

Reference

Lookups you'll come back to

- [Validation Rules](#)
- [Troubleshooting](#)
- [System Health & the COG Database Account](#)

Validation Rules

Overview — Why a Save Button Stays Grey

NSCAT validates forms as you type and keeps the save button disabled until everything passes. When a button will not enable and nothing looks obviously wrong, one of the rules on this page is the reason.

This is a reference. It collects the limits that apply across the application in one place, so you can check a rule rather than guess at it.

PRO TIP A disabled save button is almost always a validation failure, not a fault. Scroll the whole form — the offending field shows a red message underneath, and on long forms it is often above or below the visible area.

Passwords

Applies to **Register a User**, **Manage User** (with **Changing Password?** ticked), **Reset Password**, and **Profile**.

A password must satisfy **all** of:

Requirement	Detail
Minimum length	6 characters
Uppercase letter	At least one, A-Z
Lowercase letter	At least one, a-z
Number	At least one, 0-9
Special character	At least one of @ \$! % * ? &

The message on failure is: "*Minimum 6 characters, One capital latter, Special charater, Number*".

HEADS UP Only @ \$! % * ? & count as special characters, and no other symbol is permitted **anywhere** in the password. A password containing #, -, _, ., +, or / is rejected even if it also contains a valid special character. This is the single most common validation surprise in NSCAT.

PRO TIP When a strong-looking password is rejected, the cause is nearly always an unsupported symbol rather than a missing one. Replace anything outside @ \$! % * ? & and try again.

GOOD TO KNOW Confirm Password must match exactly. A mismatch is reported separately from the policy rules, so a valid password can still fail on the confirm field alone.

Email Addresses

Applies wherever an email is typed rather than picked from a list.

The address must be a structurally valid email — a local part, an @, and a domain with a dot and a two-or-more-letter suffix. Failure reports *"Invalid e-mail."*

GOOD TO KNOW This checks **format only**. NSCAT cannot tell whether the mailbox exists, so a typo in a valid-looking address passes validation and only shows up when mail does not arrive.

Required Fields

The general required rule rejects two things:

1. An **empty value** — and whitespace-only text counts as empty, since the value is trimmed first.
2. The literal value **Select** — the placeholder some pickers start on.

Both report *"Required."*

HEADS UP A picker still showing **Select** counts as empty even though it does not look blank. If a form insists a field is required and it appears filled in, check whether it is still on its placeholder.

PRO TIP Spaces are trimmed, so a field containing only spaces fails as empty. Where a field looks filled but reports Required, select the contents and retype.

Multi-Select Limits

Several fields accept a list, and lists have caps.

Rule	Minimum	Maximum	Used by
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Standard list	1	20	Add / Delete themes, CPRO utilities, Team Leads
Trending activities	1	20	Trending Report activity selection
At least two	2	—	Consolidate Themes

Messages are "At least one required", "Maximum of number of activities allowed is 20", and "At least two required".

GOOD TO KNOW The maximum message mentions "activities" wherever it appears, including in the theme dialogs. The **20-item limit** is what it means; the wording is generic.

HEADS UP The 20-item cap bites hardest on the **Trending Report**, where a long assessment history can easily exceed it. Split the comparison into overlapping batches of 20 rather than trying to force it into one report — see **Trending Report**.

PRO TIP Consolidate Themes needs two or more selections because merging one theme into a new name is simply a rename. If the button will not enable with one theme selected, use **Rename Theme** instead.

Numeric Fields

Where a number is required, it must be present, must actually be a number, and must be **zero or greater**. Messages are "Required.", "Must be a number.", and "Must be 0 or greater."

GOOD TO KNOW Negative numbers are rejected in these fields. This does **not** apply to rating scale values, which are fixed at -1/0/+1 or -3...+3 and are not typed in — see **Rating Scales**.

Text Length

Some short fields cap at **20 characters** — "Max 20 characters" — and some longer ones require a **minimum of 8** — "Min 8 characters".

PRO TIP The 20-character cap is a hint about intent. A field with it is meant for a label or an abbreviation, not a description — a utility **Short Name**, for instance. If you are fighting the limit, the value probably belongs in the corresponding long-name field.

Themes — Naming

Themes are named by convention as Attribute - Trait, for example Standards - Personal Accountability.

HEADS UP This format is **not enforced**. The theme name field accepts any non-empty text, so a free-form or mistyped name saves without complaint. Consistency has to be maintained by your team — see **Theme Management**.

