pre-reviewers?

- Click on Management
- Click on Assignments
- Click on 'Change Sub Department Assignments'
- Select a sub department, then click Proceed
- Click on 'Change Sub Department Pre- Reviewer'
- Select from the list, then click Proceed
- Click Apply

7. How does a Department Coordinator assign a Sub-Department Coordinator, and how many Sub-Department Coordinators does the system allow per department?
   A department can add up to five Sub Department Coordinators using the following steps:
   - Click on Management
   - Click on Assignments
   - Select Change Sub Department Assignments
   - Select a sub department, then click Proceed
   - Click on Add subDC
   - Select desired name from the list, then click Proceed
   - Review the selection, then click Apply.

8. What if the graduate student in your department is working on a project for a PI in another department?
   The ERS form can be assigned to a pre-reviewer in the other department with the following steps:
   - Click on Management
   - Click on Assignments
   - Click on 'Change Assignments for Individuals'
   - Select your department, then your sub department
   - Begin typing the graduate student name in the top row to filter, then select the graduate student and click Proceed
   - Select 'Change Pre-Reviewer', then click Proceed
   - Note the three options at the top, above the list of employees. Click on 'Assign somebody not in your domain'
   - Enter the sub department associated with the graduate student's project, then click Search
   - Select a name from the list presented, then click Proceed
   - Review your selection, then click Apply

9. During pre-review, a pre-reviewer determines that an effort report is incorrect, how do you handle this?
   - Click on the Initiate CT button at the bottom of the screen. This will lock the form to prevent further action until a correction can be made.
   - Complete a Labor Redistribution (LR) in Banner, outside of ERS
   - Updated payroll records will be automatically updated in ERS after the LR has been completely approved and finalized in Banner, and the pre-reviewer will be notified that that an updated report is ready for review
   - Log back into ERS, select the person and effort report. Note the message at the top of the effort report that a Retroactive Cost Transfer (RCT) have been applied. Review the changes and complete prereview, or click Initiate CT button if further changes are necessary.

10. How do I retrieve an effort form that was already sent for certification but now requires a Labor Redistribution?
    - On the home page go to "Search Employee Effort Form"
    - Begin typing the name of employee effort report, then click on the name and choose 'Modify'
    - Click on the 'Make Changes' button, then click on 'Initiate CT'.
    - The status changes from 'Pending Certification' to 'Pre-Review (CT Pending)' and the form is locked until an LR can be completed.

11. What if the graduate student is paid from two different departments?
    - When the pre-reviewer and Line item assignment is completed, the status of the form will change to 'Awaiting Certification' and both PI's will be notified that it is available for each to certify the line that applies to their project. After both have completed their project certification, the form will be complete.

12. Graduate student's effort is split between two departments. My PI has already certified. Why is the graduate student still on my list?
    - The graduate student will be on your list until the other PI certifies the effort for his/her project.

13. What is the process when an employee (not graduate student) is paid from a fund in your department and also from a fund in another department?

- The employee is required to certify their effort on both funds with the Effort form. If he/she feels a fund or percentage is incorrect, they should contact the home Department Coordinator to initiate the appropriate labor redistribution.

14. What is the process when the employee effort report is listed in your department and paid from sponsored fund in your department, but the PI does not recognize the employee?
    - Determine if there has been a change to the employee's home organization, and contact that department's Department Coordinator
    - If necessary, change the pre-reviewer
    - If necessary, complete a Labor Redistribution if the effort is incorrectly charged to your PI's fund

15. How would the effort report be handled when the employee is no longer with the university?

    A responsible official who is able to verify the work performed can be assigned by an ERS central administrator to certify the employee's effort form. ERS provides a way for the employee to certify their effort 'to date' before they leave, which will make the verification easier for the responsible official. As part of the employees 'off-boarding' procedures, use the following steps to obtain a preview of any upcoming effort forms.

    - Go to the Reports menu, in "Effort Results" section
    - Generate the "Effort on Demand Preview Report"
    - Let the employee review effort charged to the grant for the semester
    - Get an email from the employee, that the effort charge to the grant is accurate
    - When the Effort report for that semester becomes available, contact OSP (ERS@vt.edu) to change the certifier to PI/department head
    - Have the PI/department head certify the email
    - Send the email confirmation from the employee to OSP to attach in the ERS.

16. What reports can I generate to manage the effort reports for my department?
    - Go to the Reports menu
    Common reports
        o Comprehensive Status report
        o Effort by fund
        o Effort by individual
        o Effort form not completed
        o Effort on Demand Preview

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17. How do you search for an employee's effort report?
    On home page in "Search employee effort forms" enter employee name or ID

18. How will an employee know that they have an effort form to certify?
    The employee will receive an automatic to certify after it is pre-reviewed.

19. How do I certify my effort?
    - Use this link https://ers.maximus.com/VirginiaTech/ to access ERS
    - Observe the 'My Status/To Do' section
    - Click on the number that appears on the Individual Certification line in the Current column
    - Verify that the fund(s) and the percent of effort is reasonable, then click Proceed. *IMPORTANT: If any corrections need to be made, please inform the pre-reviewer or Department Coordinator by using the 'Notify' button and do not continue with certification until the form is correct.*
    - Allocate any effort charged to "Non-Sponsored Allocable fund" if applicable
    - Review the Certifier Checklist
    - Click on Certify

20. How do I certify the graduate student's effort?
    - Use this link https://ers.maximus.com/VirginiaTech/ to access ERS
    - My Status/To Do section
    - Project Certification - click on Pending number of certifications (eg. 3)
    - Click on the name
    - Verify that the fund(s) and the percent of effort is reasonable, then click Proceed. *IMPORTANT: If any corrections need to be made, please inform the pre-reviewer or Department Coordinator by using the 'Notify' button and do not continue with certification until the form is correct.*
    - Review the Certifier Checklist
    - Click on Certify

    Note: For assistance - go to Help menu for resources
    - Certifier quick Guide
    - Certifier Training videos

21. Why was the Certifier not notified via email to certify the effort report after I completed the Pre-review?
    - The Certifier may not have a VT email address on file
    - The email may have been delivered to a spam or junk folder
    - If neither of the above, please contact ERS central administrators at ERS@vt.edu.

22. The effort charged on the Effort report does not match to the employee's payroll history. Please explain.
    - Retroactive pay adjustments done without the Banner Labor Distribution system (i.e. earn codes CPA, RET, RTG, etc.) are not included in the Effort Form since these adjustments are not associated with pay periods and the system cannot determine with accuracy which semester the adjustments belong. To avoid this situation, please ensure that the employee is paid from an E&G fund first, and then use LR to adjust the pay within the appropriate pay periods.
    Other non-effort related types of pay, such as mobile phone allowances, are not included in the Effort Form.