I. Lecturers III and IV – Major Reviews – General Background

Major reviews for LEO Lecturers III and IV are governed primarily by Articles XI ("Appointments, Major Review, and Renewal"), Article XV ("Salary"), Article XIX ("Performance Evaluation"), and by Memorandum of Understanding #1 ("MoU #1") of the 2013-2018 collective bargaining agreement between the University of Michigan and the Lecturers’ Employee Organization (the “UM/LEO Agreement”).

The College has prepared this document to provide background and guidance to Academic Units (“LSA Lecturer III/IV Major Review Guidelines”) in developing LEO Lecturer III and IV major reviews guidelines.

The UM/LEO Agreement is the authoritative document governing major reviews.

Nothing in this document is intended to contradict or supersede any provision of the UM/LEO Agreement or any applicable Memoranda of Understanding between the University and LEO ("MoUs"); those documents take precedence.

Academic unit guidelines may not conflict with this document. If you have questions about your unit’s obligations and responsibilities for Lecturer III and IV major reviews, please contact the Dean's Office (e.g., your Local Human Resources contact or the College’s Academic Labor Relations Representative).

Please consult the 2013-2018 UM/LEO Agreement and applicable MoUs for specific provisions governing major reviews. ³

As discussed more fully below, the Major Reviews of LSA Lecturers III and IV involve both an academic and LSA Executive Committee reviews.

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¹ Last Updated Summer, 2016. This version is not intended to change existing review criteria, or to create significant changes in procedures from the immediately preceding version. It is intended to bring the guidelines in line with current UM/LEO Agreement language, and established practices in the College.

² These guidelines should also be sued for LSA Lecturers III and IV who are excluded from the UM/LEO Agreement as confidential or supervisory Lecturers.

³ References to specific UM/LEO Agreement articles have been included in this document.
II. Academic Units Requires to Establish Major Review Procedures and Criteria

Departments, Programs, Divisions, Institutes, Centers, and the Residential College, and other entities within the College possessing authority to make Lecturer appointments (each may be referred to separately as an "Academic Unit") are required to establish written major review procedures and criteria ("Unit Guidelines"), including procedures for classroom observations, if observations are a part of the review process (see, e.g., Article XIX.A.3., pp. 98-99 of the UM/LEO Agreement).

Academic Units will review Lecturers according to the College’s and their own written guidelines, developed with specific relevance to their discipline and methods of instruction.

In addition to this document, Academic Units may consult the May 10, 2012 “Lecturer Performance Evaluations Best Practice Guidelines” document (“UM/LEO Ann Arbor Campus Best Practices Document”), attached hereto as Attachment A.4

III. Lecturer III and IV Appointments – Background

In general, LSA Lecturer III and IV appointments are for positions that include:

1. Instruction; and
2. Significant, ongoing administrative or service duties; and
3. Require a range of instructional expertise

(Article XI.B.3., pp. 48-49, and XI.B.4., pp. 50-52).5

Layoffs (Article XII – “Layoff, Reduction in Appointment Effort, and Recall”) and Leaves of Absence (Article XXX - "Leaves of Absence Without Pay") may affect the timing of the major reviews of Lecturers I and II; please consult the UM/LEO Agreement and your Local Human Resources contact in the Dean's Office with any questions.

Factors considered in reappointing Lecturers include (1) continuing curricular need; and (2) availability of funding and/or enrollment to support reappointment. These factors are not relevant in the Major Review process (i.e., whether funding exists to support a Lecturer’s reappointment does not factor into the assessment of the Lecturer’s performance in a Major Review; see Section VI.A.1., below).

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4 The UM/LEO Ann Arbor Campus Best Practices Document is a product of Memorandum of Understanding #5 from the 2010-2013 UM/LEO Agreement. Under MoU#5, the Provost appointed a committee charged with producing best practice guidelines on a number of issues related to Lecturer performance evaluation.

5 Please note that while the referenced article use “and/or” for the latter two elements, LSA requires all three (3) for Lecturers III and IV first appointed on or after September 1, 2007.
IV. LEO Lecturers III and IV – Major Review Schedules and Outcomes

Lecturers III may be appointed for annual or multi-year university-year appointment periods ("UYr") for a total of no more than four (4) years (see Article XI.B.3. – pp. 48-49).

A LEO Lecturer III who has held appointments for up to but no more than four (4) consecutive academic years shall undergo a major review consistent with the evaluation procedures in Article XIX and MoU #1.

Pursuant to MoU#1:

1. The major review of Lecturers III and IV in LSA may begin, at the earliest, during the winter semester of the penultimate academic year of the Lecturer III/IV appointment.

