

Insights

Recent Updates on Department of State's (DOS) Social Media Vetting of Student and Exchange Visitor Applicants

06.23.2025 | INSIGHT

RELATED CAPABILITIES

Immigration Law

On June 18, 2025, the Department of State ("DOS") lifted the pause on the scheduling of new visa appointments for student and exchange visitor applicants in the F, M, and J nonimmigrant categories, instructing U.S. Embassies and Consulates to resume scheduling of Visa Interviews, with clear direction to prioritize Physicians applying for the J-1 Visa for educational exchange, and released a media note confirming expanded screening and vetting of all student and exchange visitor applicants in the F, M, and J nonimmigrant (temporary) classifications. The media note confirms that the expanded screening includes online presence / social media accounts. Overseas posts are now resuming scheduling of F, M, and J nonimmigrant visa applications.^[1]

As per the DOS' media note:

The State Department is committed to protecting our nation and our citizens by upholding the highest standards of national security and public safety through our visa process. A U.S. visa is a privilege, not a right.

We use all available information in our visa screening and vetting to identify visa applicants who are inadmissible to the United States, including those who pose a threat to U.S. national security. Under new guidance, we will conduct a comprehensive and thorough vetting, including online presence, of all student and exchange visitor applicants in the F, M, and J nonimmigrant classifications.

To facilitate this vetting, all applicants for F, M, and J nonimmigrant visas will be instructed to adjust the privacy settings on all of their social media profiles to "public."

Our overseas posts will resume scheduling F, M, and J nonimmigrant visa applications soon. Applicants should check the relevant embassy or consulate website for appointment availability.

Every visa adjudication is a national security decision. The United States must be vigilant during the visa issuance process to ensure that those applying for admission into the United States do not intend to harm Americans and our national interests, and that all applicants credibly establish their eligibility for the visa sought, including that they intend to engage in activities consistent with the terms for their admission.

What F, M, and J Applicants Should Know:

- The Department of State has confirmed implementation of expanded screening and vetting of student and exchange visitor applicants in the F, M, and J nonimmigrant classifications.
- Visa applicants should carefully review their online / social media presence for any factors that could be construed by an U.S. Consular Officer as bearing a hostile attitude toward U.S. citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles; including advocating for, aiding, or supporting designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security; or perpetuating unlawful antisemitic harassment or violence.
- Overseas posts have resumed scheduling F, M, and J nonimmigrant visa applications.
- Applicants should check the relevant embassy or consulate website for appointment availability.
- Prospective F, M, and J visa applicants should prepare for potential delays and should remain informed of future updates.

Should you wish to receive further information concerning Immigration matters, please contact **Gunster's Immigration Law practice**.

[1] See Announcement of Expanded Screening and Vetting for Visa Applicants - United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/06/announcement-of-expanded-screening-and-vetting-for-visa-applicants/>

YES! PLEASE SIGN ME UP TO RECEIVE EMAIL ALERTS FROM OTHER GUNSTER PRACTICE AREAS.

This publication is for general information only. It is not legal advice, and legal counsel should be contacted before any action is taken that might be influenced by this publication.

About Gunster

Gunster, Florida's law firm for business, provides full-service legal counsel to leading organizations and individuals from its 13 offices statewide. Established in 1925, the firm has expanded, diversified and evolved, but always with a singular focus: Florida and its clients' stake in it. A magnet for business-savvy attorneys who embrace collaboration for the greatest advantage of clients, Gunster's growth has not been at the expense of personalized service but because of it. The firm serves clients from its offices in Boca Raton, Coral Gables, Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Miami, Naples, Orlando, Palm Beach, Stuart, Tallahassee, Tampa, Vero Beach, and its headquarters in West Palm Beach. With more than 320 attorneys and consultants, and 300 committed support staff, Gunster is ranked among the top 200 largest law firms by the National Law Journal and has been recognized as one of the Top 100 Diverse Law Firms by Law360. More information about its practices, industries, offices and news is available at www.gunster.com.