**STEM Scholarship: Education Routing Wizard & VA Form 22-1995 Update - Prototype Research Discussion Guide**

**Introduction**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is [NAME]. I also have several colleagues on the line. They’ll be observing and taking notes to ensure that we capture your feedback accurately.

We work with a team at the VA that designs online forms.

Today, we'll be looking at a form that students use to update their educational benefits.

We're reviewing the form with students in sessions like this to ensure that it's easy to use.

The entire session should take less than 45 minutes.

Throughout the process, we are interested in hearing your honest opinions. We are in no way testing your knowledge or ability. We just want to hear your ideas and be sure the form meets Veterans’ needs. You are welcome to express any opinions you wish. We welcome your feedback.

If for any reason you want to pause or stop the session, please let me know. I'd be happy to do so.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Recording**

We generally record sessions, in case we need to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. Are you comfortable if I record the audio and screen movements as we talk?

Great! I'm going to turn the recording on now.  
Once it starts, I’ll ask again if you are okay if we record, so we have your verbal consent.

[The meeting host will begin audio and screen recording.][When we hear an announcement that it’s started,]

Are you comfortable if I record the audio and screen movements today? Thank you.

**Warm-up Questions**

Let’s start with a few warm-up questions

1. Which Education benefits have you used (Post-9/11, Montgomery, etc.)? I haven’t used any in the past. I’m actually waiting for my, I think it’s the Montgomery gi bill to go through.
2. What type of degree are you pursuing? English and social work.
3. How far through the program are you? I’m about 7/8ths of the way done.
4. Approximately how many months or years of education benefit do you have remaining? I’m not sure. It might be two years just because based on my time in service.
5. [If STEM] Do you have any interest in obtaining a teaching certification after you graduate?

**Prototype**

Now we're going to shift gears and review a clickable prototype that we’d like to get your feedback on.

Just so you know, the prototype is a mock-up, rather than a real website. This means only certain links have been activated and you’ll see pretend data in some areas. In many cases, as soon as you click you'll see an example of what someone might type in the fields. We do this to save you time and eliminate the need to type.

**Think Aloud**

While you are going through the site, we ask that you please think aloud and vocalize your thoughts, and decisions. We are interested in your first reaction to each page.  
The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn.  
Thinking aloud may seem strange at first, but it helps us understand what aspects of the design work well and where we might want to make improvements to make things even easier. If you have questions, it’s likely that many other Veterans will, as well, so feel free to ask them along the way.

[Half of participants will complete Scenario 1A and Scenario 2]  
[Half of participants will complete Scenario 1B and Scenario 2]

**Scenario 1A: Change Schools**

[Start the participant on the "How to apply" page Education Routing Wizard  
<https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> and allow them to continue to VA Form 22-1995 <https://www.va.gov/education/apply-for-education-benefits/application/1995/introduction>]

Let's say you've moved to Florida and would like to keep using your education benefits. Starting from this page, how would you let the VA know that you will be transferring from Boston College to University of Florida?

**Questions**

1. What are your thoughts on the overall process of letting the VA know that you are changing schools?
2. What questions do you have about the process?

Let's go back to the beginning and start the 2nd scenario

**Scenario 2: Apply for STEM Scholarship Science**

[Start the participant on the "How to apply" page Education Routing Wizard  
<https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> and allow them to continue to VA Form 22-1995 <https://www.va.gov/education/apply-for-education-benefits/application/1995/introduction>]

This time, you'll be going through the screens as a history major who has 2 years of educational benefits remaining. Starting on this page, how would you apply for the STEM Scholarship?

I’m just going to find education benefits. Applying to extend 9/11. And then clicking yes for I want to apply. Click apply now. [started 1995] just scrolling through the prefilled information, checking it, clicking continue, selecting 9/11.

[stem page] just reading through and selecting yes for applying for the stem scholarship. Selecting yes for enrollment.

T: in this case, you’re a history major. [kept undergrad stem selected as yes]

[exhaustion q] ok, so I would select no on this [t told her she had two years left] and click continue.

Ok, so it looks like I’m not eligible for it. Would you like to continue to apply for the scholarship to let va determine your eligibility? I’m going to select yes.

T: ok, what made you think you were not eligible?

Because you said two years left.

T: thoughts on the icons that appear on the left there?

That’s very helpful. It just indicated, you know, it gave a clear picture of the eligibility criteria and just also the information that I entered, showing that, yes, I’m receiving benefits, no, and so on and so forth.

T: is your impression that this person would not be eligible?

Correct.