2. The major review of Lecturers III and IV in LSA will be completed, and the academic unit will send notice of the result of the major review to the Lecturer III/IV, prior to December 31 of the last academic year of the Lecturer III/IV appointment. Offers of reappointment shall be made prior to April 1 of the same year (XI.B.3.g., p. 49; XI.B.4.b., p. 50).

If a Lecturer III major review is successful:

1. The Lecturer III will be offered a three (3) year reappointment as a LEO Lecturer IV with “presumption of renewal” beginning with the following Fall semester (XI.B.4., p. 50);

2. The Lecturer III will also receive a seven percent (7%) increase to his or her full-time rate effective on the 1st of January following successful completion of the first major review (Memorandum of Understanding #1, pp. 167-168).

If a Lecturer III major review is unsuccessful:

1. The Lecturer III shall be given a one-year, or at the discretion of the academic unit, a two-year terminal appointment.

2. The Lecturer III’s appointment will end at the end of this appointment.

3. At its discretion, the academic unit may:
a. Provide the Lecturer III with a remediation plan consistent with the specifications set forth in Article XIX.E.6-8.  

and

b. Conduct another major review at the end of the remediation plan.

In that case, successful completion of the major review following remediation shall create a presumption of renewal and a three-year appointment in the Lecturer IV title.

If the Lecturer III fails a major review following remediation in the terminal appointment, the Lecturer III’s appointment will end at the end of the remediation appointment.

V. LEO Lecturers IV – Major Review Schedule and Outcomes

Lecturers IV are appointed as follows:

a. 3-years – First appointment as a Lecturer IV following successful major review as a Lecturer III;

b. 5-years – Second appointment as a Lecturer IV following successful major review as a Lecturer IV;

c. 5-7 years – First and subsequent appointments as a Lecturer IV following successful Continuing Renewal Review (“CRR”)

(XI.B.4., pp. 50-53).

Pursuant to MoU#1:

1. The major review of Lecturers III and IV in LSA may begin, at the earliest, during the winter semester of the penultimate academic year of the Lecturer III/IV appointment.

2. The major review of Lecturers III and IV in LSA will be completed, and the academic unit will send notice of the result of the major review to the Lecturer III/IV, prior to December 31 of the last academic year of the Lecturer III/IV appointment.

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6 The remediation plan will include, but is not limited to: (a) Areas of Lecturer performance in need of improvement; (b) Specific performance expectations; (c) Steps of remediation and timelines for improvement; and (d) appropriate resources (see, e.g., XIX.E.7., pp. 106-107).
If the major review of the Lecturer IV is successful:

1. The Lecturer IV will be offered a 5-year multi-year reappointment, beginning with the start of the fall semester immediately following completion of the major review; and

2. The Lecturer IV will also receive the 7% raises resulting from the major review effective January 1 of the last year of the appointment (i.e., the semester immediately following the successful completion of the major review).

If the major review of the Lecturer IV is unsuccessful:

1. The Lecturer IV shall be given a one-year terminal appointment, or at the academic unit’s discretion a two-year terminal appointment, during either of which the academic unit shall conduct another major review;

2. In the event of a terminal appointment, the academic unit will work with the Lecturer IV to develop a written remediation plan consistent with the specifications set forth in with Article XIX.E.6-8.

3. If a Lecturer IV fails the major review following remediation in the terminal appointment, the Lecturer IV’s appointment shall end at the end of the terminal appointment.

(Article XI.B.4., pp. 50-53)

VI. Major Review Criteria, Guidelines, and Review Materials:

A. General Principles (see, e.g., XIX.A., pp. 98-101):

1. All LSA major reviews are to be conducted with the thoroughness and inclusiveness of a third year review of the teaching performance of a tenure-track faculty member.

As part of the major review process, each academic unit expects its Lecturers to provide evidence of high quality instruction that fosters students’ intellectual development and to contribute to the overall teaching mission of the academic unit (XIX.D.2., p. 103).

Reviews will be of an Lecturer’s performance based on the job description given in his or her appointment letter and other assigned duties and in accordance with procedures and criteria set forth in Article XIX and other relevant provisions of
2. Each academic unit will establish and distribute written procedures and criteria for interim reviews, major reviews, and continuing renewal reviews, and procedures for remediation reviews, including procedures for classroom observations, if observations are to be part of a review process.

Lecturers who are newly appointed to an academic unit shall receive this information upon commencement of their initial appointment (e.g., by email and/or as enclosures with appointment offer letters), and all Lecturers appointed in an academic unit will receive this information when changes to the procedures and/or criteria occur (see, e.g., Section VI.A.4. and VI.A.10, below).

3. The Lecturer scheduled for a review shall be notified in the semester prior to the semester of the review of the date(s) by which the Lecturer must submit materials required for a review.

