

# F1 Visa Status in US

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Foreign students in the U.S., including thousands of Indians, are left facing the possibility of falling out of valid immigration status following a Department of Homeland Security rule about attending online classes.

## F1 Visa Status

The U.S. rule, announced by **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)**, says those **F-1 and M-1 (non-academic and vocational students) visa holders planning to take only online classes in the fall (autumn) will not be allowed to remain in the U.S.** Due to COVID-19, a number of universities are planning to shift all their classes online for the fall semester which normally starts in September. Those whose colleges and universities were moving to an online only model would therefore have to leave the country or find another way to stay in status.

The ICE said that the active students currently in the United States enrolled in such programs must **depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction** to remain in lawful status. If not, they may face immigration consequences including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings.

With at least 200,000 Indian students in the U.S, the country is the **second largest source of foreign students**, China being the first. The U.S. announcement comes weeks after the U.S. President Donald Trump **suspended H1-B highly skilled worker visas** through the end of the year. Most of these visas go to Indian citizens each year. This difficult situation for students is exacerbated by the unprecedented disruption to international travel.

The issue was raised during the virtual foreign office

consultations between Indian Foreign Secretary and the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. The sources said that the US side took note of it and said they will keep the best interests of the students in mind and try and mitigate the impact.