T: do you think the va would still receive their application?

I would hope so, but I would need to get some sort of confirmation number to make sure because in my past experience, correspondence with va, you’re missing a piece, sometimes stuff gets lost.

T: what is your impression of the three things? Do you have to have all 3 things?

All 3 things. In the box it says you must meet all 3 of the following criteria.

T: what’s your impression if you were to submit the application?

I would be looking for a confirmation email.

T: without clicking, what do you think would happen if you clicked no here?

I’m thinking maybe the continue button would not be blue, like it might be grayed out.

T: ok, let’s go ahead and click that. [accidentally clicked continue button]

[made her way back on the stem page]

[clicked no on eligibility page] do you want me to click it?

T: I was just curious on your thoughts.

[?]

T: what other questions do you have about this process?

It’s pretty straightforward. The language is used is pretty clear. The only thing I can think of is if someone’s second language is English, do you have a translate option? Or if someone is low vision, having a screen reader option on the screen. Lastly, maybe a chat window because I know on VA.gov, there’s a way, maybe if there’s a help button, top right hand side, that would connect you by phone or connect you by contact, that would be helpful.

T: would you expect va to approve or deny our application if you have too much time left?

I would think va would deny your application.

[didn’t seem to carefully read the bullets throughout the process. Didn’t know how she might see approved stem programs

T: how likely would you be to click on these links right here [stem page]

It would be likely.

[? Q’s from C and A]

**Scenario 3(1): Apply for STEM Scholarship History**

[Start the participant on the "How to apply" page Education Routing Wizard  
<https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> and allow them to continue to VA Form 22-1995 <https://www.va.gov/education/apply-for-education-benefits/application/1995/introduction>]

This time, you'll be going through the screens as a science major who has 4 months of educational benefits remaining. Starting on this page, how would you apply for the STEM Scholarship?

I’m thinking to click the green button, find your education benefits form. Ok, and I’m thinking apply to extend because you said there were only 4 months left. And it mentiones the stem scholarship. [selected 3rd radio button] then, I’m going to select yes based on the eligibility I want to apply for this, and click apply now. [began 1995 right away] I’m assuming I should click start the application. Oh, and like you mentioned, there’s prefilled information.

[benefits page] [T instructed her to select P9/11] I’m going to click continue.

[stem page] are you applying? I’m clicking yes. Are you enrolled? Yes. [put yes to exhaustion question] I’m going to click yes and click continue. Are you currently on active duty? I’m going to select No. Is this information prefilled? [filled out school page for new school] That’s all filled in. So far it seems really straightforward.

[old school page] my mom actually went to Boston College. Yep, commonwealth ave! Alright. [kept filling out rest of pages in 1995]

I’m just not clicking on these [review page tabs] because if it was my information instead of the prefilled information, I would definitely check it.

[confirmation page] I do have a question about this blue section. It says please print this for your records. Normally I would take a screenshot of this. Would they be mailing or sending this information?

**General Questions**

Now I'm going to ask a number of questions that relate to the scholarship application process.

1. What are your thoughts on the overall process of applying for the STEM Scholarship? I thought it was pretty straightforward, no questions or complaints on that.

**Wizard Questions**  
Let's go back to the beginning of the process, so I can ask a few specific questions.

1. As you look at the information that appears when you click the STEM Scholarship option, what thoughts or reactions come to mind?
2. What additional information would help you determine whether or not to apply for the scholarship?
3. What are your thoughts on whether you’d be eligible for this scholarship?
4. [If there seems to be confusion] How might we further clarify the eligibility requirements?
5. [If they’re ineligible] Under what circumstances might you try to apply for this scholarship even though you don’t seem to be eligible?

**VA Form 22-1995 Questions**  
Now, let's look at the application form.

1. What did you think of the part of the process when you were answering the questions about the Rogers STEM Scholarship?
2. As you read through the eligibility requirements, what questions come to mind?
3. What are your thoughts on whether you’re eligible for the Rogers STEM Scholarship?
   * What information are you using to form that decision?
   * Are you able to determine under what circumstances you might become eligible in the future?
   * Would you go ahead with the application if you thought you were close to exhaustion?
   * How effectively does the form inform you of your potential eligibility?
4. What are your thoughts on these blue boxes?
5. [ When looking at the last info / alert ] When you saw this, what did you think your options were at this point in the process?”
6. Do you have the impression that your application will be processed or not processed?
7. Do you think the VA would allow you to submit the application even if the answers you've selected would not qualify one for the scholarship?
8. What, if any, modifications would make completing the form easier?