Rules That Are Not Validation

Some things that block a save are not field validation and produce a dialog rather than a red message:

Restriction	Where
Rating scale type frozen once responses exist	Activity Properties — shows Cannot Change Rating Scale
Published questions cannot be edited	Question Composer — the Edit button is absent
Deprecation cannot be reversed	Question Composer — the switch is disabled
Saved ISF Traits and Attributes cannot be deleted	Manage ISF — no delete icon
A locked activity is read-only	Everywhere in the activity
Utility must match to edit an activity's team	Activity Properties — fields greyed out

GOOD TO KNOW These are structural rules, not form validation. No amount of correcting fields will satisfy them — the state of the data has to change, or a different account has to make the change.

Quick Diagnosis

Symptom	Check
Save disabled, nothing obviously wrong	Scroll the whole form for a red message; check for a picker still on Select .
Password rejected	Remove any symbol outside @ \$! % * ? &.
Passwords "do not match"	Retype both fields; check for a trailing space.
Field looks filled but says Required .	Whitespace-only, or still on the Select placeholder.
Multi-select refuses more entries	You have hit the 20-item cap.
Button disabled with one item selected	That field needs at least two — you probably want a different operation.
Number rejected	Must be numeric and zero or greater.
A dialog blocks the change rather than a field	A structural rule, not validation. See the table above.

Troubleshooting

Overview — Start Here

Most NSCAT support questions come down to one of five things. Work through these before digging deeper:

1. **Is it a role problem?** Admin roles and activity assignments are separate — see **Roles & Access Control**.
2. **Is the activity locked?** Locking hides **Properties** and **Activity Feed** and disables every save.
3. **Is the session stale?** Role changes only take effect on the next sign-in.
4. **Is it validation?** A grey save button is nearly always a rule — see **Validation Rules**.
5. **Is it a structural rule?** Published questions, deprecated questions, saved ISF items, and rating scales with responses cannot be changed at all.

PRO TIP Ask two questions before anything else: "What roles does the account have?" and "Is the activity locked?" Between them they explain the large majority of "I can't do X" reports.

Sessions and Signing In

Re-login prompts

NSCAT warns you before your session expires, at **30 minutes**, **5 minutes**, and **1 minute** remaining:

You are about to be Logged Out — Your session is about to expire in 30 minutes. Click on 'Re-Login' to stay logged in... Ensure that you save your work in advance.

Click **Re-Login**, enter your password, and the session extends. Your work is not discarded by the prompt.

HEADS UP Take the **30-minute** prompt seriously if you are part-way through something long — a new ISF, a survey, a batch of themes. Dismissing all three prompts means being signed out mid-edit, and unsaved form contents do not survive it.

PRO TIP Save your work at the 30-minute prompt, then re-login. Doing both is quicker than deciding later whether the last twenty minutes of typing survived.

Role changes not taking effect

The sidebar is built from the roles in your **current session token**. Granting someone a role does not change what they can see until they sign in again.

GOOD TO KNOW This is the answer to "I ticked Utility Admin but they still can't see Question Composer." Have them sign out and back in.

Access Problems

Report	Cause	Fix
Access Restricted on an activity's menu	No assignment on that activity	Add them as a Team Lead or Team Member in Properties
A sidebar entry is missing	The role gate for it is not met	Check the role matrix on the Overview page
COG Admin cannot see Question Composer, Themes, Training, Trending, CPRO, or Report Builder	All are Utility Admin only	Tick Utility Admin as well
COG Admin cannot see Lessons Learned Review	Hidden from COG Admins by design	Nothing to fix — use a Utility Admin account
Utility Admin cannot see Add Utility, ISF, or Manage Activities	All are COG Admin only	A COG Admin must perform the action
COG Admin cannot edit content inside an activity	COG Admin grants no in-activity write access	Add Utility Admin, or an activity assignment
Redirected to the dashboard from Activity Feed	Not a COG Admin or Utility Admin — access is enforced, not just hidden	Grant an admin role
Utility Admin sees team fields greyed out	The activity belongs to a different utility	An admin from that utility must make the change

HEADS UP COG Admin is **not** a superset of Utility Admin. Most day-to-day administrators need **both** boxes ticked. If one account is reporting an odd mix of missing menus, check whether only COG Admin is set.

Locked Activities

Report	Cause
Properties missing from the activity menu	The activity is locked
Activity Feed missing from the activity menu	The activity is locked
Every save button disabled inside an activity	The activity is locked

Cannot change a locked activity's team	Team editing lives on Properties, which is hidden
Cannot change the rating scale	Locked — or the activity has responses
Locked it by mistake and cannot undo it	Only a COG Admin can unlock, via Manage Activities

HEADS UP A Utility Admin who locks an activity **cannot unlock it**, because locking removes the page holding the lock checkbox. Only a COG Admin can reverse it — see **Manage Activities**.

PRO TIP The **Unlock** button in Manage Activities is disabled while the checkbox is ticked. That confuses people regularly — untick the checkbox first, and the button enables.

Questions and the Pool

Report	Cause	Fix
No Edit button on a question	It is published, or owned by another utility	Published questions cannot be edited — copy it and edit the copy
No Set Deprecated switch	Not a Utility Admin, question unpublished, or another utility's	Check all three
Set Deprecated greyed out	Already deprecated — this cannot be reversed	Publish a corrected copy instead
A question is missing from a survey composer	Unpublished, deprecated, private to another utility, or classified against a different ISF	Check its state in the pool
Attribute shows No Options Available	The chosen Trait has no Attributes	Add them in Manage ISF
Demographic breakdown missing from a report	The question uses plain Demographic rather than the specific category	Create a question in the specific category

PRO TIP "Someone wrote a question but nobody can find it" is almost always an **unpublished draft**. Filter the pool to **Unpublished** and look.

Reports

Report	Cause	Fix
CPRO: No Results available !	Nothing matched the criteria	Widen the date range first, then check the utilities
Trending: No Results available !	The selected activities have no scored survey data	Confirm responses exist
Trending: mixed rating scales warning	Selection spans 3-point and 7-point activities	Compare same-scale columns only, or split the report

Trending: many NR cells	Those activities have no questions against those ISF elements	Absent data, not poor scores
Cannot select more than 20 activities	The cap is 20	Split into overlapping batches
Report Builder: No records match the selected filters	Filters too narrow	Remove them one at a time
Report Builder: blank Department / Level / Site columns	The survey lacked the specific demographic questions	Nothing to fix retrospectively
Trending Report has no download button	It has no export	Use CPRO or the Report Builder for exportable output
Export failed banner	The export did not complete	Retry; narrow the data if it recurs

HEADS UP Two reports look similar but are not comparable if the activities behind them used different rating scales or different question sets. Check the [3-point] / [7-point] suffixes in the Trending Report headers before treating a movement as real.

Surveys

Report	Cause	Fix
Respondent sees The Survey Expired	The survey's expiry date has passed	Extend the expiry date on the survey
Respondent sees Missing Answers	Required questions left blank	They must complete them before submitting
Cannot Change Rating Scale	The activity has recorded responses	The scale type is frozen; only labels can change
Please Select a File!	An upload was attempted with no file chosen	Choose a file first

HEADS UP The rating scale lock cannot be overridden by anyone. Once responses exist, the only way onto a different scale is a **new activity**. Confirm the scale before distributing the survey link — see **Rating Scales**.

Themes and the ISF

Report	Cause	Fix
No delete icon on an ISF Trait or Attribute	It is saved — saved items cannot be deleted	Rename it to mark it retired
An ISF Trait panel header is dark grey	Its required Long Name is empty	Expand it and fill the field in
Theme names no longer match the ISF	Themes do not follow ISF renames	Rename them in Theme Management

Theme saved in the wrong format	The Attribute - Trait format is not enforced	Fix with Rename Theme
Theme counts changed between report runs	A consolidation or deletion happened in between	Consolidate before reporting, not after
Findings lost their categorization	A theme in use was deleted	Not recoverable — use Consolidate for themes with history
Duplicate near-identical themes	Duplicates are not prevented	Consolidate them

HEADS UP After **any** rename in the ISF, review your themes. Nothing links them, nothing warns you, and the mismatch only becomes visible when a report reader cannot trace a theme back to its Attribute.

Users

Report	Cause	Fix
Password rejected but looks strong	An unsupported special character	Use only @ \$! % * ? &
Every field greyed out in Manage User	The account is disabled	Tick Account Enabled to edit anything
Registration rejected on the email	Invalid format, or the account already exists	Search Manage User before creating
Cannot add someone as a Team Member	They are already a Team Lead on that activity	Remove them from that list first
A trained person is missing from Training Management	They have no NSCAT account	Register them first
Wrong name against a training record	The account's name is wrong	Fix it in Manage User
Departed staff still on a team list	Disabling an account does not unassign them	Remove them from the activity as well

PRO TIP When someone leaves, do both: **disable the account** in Manage User **and** remove them from their activities. Doing one leaves either a live account or a team list naming someone who cannot sign in.

When Nothing Loads

Symptom	What to check
Activity Feed: Could not load activity feed	It retries automatically, then stops after three failures. Use refresh .
Feed stopped updating on its own	Three failures stopped polling, or the tab was in the background. Refresh.
Spinners that never resolve	Reload the page. If it persists on one page only, note which and report it.
Everything fails after a period of inactivity	The session expired. Sign in again.

HEADS UP An empty list after a failed load is not evidence of empty data. If a warning alert is on screen, treat what you see as unreliable rather than concluding nothing exists.

Escalating

When none of the above explains it, gather this before reporting:

- The **account's roles** — COG Admin, Utility Admin, or neither — and its **utility**.
- The **activity id**, from the address bar or the Manage Activities picker.
- Whether the activity is **locked**.
- The **exact message**, including the dialog heading.
- Whether it happens after a **fresh sign-in** — which rules out a stale session.

PRO TIP "Fresh sign-in, roles confirmed, activity unlocked, and it still fails" is a genuinely useful report. Without those four facts, the first response will only ever be to check them.

System Health & the COG Database Account

Overview — When NSCAT Cannot Reach Its Database

NSCAT's API exposes a health endpoint that checks whether the application can reach its database. Where it cannot, the response now names the most likely cause explicitly rather than returning a generic failure:

Unable to connect to the database. If this persists, the COG Database Owner Account password may have expired. Please contact COG IT.

This message exists because an expired database owner account password produces symptoms that look nothing like a credentials problem to the people reporting them.

What This Is — and What It Is Not

This is	The password on the COG database owner account — the service account NSCAT's API uses to connect to SQL Server. It is managed by COG IT, on COG's password policy, entirely outside NSCAT.
This is not	Any NSCAT user's password. NSCAT user passwords do not expire, are not rotated, and have no maximum age.

HEADS UP Do not respond to this message by resetting anyone's NSCAT account password. It will not help, and it wastes the window in which the real problem could be fixed. The account in question is not visible in Manage User.

What Users Will Report

When the database account password has expired, NSCAT does not present a tidy error. Expect reports like:

- Spinners that never resolve on pages that normally load instantly.

- "Everything worked this morning and now nothing loads."
- Sign-in failing for everyone, with correct credentials.
- Saves failing across unrelated pages at the same time.
- Autosave chips showing **Save failed** on every content page at once.

PRO TIP The tell is *breadth*. A permission or validation problem affects one person or one page. A database connectivity problem affects everyone, everywhere, starting at a single moment in time. If three unrelated reports arrive within a few minutes of each other, check health before investigating any of them individually.

What To Do

1. **Confirm the breadth.** Ask a second person on a different account and a different page. If it works for them, this is not it.
2. **Check the health endpoint.** Your COG IT contact or whoever deployed the API can query it; the message above is what it returns.
3. **Contact COG IT**, quoting the message verbatim. The fix is theirs — rotating the database owner account password and updating the API's connection configuration.
4. **Tell your users to stop retrying and to leave their browser tabs open.** Autosave queues changes when the failure looks like a network problem and drains the queue automatically when connectivity returns. Closing the tab discards the queue and any local draft with it.

HEADS UP Point 4 matters more than it looks. An analyst who closes a browser tab in frustration loses whatever autosave had queued. One that stays open may recover it. Say so when you acknowledge the outage.

GOOD TO KNOW Autosave's offline queue makes up to five attempts to drain once connectivity returns, one second apart, then gives up and shows **Save failed**. So a short outage often resolves itself with nothing lost; a long one does not.

Preventing It

PRO TIP This is a scheduled, predictable event. Ask COG IT for the database owner account's expiry date and put a reminder in your own calendar two weeks ahead. The one thing worse than the outage is discovering the account expired on the morning your assessment team was writing up thirty interviews.

GOOD TO KNOW There is nothing to configure inside NSCAT for this. The health message is informational; the remedy is entirely on the infrastructure side.

Common Problems

What you see	What it means
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The database connection message on the health endpoint	The API cannot reach SQL Server. Likely an expired database owner account password. Contact COG IT.
Everyone signed out at once	Same cause — or the API is down. Check health before anything else.
Save failed on every page for every user	Not a permission problem. Check health.
An administrator asks you to reset the "expired password"	Clarify which account. NSCAT user passwords do not expire.
Health is fine but one user cannot sign in	Their account is disabled, or their credentials are wrong. Nothing to do with this page.