If the Lecturer is to submit major review materials in the fall term, the academic unit will notify the Lecturer during the previous winter term. If the Lecturer is to submit materials in the winter term, the academic unit will notify the Lecturer during the previous fall term.

4. If an academic unit uses specific measures or benchmarks of evidence to assess performance, the academic unit will inform the Lecturer in writing of the specific measures or benchmarks by July 1 for the upcoming academic year.

5. Except where specified in the UM/LEO Agreement, the academic unit will determine the frequency of, the manner of, and the Lecturer’s responsibilities in evaluations.

Process and procedure of evaluation will be consistent with commonly accepted standards within The University of Michigan for evaluating teaching.

6. In addition to providing feedback as a part of the review procedures set forth in this Article, if an academic unit has concerns about the performance of an Lecturer at any time, the unit shall share those concerns in a timely way with the Lecturer.

7. Academic units shall give Lecturers complete copies of student evaluations, including statistical summary sheets, if available, within a reasonable time frame. If distribution of evaluations is by paper copies, the units will give paper copies to the Lecturers at no charge. If distribution is electronic, Lecturers shall be notified of the availability of on-line copies.

8. In any review, student evaluations shall not be the sole measure of teaching
A small amount of negative student evaluations shall not in and of itself constitute grounds for an unsuccessful review.

9. If classroom observations are a part of the academic unit’s review materials, prior to the observation the Lecturer may provide to the observer the framework, plan, and intent of the class.

If the academic unit prepares a written report of the classroom observation, the academic unit will provide a copy of the report to the Lecturer, in response to which the Lecturer may provide, in a timely way, additional written information or reflections about the class that was observed.

The Lecturer’s response, if any, will be appended to the observation report and provided to the person or committee conducting the review.

Observations shall be for full class periods, unless otherwise agreed to by the observer and the Lecturer.

Nothing in this section shall limit the ability of an academic unit to supervise Lecturers, or to informally observe a Lecturer’s class.  

10. Within any academic unit, all evaluations in a given academic year will involve the application of consistent criteria and procedures for all Lecturers.

Lecturers will be notified of changes in evaluation criteria or significant changes in procedures by July 1 for the upcoming academic year.

11. Evaluation of the Lecturer’s performance shall typically involve consideration of more than one source of evidence of performance, which may include but is not limited to, those listed in XIX.D.6. and XIX.E.3.:

   a. Course materials;
   b. Evidence of teaching performance (see, e.g., Section VI.C.2.a.iv, below);
   c. Student evaluations (written or through less formal means) and the Lecturer response to these evaluations, if any;
   d. Review of instructional and non-instructional obligations (e.g. grading, student evaluations, delivery);
   e. Annual reports and any written feedback to those reports given previously to the Lecturer;
   f. Interim reviews (if applicable);
   g. Review of applicable administrative and/or service duties;

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7 This language does not preclude an academic unit from observing Lecturers at other times (e.g., as part of an annual observation of all Lecturers delivering instruction in a first-year language program).
h. Any feedback provided to the Lecturer pursuant to Section VI.A.6., above;

i. In addition, the academic unit may require a brief statement by the Lecturer that reflects on the Lecturer’s performance during the term of the appointment (this is sometimes referred to as a “teaching philosophy statement”). The academic unit will inform Lecturers of any specific requirements for the statement;

j. Classroom observation(s)

12. An isolated incident, standing alone, shall not be considered as evidence of a pattern in the evaluation of a Lecturer’s performance.

13. In the event that a Lecturer, at the request of the academic unit, accepts an additional teaching assignment on short notice or outside of the Lecturer’s regular area of teaching, this context shall be included in the evaluation of such work.

14. Lecturers shall be notified in a timely way of the identities of individuals involved in their review. Lecturers with concerns regarding possible bias on the part of individuals involved in their review must submit their concerns in writing prior to the beginning of the evaluation. Such statements will not be part of the evaluation but will be kept on file with the evaluation.

15. When a Lecturer routinely teaches in more than one academic unit, at the request of the Lecturer or of either academic unit, the units shall meet to determine the review criteria, procedures, and timelines that will apply to the Lecturer’s review.

16. Written evaluation review reports shall be, to the extent possible, consistent with evaluative feedback given to the Lecturer during the review process.

Should the Lecturer receive feedback during the review process that is substantially inconsistent from the feedback received in the written reports, the Lecturer can request clarification from the academic unit regarding the inconsistency.

In the case of such a request, the academic unit will provide written clarification, to which the Lecturer may respond in writing in a timely way.

In no case shall this provision be used to interfere with or delay the review process.

B. Criteria

1. The general criteria governing major reviews of Lecturers III and IV are excellence, expertise, and professionalism in the execution of assigned duties. The Academic Units’ major reviews are critically important parts of the process.
2. As noted above, and within any Academic Unit, all evaluations in a given academic year will involve the application of consistent criteria for all Lecturers. Lecturers must be notified of changes in evaluation criteria or significant changes in procedures by July 1 for the upcoming academic year. (Article XIX.A.10 – p. 100).

3. Each academic unit shall establish specific written criteria relevant to its own methods of teaching and subject area(s). Such criteria shall not violate any provisions of the UM/LEO Agreement. The specific criteria may address, but are not limited to, the following general criteria:

   a. Command of the subject matter;

   b. Ability to organize material and convey it effectively to students;

   c. Successful design and/or planning of courses and course materials;

   d. Ability to communicate and achieve appropriate student learning goals;

   e. Effective interaction with students;

   f. Growth in the subject field and in teaching methods;

   g. Performance of required non-instructional duties where applicable.

   (XIX.D.3., p. 104)

C. Review Materials and Elements:

1. The guidelines developed by the Academic Units must conform to the UM/LEO Agreement and applicable MoUs, and to the College guidelines, by including the following elements:

   a. Review Committee – The unit will appoint a review committee of at least three (3) faculty members that includes at least two (2) tenured/tenure track faculty members (the Review Committee may include a Lecturer who has passed a major review, at the discretion of the Academic Unit).

   Lecturers under review will be provided with notice as to the identities of the individuals involved in their review, and a reasonable time to provide notice of concerns, in accordance with A.14. above.

   The committee will not include any faculty members who would encounter a conflict of interest in participating in the review of any Lecturer under review with that committee. Such a conflict of interest would occur in the event of a past or ongoing romantic, sexual, familial or
other close personal relationship between a member of the faculty of the department or program and the candidate; this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of potential conflicts of interest. Absent a determination by the academic unit to the contrary, faculty members who have a conflict of interest will not participate in any element of the review process or be present in any discussions of the case.

b. The Academic Unit conducting reviews may choose to create separate review committees for individual Lecturers or groups of Lecturers (e.g., a single review committee to review all Lecturers in the English Department Writing Program), or a single review committee to review the appointments of all Lecturers in the unit. In the latter event, it is permissible for the committee to consult with other faculty members when special disciplinary and/or subject matter expertise is required for the review, or to rely upon ad hoc committees for classroom observations.

c. Within any Academic Unit, all evaluations in a given academic year will involve the application of consistent criteria for all Lecturers (Article XIX.A.10. – p. 100).

d. In the case of a Lecturer holding a joint appointment (i.e., Lecturer appointments in more than one Academic Unit within the College), and where it is decided that a joint review committee will be formed (see Section VI.A.15., above). The joint committee will include either:

i. All members from each of the Academic Units' review committees or,

ii. A subset of members from each of the Academic Units' review committees such that the joint review committee consists of at least three (3) faculty members, and includes at least two (2) tenured/tenure-track faculty members.

2. Review Items and Materials:

a. A thorough assessment of review materials will be conducted and a written summary of the evaluation provided to the Lecturer and placed in the Lecturer's personnel file.8

If written clarification is sought and obtained under Section VI.A.16., above, such documents will be attached to the review summary.

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8 For example, in the event an academic unit’s review committee prepares a report and/or set of recommendations regarding the outcome of a Lecturer’s major review for action and final decision by the unit’s governing body (e.g., the unit’s executive committee), the Lecturer should receive the report and or recommendations with a reasonable time to request clarification and prepare a response, if desired (see, e.g., Section VI.A.16, above).
At a minimum, review items shall include the following (Article XIX.D.6. – pp. 104-105):

1) Course Materials and Other Evidence of Teaching Performance – the documentation must be thoughtful and thorough and should include the following:

   i. Two (2) sample syllabi from course(s) taught by the candidate;

   ii. Report(s) from classroom visitation/observation (depending on Academic Unit policy)

   If classroom observations are a part of the major review, written procedures for the observations must also be established and distributed (Article XIX.A.3. – pp. 98-99).

   iii. A table showing:

       a) Each course taught

       b) The enrollment in the course

       c) The mean grade for the course (where available)

       d) The Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 E&E scores for the course(s)

       e) Departments should also provide comparative Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 E&E data for the same or similar courses taught by other faculty.

       f) Mean grade data is also requested for the Lecturer and comparison faculty. Mean grade and enrollment data are available from the LSA Management Reporting System (“MRS”); the table should not include the names of other faculty.

       g) The average of the Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 scores for the Lecturer

       h) The average Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 scores for the same or similar courses taught by other faculty

   iv. Other evidence of teaching performance, including but not limited to:
a) Information describing a course website;

b) Selected sample of tests that demonstrate alignment of assessment techniques with course goals;

c) Selected sample of lecture notes or other teaching materials; and

d) Evidence of dissemination of teaching methods through workshops, presentations, publications.

2) **Student Evaluations** (including Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 information identified above);

3) **Review of Instructional and non-instructional obligations** (e.g., grading, student evaluations, delivery, unit-specific service responsibilities such as student recruitment efforts, development efforts, ad hoc committees);

4) **Annual Reports**

5) **Interim Reviews** (for Lecturers III, Article XIX.C. – p. 103).

b. Review items **may** also include, but need not be limited to:

1) **Current Curriculum Vitae**

2) **Teaching Statement**

3) **E&E Evaluation Summaries** – for each course taught since the last major review;

4) **Academic Advising** (if applicable, provide number of advisees over the period covered by this review, the nature of the contacts with the students);

5) **Curricular Development** (e.g. contributions to improve teaching quality in the Academic Unit, involvement in the unit’s assessment efforts, mentoring of other faculty, etc.); and
6) Performance of Assigned Supervisory Responsibilities (e.g., the Lecturer may have assigned supervisory responsibilities for Lecturers, Graduate Student Instructors, or both).^9

VII. Academic Unit and LSA Executive Committee – Roles and Timelines

Based on a review of the materials considered, the Academic Unit review committee will prepare a written report to the Chair or Director of the Academic Unit recommending a successful or unsuccessful major review outcome.

A. In the event of a positive recommendation from the appointing unit, the unit will prepare a written recommendation regarding the outcome of the major review.

The Academic Unit will submit the recommendation to the College in accordance with the following schedule:

1. In accordance with MoU #1, the College expects the Academic Unit’s portion of the major review will be completed prior to the end of the winter semester of the penultimate year of the Lecturer’s appointment.

2. Under MoU#1, the entire review must be completed, and decisions announced, prior to December 31 of the final year of the appointment;

3. As such, Academic Units must provide the recommendation and supporting material referenced above on or before October 1 of the final year of the Lecturer’s appointment. Please complete and attach the Lecturer III/IV Major Review Checklist, a copy of which appears as Attachment B, when submitting the file to the College.

4. The College Executive Committee will plan to take the matter up, and announce the decision by the December 31 deadline.

B. In the event of a negative recommendation at the appointing academic unit level (i.e. the Lecturer fails the major review at the Academic Unit level):

1. The Academic Unit must send notice of this decision to the College within the timelines outlined above.

2. A copy of the Academic Unit’s recommendation to the College Executive Committee will be provided to the Lecturer in writing.

Please contact the Dean’s Office with any questions.

^9 A Lecturer with assigned supervisory responsibilities for other Lecturers may be excluded from the LEO Lecturer bargaining unit as a "Supervisory" Lecturer. Please consult with the Dean's Office if you have questions about the Supervisory status of a Lecturer in your academic unit.
In January 2011, pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding #5 (Establishing Best Practice Guidelines for Performance Evaluations) in the 2010-2013 Agreement between the Regents of the University of Michigan and the University of Michigan Lecturers’ Employee Organization, the Provost of the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor established a Committee to develop best practice guidance for the performance evaluation of lecturers.

The Committee was charged with articulating a set of best practices that would “support consistent and equitable evaluation at the various stages of a lecturer’s career, while promoting and ensuring excellence in the teaching of the students who attend the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.” The Committee was not asked to produce a single, centralized approach, but to suggest “a range of techniques that could be more widely shared.” The performance to be evaluated was teaching -- primarily, but not only, classroom teaching.

Criteria for performance excellence are set forth in Article XIX, section D(3) of the Agreement. Under the Agreement, each academic unit sets standards for reappointment and disciplinary-specific written criteria in addition to the list in XIX.D.3. Each unit is also responsible for establishing procedures for reviews under Article XIX.A.3. The Committee is charged with articulating best practices for completing these tasks and applying the criteria in particular cases.

These “best practices” are aspirational. They are not intended to define, supplement, or replace obligations under the Agreement. Rather, they are designed to assist in improving department practices, to suggest to departments new and effective methods of conducting lecturer performance evaluation in furtherance of the shared goal of providing the best possible education for our students.

The following paragraphs offer a variety of methods to accomplish the tasks required of all units that employ lecturers. The feasibility and usefulness of specific techniques will vary depending on the disciplinary and sometimes interdisciplinary demands of the unit, its size, and its resources. The Committee urges the schools and colleges to implement those that are consistent with their structures and resources, and we encourage flexibility and collaboration among units with comparable demands and constraints as they consider the feasibility of alternative methods.


The criteria in Article XIX.D.3 are stated comprehensively but generally. We consider it important that all units take seriously the need for

a. clear expectations about how the criteria will be applied within the disciplinary and
Recognizing that there are a variety of ways in which teaching can be successful, we recommend the use of multiple measures of excellence, all clearly articulated and consistently applied, within units.

As the Committee considered how to apply the general criteria, it was aware that many of the most helpful practices described below are very labor-intensive, perhaps too labor-intensive for small units or units without many lecturers. It recommends that units address that problem, to the extent possible, by creating teams that include experienced lecturers as well as tenure-track faculty. A mixture of experienced lecturers and tenure-track faculty as part of the evaluation team may be ideal. In some units, an experienced lecturer is designated as the person responsible for training all junior lecturers and for working closely with lecturers who are having difficulties in the classroom or other teaching settings. This person may serve as a mentor, instead of - or in addition to - an evaluator; the specific expectations of the role should be clearly defined.

Academic units should have a standard procedure for reviewing the materials that they already receive under the Agreement. Annual reports should be read and responded to seriously, in conjunction with student evaluations and any other information received by the department. This is especially important during the first few years of a lecturer’s employment (see G below), but is always helpful in detecting the emergence of problems in time for the lecturer to work on correcting them.

B. Best Practices for Establishing Specific Written Criteria

Unit-specific written criteria provide the schools and colleges with an opportunity to inform lecturers of what is perceived as excellent teaching in their disciplinary areas. Conversations among the teaching faculty in a unit, both as part of the development of specific criteria and as part of its implementation and application, is a recommended method for developing shared understandings that identify specific best pedagogical practices for each discipline.

Unit-specific criteria should be organized so as to reflect the categorization in Article XIX.D.3, and additional criteria should be identified as such.

Unit-specific criteria should be accompanied by specific positive and negative examples.

As mentioned in A above, an experienced lecturer or other faculty member could be assigned to work with lecturers; that person should be fully informed of specific unit expectations and work to assure consistency in application.

C. Best Practices for Using Student Evaluations

Student evaluations are one useful source of information about teaching success. They can be especially helpful in alerting the lecturer and the unit to possible problems. Newly hired
lecturers, in particular, should be encouraged to use mid-term course evaluations.

When used as a part of performance evaluation, however, student evaluations should always be set in a broader context. (See Article XIX.A.8 of the Agreement.) Small differences in ratings should not be over-emphasized. Basically, units need to identify three groups: excellent, satisfactory, and needs improvement. In addition, written comments, while useful for improvement, should not be part of personnel decisions. CRLT offers a set of guidelines for using student ratings for personnel decisions (http://www.crlt.umich.edu/evaluation/decision.php). Although evaluations may suggest issues that merit further investigation, the numbers they report should not be over-interpreted.

One way to broaden the context is to make comparisons among faculty, not identified by name. LSA, for example, has a practice of compiling a chart that compares the person under evaluation with other faculty (identified by rank rather than name) who teach the same or similar courses. The comparison is made in terms of course enrollment, mean grade given, and responses to some of the questions on the course evaluations. Of course, if all instructors are getting uniformly high ratings, it makes no sense to penalize the lowest instructor. Even the lowest performer in a list of star performers is a star.

Another way to broaden the context is to ask the lecturer to provide a range of course material that would assist the evaluation process. This documentation could include, in addition to syllabi, narratives explaining pedagogical methods and goals, tests, final exams, descriptions of websites and other means of communication with students, and even samples of lecture notes.

Occasionally, a single student or a group of students will have a particular complaint about a lecturer. The Agreement, in Article XIX.A.12, specifies that an “isolated incident, standing alone, shall not be considered as evidence of a pattern in the evaluation” of performance. Evaluators should also be attentive to the way in which systematic bias may be affecting student perceptions. Nevertheless, a unit may appropriately inquire further into whether the complaint in fact reflects a recurrent or continuing problem.

The Committee also encourages seeking student feedback in a more open-ended fashion that makes students accountable for their comments. This could be done through interviews with students or email requests to all students. Here, as always, care should be taken in weighing outlier individual responses. Where interviews are conducted, at least two evaluators should be involved in talking to each student to ensure the student is appropriately heard. Where email is used, students should be encouraged to write enough to give the evaluators some sense of the basis for the students’ views. The Committee recommends that academic units include only feedback that is signed and from a umich account. When a broader range of student comment is sought, it is important, where applicable, to include students who work independently with or who are advisees of the lecturer, as well as classroom students.

