**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.)? Yes, I have, the post 9/11 gi bill and before I got out of service, I used tuition assistance.
2. What type of degree are you pursuing? I was studying history with a minor in history from the university of…[?]
3. How far through the program are you?
4. Approximately how many months or years of education benefit do you have remaining? No, I don’t know.
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?

How would I apply for the stem scholarship? I’d click this, find your education benefit form, and since I’m applying for the stem scholarship, I would not, I can see immediately that I would not be eligible because you have to have six months or less remaining.

T: good reading. Let’s pretend the person didn’t read that.

[she went on to click apply now for the scholarship]

And it was still post-9/11, right?

T: it is still.

[stem page] ok, so…assuming that I don’t read this again, and I’m just clicking, I’d click yes. I see that I do not qualify for this scholarship.

T: tell us all the places you might learn.

Now it’s asking if I’m enrolled in a science engineering… again, this is another thought where I’m literally answering yes and reading it off. I’d stop because if you’re a history major you don’t qualify for this. If they click yes because it leads to what school…there was no dropdown about what program. When filling out the application, they were not.

T: ok, so it seems like this is the last point where they get to know…

Again, just click yes [to exhaust benefits q]

T: ok, I’m going to go back one page. [t changed answers so they wouldn’t be eligible] let’s say you have two years left here.

[eligibility page] t: talk to me about this page.

At this point, I would not see any benefit in [?]

T: what would you do?

[she selected no] and click explore other education benefits. Unless I considered changing my major… but you still need to have the 6 months or less of benefits for the eligibility question.

T: so you just gave us two ways people might get around it, in case their situation changed.

[?]

If I considered changing my major, I would switch the answer to yes because I now meet two of the criteria, and see what the va wanted to do.

I’m not going to waste my time applying for a scholarship that I’m not eligible for.[…] I don’t like to waste my time or anyone else’s time and I wouldn’t want to submit that application, which I wasn’t eligible for and then submit one I was eligible for, and have the va look differently at *that* one…I’d look very carefully at some of the scholarships that were available to me. Some of them were for left-handed people. I happen to be left-handed. I don’t see why somebody would apply for a scholarship that they’re not eligible for. Not that I ever applied for anything I wasn’t eligible for. I would make sure, even though I’m not eligible, that I truly don’t meet all of the criteria. I would make sure there was no loophole where I was not eligible. It just wasn’t an easy direction. To not tell the truth on the application, that’s not something I would ever consider. I’m a history major, and was before I graduated… I know I wouldn’t have made it past the first page.

A: would you try and go to a different browser? How do you think you’d get out of that situation?

I’m assuming that, I would go up and start clicking other areas to see if there was another link to click that had other scholarships that I might be eligible for. [?]

I can’t say that I wouldn’t be disappointed that I can’t apply for this scholarship, but at the same time, I’m a history major, so why am I even looking at this scholarship? I know there are some degrees where you can get a bachelor of science instead of a bachelor of art…particularly from the mom of a stem student, I really appreciate the amount of stem scholarships out there because, unless she changes her way, that’s the way she’ll go.

**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?

It’s cool working on this page because the touchscreen on my screen doesn’t work.

Let’s see… applying for a scholarship?

T: it’s called the stem scholarship.

The only thing on the screen I can see would be the green find your education benefits form. There’s nothing saying stem scholarship [she looked around the page] and there it is, applying to extend my benefit…[selected 3rd radio button]

T; I’ll let you wonder through this process.

I have to be receiving benefits…[started reading bullets] I’m a science major, so that would all make sense. I meet the requirements, so I’d click yes. [clicked apply now]

[1995 intro] and because it’s so nice where it’s listed under the start your application button, it says all the stuff I would need. Everything else, if I didn’t have the address of the school, you know, I’d go and find it. The applications can time out, so I’d rather have it sitting there instead of having the screen time out.

T: just so you know, we’ve prepopulated it, so we have fake data in there.

I’m not thinking that. My daughter has post-9/11, and once she graduates high school, this might be something she’s interested in because she’s a stem child. [started going through 1995]

[benefits page] T: in the scenario, you’re post-9/11.

[stem page] [selected yes to all questions, as she was eligible].

[active duty page] I’m going to answer no.

[T instructed her to click through the form as the info is prefilled]

[clicked through to submit 1995]

**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? It was pretty streamlined. It seemed pretty easy to locate how to apply for the scholarship. I imagine I wouldn’t be working off of, since I’ve never heard of it before, somebody would have had to tell me about it before. That was the only part where I was confused. Everything else seemed to be streamlined and easy to follow.

**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?