**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 a number of colleagues on the line. They’ll be 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 reviewing one of the forms that students use to update educational benefits.

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

The entire session should take about 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.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Recording**

Lastly, 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 as we talk today?

Great! I'm going to turn on screen and audio recording now. When we hear an announcement that it’s started, I’ll ask again if you are okay if we record the audio, so we have your verbal consent. [The meeting host will begin audio and screen recording.] Are you comfortable if I record the audio today? Thank you. Let’s start with a few warm-up questions

**Warm-up Questions**

1. Which Education benefit do you have?

Post-9/11.

1. What type of degree are you pursuing?

I got my bachelor’s and now I’m working on my master’s all using my benefits.

T: what subject?

Accounting and financial management. My undergraduate is accounting.

1. How far through the program are you?
2. Approximately how many months or years of education benefit do you have remaining?

I just know it’s less than 6 months, so it’s maybe 1 month or 2. They did the thing where they had to grandfather me in. When the semester starts, and you have less than a month…[?] I have 1 or 2 months left.

1. [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. You’ll not need to enter any data as you go through, in many cases, as soon as you click you'll see an example of what someone might type in the fields.

**Think Aloud**

While you are going through the site, we ask that you please think aloud and vocalize your thoughts, and decisions as you see each page. 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.  
If you have questions, it’s likely that many other Veterans will too. This may seem strange at first, but it helps us understand what you are thinking and helps us so much with our research.

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

   She did 1A 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?

P: [clicked green button and selected “updating” radio button, then “no, using own benefit”] I assume thatI could find this information on the benefits form. I changed programs before so I know there’s some kind of form that had to be filled out. If I didn’t know that already, I don’t know if I would have necessarily known to go here without your direction. [clicked apply now]

Okay, so I guess these are the steps [on 1995 intro]

[on benefit page] ok, these little links are helpful [learn mores] would they not work? I was just curious what they would tell me. [selected p911]

[on stem page]

Will this work? [helper] Oh yeah, it works! I have never heard of this. Whoa okay. I didn’t know that. [she read the helper content] Are you applying? No.

T: tell me about your decision there.

P: I just went with no. I guess I would have to go investigate. Will this page work? [stem page link; clicked and opened it]. If I choose yes or no, obviously, I would be able to change that later, right?

I would just need time to decide.[?] Can I continue? [she continued through school pages.]

I just noticed down at the

T: I’m interested in your thoughts on the process so far.

P: to me it’s straightforward.

T: any questions?

P: no

T: okay, we can move into our 2nd scenario. [went back to wizard]

P: okay, so I guess it would be the same way I did last time. Oh, there it is [3rd radio button]

Hmm. Ok. I guess it is kind of obvious, the green button, and then it has the 3 options. That’s helpful, the eligibility is right there. You don’t go through and think, oh, am I eligible? It’s right there. Does this take you to ebenefits? I don’t know if it would still be in ebenefits or if it’s a va website.

T: I don’t know if we have to go there. It’s beyond our scope...

P: [elected to apply for stem] Ok, so it is the same form as change your program or your place of training. [clicked through all the way through the benefits page] It’s helpful to see the link to finish your application later. [selected p9/11]

[on stem page, opted to apply] One thing, maybe I’m just a little silly, but I was not thinking accounting/finance, I didn’t even think of that as a stem discipline. Does it say somewhere what qualifies? [she was on the 2nd stem question].

T: that’s a great question. How would you think of doing that?

P: maybe if there was a list of all the stem majors.

T: I will say I don’t know if accounting is on the list, full disclosure. [answered yes that she’s enrolled in stem.

P: are you currently on active duty?

T: let’s go back to the previous page.

P: oh snap. I’m not undergraduate. I answered wrong.

T: you can change it.

P: okay. No, I’m not an undergraduate. [answered no to teaching cert]. oh, booo! …probably in the eligibility you could say that, too.

T: ok, so make that more prominent in the eligibility

P: [selected YES to exhaustion of benefits]. So what happens…so I guess I change my answer to no? Can I click continue? Oh, then it just goes back to [active duty page]..ok. So does that mean you could still apply? It still lets me go through even after I said no. Maybe I’m just confused. Were those preliminary questions? When you’re filling out an application for benefits,..what am I trying to say?...If I didn’t qualify but I still continued through, would my application be processed? That’s probably beyond the scope.

T: what would you expect?

P: I would expect me to stop me. I would expect to not be able to continue if I don’t qualify.

T: [went back to the wizard] I would want to find out how easy this was to read.

P: oh, they did say it has to be a stem degree.

T: this helps us understand what needs to be more prominent. It’s in the middle of the paragraph.

P: yeah, maybe bold it. I feel like, you could have told me from the beginning, but yeah, you did.

T: on the screen, it’s so easy to gloss over so much of the information. [went to stem page] what did you think of this first question?

P: I think my thoughts at the time were, what is this? I don’t even know what it is. I guess it’s interesting that they’re on the same form. Like, why are they on the same form, right?

T: eventually they’ll be different forms, but that is a good point. So we went to these questions [opened more stem qs] How would you expec to see the degree programs?

P: maybe a hyperlink, like that one [helper link]

T: what about the language?

P: that’s pretty straightforward.

[?]

T: would you keep going or what would you do at that point?

P: I would probably click continue because I would expect the application to stop me from applying. I guess I could go back and change my answers.

T: what would you expect to see after you click continue and the warning message?

P: I don’t know which part came first, but it probably would take me back to changing the program.

T: what if you were coming through to do the stem scenario? Would you apply for the scholarship? What would you want to happen?

P: I would expect for it to take me back to a landing page or have an option on the page to go back to the beginning. Like when I did it, it said go back to the top of the page. It was obvious I needed to change my answer to say no, I’m not applying.

T: how do you feel about changing your answer?

P: what else can I do if I don’t qualify?

T: there’s one more message if I can get it to appear [pulled up warning] thoughts on this message

P: the first time I went through, I did see that big yellow one at the bottom. And I was like, hey did they tell us that?

C: If you thought that, despite the alerts saying you may not be eligible, would you still try to apply if you thought there was a chance to qualify?

Oh, it does say if you choose. I would still like to apply.

C: Do you think you’d be able to apply for stem and change your school or program on the same form?

P: Yes, it seems like it.

C: 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?

**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 1B: Change Major**

[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 assume you are midway through college and would like to change your major. Starting from this page, how would you let the VA know that you will be switching from your current major to biochemistry?

**Questions**

1. What are your thoughts on the overall process of letting the VA know that you are changing your major?
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**

[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>]

Using this page, how would you apply for the STEM Scholarship?

**General Questions**

1. What are your thoughts on the overall process of applying for the STEM Scholarship?

**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’d be eligible for the Rogers STEM Scholarship?
   * What information are you using to form that decision?
   * How effectively does the form inform you of your potential eligibility?
   * Would you go ahead with the application if you thought you were close to exhaustion?
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 think the VA would allow you to submit the application even if the answers you've selected would not qualify one for the scholarship?
7. Are you able to determine under what circumstances you might become eligible in the future?
8. What, if any, modifications would make completing the form easier?

NOTES: