



Samantha Wolfe

Partner
303.295.8479
Denver
sdwolfe@hollandhart.com

International Student Visa Interviews Halted for Expanded Social Media Screening

Insight — May 28, 2025

The U.S. Department of State (State Department) has directed consular sections worldwide to suspend the scheduling of new interviews for international student and foreign exchange visitor visa applicants as it prepares to implement expanded screening of applicants' social media activity. The directive, issued via internal cable and signed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, applies to F, M, and J visa categories, which cover academic, vocational, and exchange programs. The suspension is effective immediately but does not impact applicants who already have interviews scheduled.

This action follows a broader effort by the Trump administration to intensify scrutiny of international students and the institutions that host them. The cable instructs posts that “in preparation for an expansion of required social media screening and vetting,” consular officers should not “add any additional student or exchange visitor visa appointment capacity” until further guidance is issued.

State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce confirmed the pause in a press briefing, emphasizing that the U.S. “will continue to use every tool we can to assess who it is that's coming here, whether they are students or otherwise.” Bruce declined to elaborate on what additional vetting measures are under consideration, citing concerns that disclosing the details could be “counterproductive.”

The use of social media screening in visa adjudications is not new. Since 2019, applicants for most U.S. visas have been required to disclose identifiers for platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn. However, recent reporting and practice alerts suggest that the State Department is now relying more heavily on this data to make eligibility determinations, including in some cases revoking visas based on posts or affiliations uncovered through this screening process.

In practice, visa revocation based on social media content has occurred with minimal notice to the visa holder. Individuals typically discover their visa has been revoked only after attempting to travel or renew their status. Importantly, visa revocation does not automatically terminate lawful status if the person remains in the U.S. under a valid I-94, but it can trigger inadmissibility and future visa ineligibility, including loss of eligibility for automatic visa revalidation.

Revocations based on social media posts have occurred even where

individuals have no history of immigration violations, raising concerns about transparency and consistency in adjudications. Given the increased scrutiny of visa applicants' social media content and the potential for revocations without prior notice, international students and exchange visitors should consider consulting with immigration counsel before making travel plans or initiating new visa applications. This evolving approach to vetting could carry significant implications for reentry, future visa eligibility, and maintenance of lawful status.

While the visa interview suspension is described by officials as temporary, an extended pause may result in processing delays that affect international students' ability to enroll in U.S. academic programs for the summer and fall terms. Universities, many of which rely heavily on full tuition paying international students to support their budgets, may also experience ripple effects if enrollment drops due to prolonged visa backlogs.

Subscribe to get our Insights delivered to your inbox.

This publication is designed to provide general information on pertinent legal topics. The statements made are provided for educational purposes only. They do not constitute legal or financial advice nor do they necessarily reflect the views of Holland & Hart LLP or any of its attorneys other than the author(s). This publication is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship between you and Holland & Hart LLP. Substantive changes in the law subsequent to the date of this publication might affect the analysis or commentary. Similarly, the analysis may differ depending on the jurisdiction or circumstances. If you have specific questions as to the application of the law to your activities, you should seek the advice of your legal counsel.