

## **Signature Requirements for Payroll Certifications:**

Payroll certifications will be accepted with wet signatures (physical signature made by hand) or digital signatures that conform to the digital signature requirements listed below. An electronic signature is not equivalent to a digital signature. As described below, electronic signatures do not contain the same security features that are present in digital signatures. Payroll certification liaisons should confirm that signatures are in compliance with the requirements prior to submitting signed payroll certifications to OSP. In accordance with university guidelines (<https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/guidance-for-the-use-of-electronic-digital-signatures-at-mason/>), digital or electronic signatures will only be accepted if one of the following requirements is met:

1. The digital signature is linked to a valid digital certificate. A digital certificate is prepared and delivered by a trusted certificate authority that follows a specific process to verify the identity of the requestor. The digital certificate attaches a specific identity to a signing key that allows verification of the identity of the certificate holder and includes the signer's name, certificate number, and date. Signatures can be validated by clicking on the digital signature and viewing the associated certificate information.
2. An adobe generated digital signature not linked to a valid certificate as described in #1 will be accepted with accompanying email from the signer. Adobe signatures can be created without the use of a third party certificate authority, documents will be locked to further changes after signature, but signatures are not linked to a personal certificate. Clicking on the signature will indicate that the document is self-signed, not validated by a third party certificate authority. When utilizing the adobe signature the signed payroll certification must be sent from the signer's GMU email address and the payroll certification liaison must include the email with the payroll certification submission to OSP.
3. The adobe stamp signature found under the fill & sign tools in adobe will be accepted when sent from the signer's GMU email address, the payroll certification liaison must include the email with the payroll certification submission to OSP. This method allows stamping the document rather than signing, these electronic signatures are not authenticated and do not lock the document to further editing.



### **Email approvals only are not acceptable for payroll certifications.**

A tutorial on how to create a self-signed digital ID/digital signature in Adobe Acrobat can be found at: <https://youtu.be/UUxF1scVZyk>. The signatures and Adobe digital ID must be created by each individual PI in order for the signatures to be valid.

The following link provides additional screenshots and instructions for creating **self-signed** signatures in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC (requires submission of sender email with certification):  
[https://techhelp.mcla.edu/index.php/Creating Self Signed Signatures in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC](https://techhelp.mcla.edu/index.php/Creating_Self_Signed_Signatures_in_Adobe_Acrobat_Reader_DC)

Please refer to the ITS website for information on the University's current supported platforms for digital certificates.