



PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | **ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION**

In coordination with the immigration and policy team at Cornell Law School

April 7, 2025

FAQ For International Students and Campus Stakeholders: What You Need to Know

In March, reports began to emerge of immigration enforcement targeting international and noncitizen students and other campus members. Dozens of colleges and universities have reported discovering numerous instances of international student records being terminated in the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). These actions have generated many questions and concerns. This FAQ provides international students and other campus stakeholders with information and additional resources.

1) What is a visa?

A visa is an official document stamped on a page in someone's passport that grants permission for a specific time and for a particular purpose like work, travel, or study. A noncitizen seeking to enter the United States generally must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. In the United States, there are three primary student visa types: 1) The **F-1 Student Visa** for studying at an accredited college, university, secondary school, or English language institute. 2) The **J-1 Exchange Visa** for participation in exchange programs, including high school and university study. 3) The **M-1 Student Visa** for non-academic or vocational study or training.

2) What is the difference between a visa and status?

A **student visa** is a travel document issued by a U.S. consulate or embassy before an international student enters the United States. It allows the visa holder to travel to the U.S. port of entry but does not guarantee entry into the United States. Upon arrival, the visa holder must present the visa and other supporting documents to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer. The CBP officer may interview to determine eligibility for entry. If allowed entry, the officer will provide an admission stamp or update the online Form I-94 record, which indicates the date of admission and the duration of stay.

Status refers to the formal immigration classification in the United States as indicated on one's I-94 record and relates to the purpose or reason for which an individual comes to the United States. Student status refers to the legal status that the student must maintain after they are granted admission into the United States, which includes but is not limited to maintaining a full course load. It is possible to have multiple visas in one's passport, but an individual can only have one immigration status while in the United States. A person can have a visa that has expired while also maintaining their status.

3) What is visa revocation?

A visa revocation invalidates the visa document from the date of issuance. A visa can be revoked by a consular officer or the Secretary of State at their discretion. Additionally, the regulations identify nine instances where an immigration officer can revoke a person's visa, two of which include if the person obtains an immigrant visa or an adjustment of status to that of a permanent resident or has a prior removal order. The Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) also lists circumstances under which a visa may be revoked: the individual is not eligible for the type of visa classification, the visa has been physically removed from the passport in which it was issued, or the individual has an IDENT Watchlist record due to driving under the influence (DUI), driving while intoxicated, or similar conviction within the past five years.

4) What is SEVIS?

SEVIS is a web-based system for maintaining information on nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors in the United States. It is the core technology for the DHS, and in use since shortly after 9/11. SEVIS implements Section 641 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which requires DHS to collect current information from nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors continually during their course of stay in the United States. Further, SEVIS enables SEVP to assure proper reporting and record keeping by schools and exchange visitor programs. SEVIS also provides a mechanism for student and exchange visitor status violators to be identified so that appropriate enforcement is taken (i.e., denial of admission, denial of benefits, or removal from the United States). Its purpose according to their website is to protect national security while supporting the legal entry of more than one million F, M, and J non-immigrants to the US for education and cultural exchange.

5) What is a SEVIS Record Termination?

According to DHS, termination of a student's SEVIS record could indicate that the nonimmigrant no longer maintains F or M status. Designated school officials (DSOs) may terminate F-1/M-1 students and/or F-2/M-2 dependents who do not maintain their status. Some of the reasons for a SEVIS termination are expulsion, failure to enroll in a full course of study, failure to report while on OPT, no-show, or failure to report to school, among other reasons. There are four consequences after a SEVIS record termination: the student loses all on- and/or off-campus employment authorization; the student cannot

re-enter the United States on the terminated SEVIS record; Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents may investigate to confirm the departure of the student; and any associated F-2 or M-2 dependent records are terminated.

6) Can ICE terminate my SEVIS?

Historically, ICE has not terminated a SEVIS record. In rare instances, ICE reported information to the DSO that would lead to the DSO terminating the record, such as if a student was taken into custody by a law enforcement agency. However, in recent reports ICE has been terminating SEVIS records based on 1) Protest and speech activity and 2) Prior past arrests or convictions. This could be reported as the student's failure to maintain his non-immigrant status, a violation of the conditions of such status, or activities that would have serious foreign policy consequences for the United States. Some have pointed to a lack of clarity about the legal basis for these terminations.

Historically, ICE has not terminated a SEVIS record. In rare instances, ICE reported information to the DSO that would lead the DSO to terminate the record, such as when a student was taken into custody by a law enforcement agency. However, recent reports indicate that ICE has now begun directly terminating SEVIS records based on three primary reasons: protest and speech activity, prior arrests or convictions, and a more general termination reason that has recently resurfaced, which states, "individual identified in criminal records check and/or has had their visa revoked. SEVIS record has been terminated." For the first two reasons, the termination action has been cited in some cases as the student's failure to maintain non-immigrant status, a violation of the conditions of such status, or activities that would have serious foreign policy consequences for the United States. For the third reason visa revocation has been explicitly cited as the basis for termination.

7) Can a student be placed in removal proceedings or otherwise subject to immigration enforcement if their visa is revoked?

Yes. Any non-immigrant whose visa has been revoked can be charged with removability and placed in proceedings before an Immigration Judge. At the hearing, the government can articulate the basis for the charge, and the noncitizen can respond to this charge or seek an immigration remedy.

8) Can a student be placed in removal proceedings or otherwise subject to immigration enforcement if their SEVIS record is terminated?

Yes. Any non-immigrants whose SEVIS record has been terminated can be charged with removability and placed in removal proceedings for failure to maintain nonimmigrant status. At the hearing, the government can articulate the basis for the charge, and the noncitizen can respond to this charge or seek an immigration remedy.

9) Can a student still study and remain in F-1 status if their visa is revoked?

Yes, if they maintain their legal status. Maintaining F-1 status depends on meeting the requirements for full-time enrollment in a study program, maintaining a foreign

residence, having sufficient funds, and other conditions. If the student remains enrolled in their program, their immigration status for educational purposes remains valid. However, if the student leaves the United States, they will need to obtain a new visa to reenter the country.

9) What are students' rights and responsibilities if they encounter ICE?

- Right to remain silent.
- Right to speak to a lawyer.
- If they have a lawyer, the student has a right to talk to them. If they have a signed DHS Form G-28, which shows they have a lawyer, they can give it to an officer.
- The student can consider providing copies of their immigration documents to a trusted family member or friend.

11) Where can I find more resources?

- [Penn State Dickinson Law - Center for Immigrants' Rights Clinic Resources](#)
- [Rights and Protections Hub: Guidance for Institutions and Immigrant Students \(Higher Ed Immigration Portal\)](#)
- [Presidents' Alliance Resources](#)
- [ALLA Lawyer Referral](#)
- [Penn State Global – Immigration Resources](#)
- [NAFSA: Association of International Educators – Regulatory Information](#)

Sources

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22 C.F.R. § 41.122 (Revocation of Visas)

22 C.F.R. § 41.113 (Procedures in issuing visas).

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<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2016/01/student-visa-vs-student-status-what-difference>

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<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/completions-and-terminations/terminate-a-student>

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Cyrus Mehta. *A Foreign Student Whose Visa Has Been Revoked by Trump Should Still Be Able to Continue to Attend School* (2025), <https://blog.cyrusmehta.com/2025/03/a-foreign-student-whose-visa-has-been-revoked-by-trump-should-still-be-able-to-continue-to-attend-school.html>

American Immigration Lawyers Association, [Know Your Rights: If ICE Visits Your Home](#)