

# US student visa status revoked? Legal options for international students, explained

By Ankita Sen, ET Online | Last Updated: Apr 07, 2025, 01:09:00 PM IST

## Synopsis

The sudden termination of SEVIS records has left many international students in the US without clarity or warning. There are multiple options available for students, but each carries specific risks, timelines, and costs. While legal efforts are underway, the most critical action for affected students is to seek legal counsel and remain proactive about their next steps.



In a growing crackdown on foreign students in the [United States](#), immigration authorities have revoked more than 300 student visas, many without prior notice to the students or their universities. The [SEVIS](#) (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) terminations have sparked concerns across university campuses and raised questions about legal recourse for those affected.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been accused of abruptly terminating SEVIS records, often based on minor allegations or past infractions.

In several cases, terminations have occurred even after students were acquitted of charges. Legal experts say the lack of transparency and due process is at the heart of growing concern.

University officials in Minnesota confirmed the termination of SEVIS records for students without warning. "This is unlike any we have navigated before," one official said. Institutions only discovered the changes after manually checking the federal database, since automated updates were not issued.

According to Rajiv Khanna, an immigration attorney based in the US, the terminations are being used to render students deportable despite being enrolled full-time and complying with visa rules. “ICE is terminating SEVIS registrations as a basis to claim that students are deportable, even when they are attending school on a full-time basis in full compliance with their visas,” he said.

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Among the justifications cited for the actions is a Cold War-era provision that allows deportation if a noncitizen’s activity poses “potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” However, affected students and universities have received no clear explanation linking terminations to national security.


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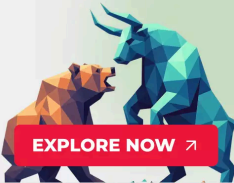
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### Why SEVIS termination matters

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a centralized US government database that tracks international students. If a student's SEVIS record is terminated, their visa becomes invalid immediately, making them out of status. In recent weeks, universities in Minnesota and elsewhere have reported cases where students—despite active enrolment—were taken into custody or forced to leave due to sudden terminations.

Khanna, who has been advising impacted students, notes that even those cleared by courts are not being spared. A First Amendment lawsuit has already been filed, but outcomes may take time.

Legal options for students with terminated SEVIS records are limited and complex. Khanna helps outline the options

international students in the meantime, and what each involves.

### Option 1: Exit the US and attempt re-entry

#### What it involves:

Students can leave the US, request a new Form I-20 from their university, pay the SEVIS fee again, and apply for a fresh F-1 visa from a US consulate abroad. If granted, they can reenter the US to resume studies.

#### Pros:

- Offers a legal path to regain student status
- Retains ties with current university

#### Pitfalls:

- **Visa Approval Not Guaranteed:** Previous SEVIS termination can trigger scrutiny.
- **Foreign Policy Clause Risk:** US consulates may refuse the visa citing undefined “foreign policy consequences.”
- **Delays:** Even with approval, students must restart the 9-month period for CPT/OPT eligibility.
- **Costs:** Visa fee, SEVIS fee, international travel, and potential tuition losses due to re-enrolment delays.

### Option 2: Stay in the US and challenge the termination in court

#### What it involves:

Students can choose to remain in the US and challenge the SEVIS termination through legal proceedings by hiring an immigration attorney.

#### Pros:

- Allows students to stay in the country
- Opportunity to seek judicial intervention

#### Pitfalls:

- **Expensive:** Legal fees can range between ₹8 lakh and ₹16 lakh (USD 10,000–20,000).
- **No Automatic Stay on Deportation:** Unless the court intervenes, deportation may proceed.
- **Work Restrictions:** Students cannot work while litigation is pending, unless permitted by the court.

- **Uncertain Outcome:** Federal courts often defer to administrative discretion in immigration matters.

### **Option 3: Switch to a Work Visa (H-1B or L-1)**

#### **What it involves:**

Students may transition to a work visa such as H-1B or L-1 by securing sponsorship from an eligible employer. Once approved, they can exit and reenter the US with the new visa.

#### **Pros:**

- Provides a path to stay and work in the US
- May offer long-term career stability

#### **Pitfalls:**

- **Limited Time:** Students may be removed before a petition is approved, especially without a grace period.
- **H-1B Cap Limits:** Annual quotas can delay or block access to H-1B status.
- **Employer Willingness:** Many employers avoid visa sponsorship due to legal complexity.
- **Coordination:** Students must manage timing carefully to avoid a legal status gap between termination and new visa issuance.

### **Option 4: Complete the degree remotely**

#### **What it involves:**

Students may choose to complete their remaining coursework through online classes, subject to university and program approvals.

#### **Pros:**

- Retains academic continuity
- No immediate immigration entanglements

#### **Pitfalls:**

- **Not Universally Offered:** Not all institutions or programs support remote learning.
- **Time Zone Conflicts:** Academic performance could be affected due to regional timing differences.
- **Loss of US Benefits:** No access to on-campus resources, internships, or Optional Practical Training (OPT).
- **Residency Complications:** Completing the course abroad removes future US work opportunities tied to student status.

### **Option 5: Join a coordinated legal effort**

#### **What it involves:**

Students can join existing lawsuits or group legal actions initiated by other impacted individuals, such as the First Amendment case filed by university unions.

**Pros:**

- Lower cost than individual litigation
- Greater public visibility may influence outcomes

**Pitfalls:**

- **Shared Strategy:** Legal arguments may be broad and not tailored to individual circumstances.
- **Uncertain Results:** Even group challenges can take years with unpredictable verdicts.
- **Limited Input:** Students may not have a say in how the case is argued.

**Who has the best chance of success?**

According to attorney Khanna, students fall into different risk categories:

- **Strongest Case:** Students with no legal violations, immigration breaches, or controversial public activity.
- **Moderate Risk:** Students who faced minor legal issues but were not charged or convicted.
- **High Risk:** Students with prior arrests—even if acquitted.
- **Weakest Case:** Students with convictions, such as DUIs, even if they've served their sentences.

**What students should do now**

- Consult an Immigration attorney
- Gather all documentation: I-20s, visa stamps, SEVIS records, and correspondence with university officials.
- Avoid further complications: Limit public political statements online; some terminations may be tied to social media activity.
- Coordinate with university: Inform the international student office and seek their assistance in obtaining updated records or academic options.