



Compliance pitfalls in higher ed HR: How to get ahead of them

Higher ed HR compliance is layered. Your system should be ready for it.

Faculty contracts. Union rules. Grant-funded roles. ACA tracking. In higher education, HR compliance isn't just complex – it's constant.

For HR leaders in colleges and universities, every decision can have audit implications. But with lean teams, seasonal hiring cycles and disconnected tools, even diligent teams face gaps.

That's where People First powered by MHR comes in. An all-in-one HCM platform built for the realities of campus operations, it helps HR leaders stay ahead of risk with smart, audit-ready tools that reflect how higher ed actually works.

On the following pages, we've outlined seven compliance areas where hidden risk often lives — and how to tackle each with more clarity, consistency and control.

Challenge:

Faculty and adjunct classification

1

What it covers:

Exempt vs. non-exempt status, adjunct appointments, contract length, workload thresholds

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✔ Adjuncts teach across departments or terms
- ✔ Faculty may hold multiple appointments
- ✔ Contract terms vary by role, funding source or semester

How People First helps:

- ✔ Centralized role and appointment tracking
- ✔ Clear visibility into contracts, hours and classifications
- ✔ Eliminate gaps caused by manual work arounds and siloed systems

Challenge:

Union agreements and collective bargaining compliance

2

What it covers:

Workload rules, step increases, leave provisions and documentation requirements

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✔ Multiple unions across faculty, staff or campus groups
- ✔ Contract terms differ by role or location
- ✔ Inconsistent application increases compliance exposure

How People First helps:

- ✔ Configurable rules by role, department or agreement
- ✔ Consistent policy application across the institution
- ✔ Clear audit trails to support contract adherence and audit readiness

Challenge:

**Grant-funded
and sponsored**

3

What it covers:

**Employment tracking,
appointment duration and
documentation alignment**

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✓ Roles tied to grant timelines and renewals
- ✓ Employees shift between funded projects
- ✓ Reporting requirements extend beyond HR

How People First helps:

- ✓ Centralized visibility into appointments and changes
- ✓ Clear documentation across funding periods
- ✓ Fewer manual handoffs between teams, improving accuracy

Challenge:

**ACA and benefits
eligibility tracking**

4

What it covers:

**Eligibility thresholds,
measurement periods
and reporting support**

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✓ Variable hours across academic terms
- ✓ Adjuncts and part-time staff crossing eligibility thresholds
- ✓ Eligibility status changes throughout the year

How People First helps:

- ✓ Unified workforce data across roles and contracts
- ✓ Clear visibility into hours and employment status
- ✓ More confidence during audits and reporting cycles

Challenge:

Leave management
(FMLA and institutional
policies)

5

What it covers:

Protected leave eligibility,
tracking and documentation

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✓ Eligibility tied to tenure, hours and appointment type
- ✓ Leave policies differ by employee group
- ✓ Manual tracking leads to inconsistency

How People First helps:

- ✓ Centralized leave records and policy visibility
- ✓ Clear eligibility tracking across employee types
- ✓ Audit-ready documentation without added administrative burden

Challenge:

Compensation
and contract
change accuracy

6

What it covers:

Appointment changes, stipends,
workload adjustments and
effective dates

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✓ Mid-term changes to teaching loads or contracts
- ✓ Multiple compensation components tied to roles
- ✓ Data inconsistencies from disconnected

How People First helps:

- ✓ Single source of truth for role and contract changes
- ✓ Clear effective dating and approval trails
- ✓ Reduced risk from outdated or inconsistent records across disconnected systems

Challenge:

Data privacy and record retention (HR-owned data)

7

What it covers:

Employee records, access controls and documentation governance

Why it's complex in higher ed:

- ✔ Decentralized access across departments
- ✔ High expectations around privacy and accountability
- ✔ Legacy systems increase exposure

How People First helps:

- ✔ Secure, role-based access to employee data
- ✔ Central system of record for HR documentation within a unified platform
- ✔ Stronger governance without added complexity

people first
powered by MHR

Compliance doesn't have to slow campus progress

People First brings structure and clarity to higher education HR with a cloud-based, mobile-first approach that helps lean teams reduce risk, simplify audits and support faculty and staff with confidence.

Learn more about People First for higher ed.

Schedule a demo





About MHR

MHR has been driving innovation across the HR technology space for over 40 years. We don't just meet the industry standard, we exceed it. Engineered with the latest SaaS technology, our product, People First enables increased employee productivity and organizational growth with a demonstrable return on investment.

People First is guided by what our customers and the market demand in a rapidly changing world.

info@mhrglobal.com | mhrglobal.com | +1 (470) 890 6170 (US) | +44 (0) 115 945 6000 (UK) | +353 (01) 541 3778 (IRE)