D. Best Practices for Conducting Classroom Observation

Classroom observation, by experienced lecturers or tenure-track faculty, is an important tool of
evaluation and should be used whenever feasible in the early stages of a lecturer’s career and in major reviews, or when issues of performance arise beyond the major review stage. Ideally, the observers would include persons with expertise in the subject being taught.

If possible, classroom observers should receive training or other guidance before conducting an observation. CRLT can assist in this process, offering workshops and providing sample forms for observations. For resources on peer observation, visit http://www.crlt.umich.edu/evaluation/teacheval.php. Departments should adopt a standard observation checklist or form to guide observations and provide consistency across observers. Sample forms can be found at http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/instruments/index.html. Such forms guide observers to address a consistent range of characteristics of teaching; without them, classroom observations may be much less reliable. In addition to the use of forms, the academic unit may choose to develop workshops for evaluators; these might, for example, include videos of classroom teaching with subsequent discussion among faculty members who are potential observers.

A committee or group of people who conduct observations for many lecturers or over several years may be ideal because of its acquired experience and potentially greater consistency.

Observers should be encouraged to indicate areas of both strengths and weaknesses. (See G below.) The College of Engineering, for example, informs its observers of the importance of a “fair and candid review.”

When feasible, observation should not depend on a single observer. Best practice would have two observers attend the same class session(s) and, if possible, reach their own consensus on the strengths and weaknesses of the lecturer before arriving at an overall evaluative conclusion.

Under Article XIX.A.9, the lecturer has the option of providing the observers with information about “the framework, plan, and intent of the class.” Ideally, this information would be discussed in a meeting between the observer(s) and the lecturer prior to observation. To facilitate this, the observers should introduce themselves to the lecturer being observed some time before the observation is to occur.

Where consistent with the evaluative purpose of the observation, the observers should have a frank and detailed conversation with the lecturer after the class observation. This conversation could be preceded by a summary of the observers’ reactions and followed by a written report that records the conversation. Article XIX.A.9 provides that if such a written report is prepared, the lecturer may respond in writing. The department may prefer to reserve these conversations for mentoring, rather than evaluative, observations.

Not all teaching is done in a classroom setting. Studios, workshops, and field placements present different evaluative challenges. Observation may be especially important in these settings because the standard course evaluation forms do not capture the full range of teaching opportunities in these settings. In evaluating teaching outside of the lecture context, it may be
particularly useful to ask lecturers to provide a narrative, supported by documentation, explaining how they have accomplished particular pedagogical tasks (as the School of Education does).

The Committee was particularly aware that its recommendations concerning classroom observations may be too demanding for some academic units. These recommendations, perhaps more than most, reflect “best practices” in the sense of goals rather than current expectations. The Committee encourages academic units to collaborate and to consult with CRLT to find ways to move toward these practices. We also note that observation is not a routine element in Continuing Renewal Reviews as described in the UM_LEO agreement Article XIX.E.3.

E. Best Practices for Recognition and Respect of the Range of Pedagogical Approaches and Practices

Specific criteria should be developed for each of the instructional contexts within a unit.

A portfolio of classroom materials (such as that described in C above) may assist in evaluating whether the lecturer’s pedagogical approach is consistent with the unit’s expectations. A review of syllabi and student work can help ensure that the goals of the course are clearly defined, the expectations fair, and the demands made of students rigorous.

An alternative, adopted by the School of Art & Design, is to ask the lecturer to make a presentation to a committee or to the faculty on his or her pedagogical methods. However, portfolios and presentations are expressions about teaching and are not the same as teaching itself. It is also important to know what is actually happening in the classroom. The Committee advises academic units to keep this perspective when evaluating the portfolio or presentation.

The University appropriately expects that faculty will remain current both in their substantive knowledge of the discipline and in their pedagogical practices. The Ross School of Business, for example, asks lecturers to include a discussion of how they are maintaining growth in their subject field as part of the annual report. Because lecturers face constraints, such as limited opportunities to participate in research and limited funding for attendance at conferences, academic units need to set reasonable expectations and to provide an environment conductive to professional growth, for example, ensuring access to journals and colleagues in the field.

Where remaining up-to-date in substance or method is perceived to be a problem, the lecturer should be given notice of the concern and a reasonable opportunity to retrain. Where pedagogical practices are concerned, for example, the lecturer may be willing to seek help from CRLT.

F. Best Practices for Incorporating Student Learning Outcomes

Evaluation of student learning might best be observed by reviewing samples of student work over the course of a semester. The academic unit, not the lecturer, should solicit this work. Ideally, the solicitation would go to the entire class; where that is not possible, the students
should be selected at random. A lecturer may recommend including a few particularly engaged students, but feedback solicited by the lecturer may not be as helpful.

