Harvard University is facing an unprecedented ultimatum from the US federal government: it has 72 hours to meet six stringent conditions or lose its right to enroll foreign students for the 2025–2026 academic year. This move has immediate and sweeping consequences for thousands of international students.

Background

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) revoked Harvard’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certification, which is required for enrolling students on F-1 and J-1 visas.
- Without SEVP certification, Harvard cannot admit new foreign students, and current international students must transfer to another SEVP-certified institution or risk losing their legal status in the US.
- The action follows months of tension between the government and Harvard over campus protests, allegations of antisemitism, and the university’s diversity, equity, and inclusion policies.

The Six Conditions

To regain its SEVP certification and continue enrolling international students, Harvard must submit the following within 72 hours:

1. All Records of Illegal Activity:
   Harvard must provide any and all records—official or informal, including electronic, audio, or video files—regarding illegal activity (on or off campus) by non-immigrant students enrolled in the last five years.
2. Records of Dangerous or Violent Activity:
   The university must submit all documentation of dangerous or violent acts involving non-immigrant students, regardless of where they occurred, for the past five years.

3. Records of Threats:
   All records related to threats made by non-immigrant students toward other students or university personnel must be turned over.
4. Records of Deprivation of Rights:
   Harvard must provide any evidence of non-immigrant students depriving classmates or university personnel of their rights in the last five years.
5. All Disciplinary Records:
   The university is required to submit all disciplinary records of non-immigrant students from the past five years.
6. Protest-Related Audio/Video Footage:
   Harvard must hand over all audio or video footage of any protest activity involving non-immigrant students on campus in the last five years.

Implications and Risks

- Student Impact:
  Roughly 6,800 international students at Harvard, about a quarter of its student body, are directly affected. If Harvard fails to comply, these students must transfer or face deportation.
- Legal Warning:
  DHS has warned that providing false or incomplete information could result in criminal prosecution and other sanctions.
- Broader Message:
  The government’s action is intended as a warning to all US universities about compliance with federal regulations regarding international students and campus safety.

Why This Is Happening

The Trump administration cited Harvard’s alleged failure to comply with federal requests for information about student conduct and campus safety, particularly in the context of recent campus protests and concerns over antisemitism. The government argues that enrolling international students is a privilege, not a right, and that Harvard’s privilege has been revoked due to non-compliance.

What’s Next?

Harvard has until the end of the 72-hour window to submit the required documentation and meet all six conditions. If it does, its SEVP certification may be reinstated in time for the new academic year. If not, the university will remain barred from enrolling international students, forcing thousands to seek alternatives.