

# Edit Checks & Ensuring Data Quality

## Tutorial Script

### 2024-25 Data Collection Cycle

In this video, we are going to review edit explanations and fatal errors in the Data Collection System. When reporting IPEDS data, the edit check process is integral to ensuring data accuracy and accounting for possible deviations from prior data collection years. There are several steps a keyholder should take in order to establish an orderly process for collecting, validating, and reporting data accurately.

Let's look at some screenshots of the Data Collection System to illustrate how to resolve edits and errors. No matter how you enter your data, you will need to check for edits to see if there are any issues or potential errors. You will notice the edit and error message icons at the bottom of the survey collection screens.

Let's review the 5 icons on the screen: Invalid data type, fatal error, confirm or explain, resolved explanation, and overridden by admin.

- An invalid data type icon appears when, for example, an alpha character has been entered into a field that is restricted to numeric characters.
- A fatal error indicates that data have been flagged for a serious error. This could be due to missing data, because the data violate internal consistency between parts or components, because they violate reporting rules, or because you've entered a value that is not likely for most institutions. Please review the data for accuracy and correct any incorrect data. Check for keying errors. Do NOT adjust the data to try to erase the error. If the data are correct, contact the IPEDS Help Desk for an override. If you do not understand the nature of the error, contact the IPEDS Help Desk.
- A confirmation edit appears when data must be verified to check that the data entered is what is intended. Entries that are not within a normal range or an expected value may require a confirmation. Entries that require confirmation do not require an explanation; simply click Confirm if the data are correct as reported or click Close to return to the survey to revise your data. An example of this type of edit is the check that the system runs to ensure that very large values have been entered correctly on the screen. No explanations are necessary for this edit.
- However, for an explanation edit, the data have been flagged because an unexpected value was entered. Edit failures that require an explanation (or correction) may occur when the system identifies an abnormal progression of data from one year to the next or from one component to another. For example, if the number of full-time undergraduate students increased more than 30 percent over last year, the system will ask for an explanation for the increase. Check for keying errors and check to make sure the data are correct. If the data are correct, enter an explanation. To enter an explanation, click the yellow "yield sign" icon, type your response in the pop-up window provided, and click the Save button. Then click Refresh & Close to close the pop-up window.
- The icon turns grey when an explanation has been entered. Explanations may be edited by clicking on the gray icon.

- Finally, override by administrator indicates that a fatal error has been overridden by an IPEDS Help Desk administrator because of the explanation provided by the keyholder.

There are two ways to perform edit checks. A screen edit check is done automatically when you save data on a specific survey screen. Error icons will appear on a screen next to a data field; the icons identify the kind of error, and the severity of the problem. If you click on an icon you will get a description of the problem. If it is a confirmation error, when you click on the icon you can then enter the appropriate explanation.

Global edits check for consistency across a survey component and appear on the surveys page, which also provides an overview of the status of all of your institution's surveys. To run the global edits, select the active Perform Edits link. Both kinds of edits, screen edits and global edits, must be reviewed and all errors resolved before a survey can be locked. This means that all confirmation edits need to be confirmed, explanations must be entered for all explanation errors, and all fatal errors must be fixed or overridden.

If errors are generated by Perform Edits, an Error Report will appear on the screen. This is a concise listing of all edit errors and issues with the data for the component. This report will also tell you the status of each error.

On this screen, you can see a description of each edit that has been flagged for your review. The Resolved column will tell you if action is still required on your part to resolve the error. All edits must show Yes in the Resolved column before you can lock your survey. Click on the links in the Options column to return to the survey screens to check the data and edit if necessary. If the data are correct, click on the underlined Explanation link in the Severity column to enter an explanation.

If there are no global edit errors and no unresolved screen errors, the survey is ready to be locked. Remember, while the survey collection system identifies many errors, you must make sure to double and triple check the numbers you input into the online system to help prevent the submission of inaccurate data.

For more information on the material presented in the tutorial, please contact the IPEDs Help Desk.