In reviewing student work, the evaluators could ask for representative work from students who received different grades (A, B, C) and for work that includes the lecturer’s feedback. This would allow the evaluation to include an assessment of consistency, fairness, and rigor.

G. Best Practices for Giving Feedback to Lecturers

Although the Committee was not specifically charged with recommending best practices for giving lecturers feedback, it considered this to be a critical part of the evaluation process. Several of the suggestions made above, such as the recommended conversations surrounding classroom observations, reflect this concern.

The performance evaluations addressed in the Agreement are judgmental rather than educative evaluations of the sort conducted by CRLT. Therefore, it is important to specifically link assessments to the criteria articulated in Article XIX.D.3 or specified by the academic unit.

General, conclusory statements (e.g., “the lecturer is doing fine”) are not helpful to the lecturer or to future evaluators. Rather, evaluators should describe what the lecturer is doing that is either positive or negative to illustrate and support more general evaluative statements. It is important to communicate any concerns as soon as they are identified, as is required by the UM_LEO agreement in Article XIX.A.6... Ideally this would be done in writing, followed by a conversation. In future annual reports, the lecturer would be expected to discuss whether the possible problems persist and to identify how they have been addressed.

The Committee thought it important to detect and articulate problems as early as possible, for the sake of the students, the lecturer, and the academic unit. It recommends that very close attention be paid to early course evaluations and other evaluative measures in every case where continued employment (beyond one term) of the lecturer is a possibility. Thus, course evaluations in the first term or year of employment should be closely monitored. If there is any indication of that the lecturer is having a problem in the classroom, that problem should be the basis for an immediate conversation with the lecturer. (Ideally, all lecturers would have the opportunity to discuss their teaching with an experienced instructor, but the Committee believes that such conversations should be mandatory where evaluations are weak.) The conversation should be followed by continuing oversight. An experienced teacher should be assigned to work with the lecturer individually, and more detailed annual reports may be appropriate.

Academic units should encourage lecturers, whatever their pedagogical success, to achieve and maintain excellence. CRLT offers a wide range of services that can be helpful to lecturers in this regard, including consultations, the collection of midterm student feedback, and seminars on teaching. Departments may also create teaching circles, groups of lecturers (and possibly other instructors) who meet regularly to discuss issues arising in their teaching, share pedagogical strategies, or examine recent publications relevant to teaching and student learning. Academic units might assign or suggest mentors among the experienced lecturers or tenure-track faculty.
Mentoring is only helpful if it is grounded in specifics; the mentor might observe the lecturer’s class, or the lecturer could seek anonymous student evaluations mid-term. Being a mentor can be part of a lecturer’s continued professional growth as well, contributing to the maintenance of excellence in teaching and evaluation within an academic unit.

It is not reasonable to expect everyone who undergoes an evaluation process to be pleased with the ultimate result. But a smoothly working process and candid evaluations should minimize surprises.

Respectfully submitted,

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Elizabeth Axelson, English Language Institute
Derek Collins, Associate Dean, College of Literature Science and the Arts
Jeffrey Frumkin, Academic Human Resources
Kali Israel, History Department, College of Literature Science and the Arts
Anne Harrington, Director of Instructional Development, Ross School of Business
Matt Kaplan, Center for Research on Learning & Teaching
Annemarie Palincsar, Associate Dean, School of Education
Robert Sulewski, College of Engineering
Chris Whitman, Vice Provost of Academic & Faculty Affairs
Review of LSA Lecturer III or Renewal of LSA Lecturer IV

CHECKLIST FOR FILE SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE

(Revised August 2016)

Date: ______________________

Name: ___________________________ Current Lecturer rank: ______________________

Budgeted Unit(s): ____________________________________________________________

Renewal is for ___________ years (i.e., renewal of three [3] years for Lec III to Lec IV [first major review] or five [5] years for Lec IV to Lec IV [second major review])

☐ Completed checklist
☐ Cover memo to the Executive Committee
☐ Current CV
☐ Report from the Review Committee
☐ Annual reports (requirement of current UM/LEO contract)
☐ Candidate’s teaching statement
☐ Summary table that includes comparative data of the same course or, if not available, courses similar in terms of level and format. Use the comparison report template provided for tenure-track & tenured promotions and pull the data from the Management Reporting System (MRS). If you need assistance please contact Rob Wilke (rfw@umich.edu; 763-3139):

☐ A copy of the E&E evaluation summary for each course taught since the last renewal
☐ Two sample syllabi and related materials
☐ Other evidence of teaching excellence (if available, include reports from classroom visitations, teaching awards, sample tests or lecture notes, etc.)

☐ Service responsibilities
☐ Academic advising
☐ Curricular development
☐ Supervisory skills
☐ Other administrative duties
☐ Interim review (for Lecturers III only)