**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?
2. What type of degree are you pursuing?
3. How far through the program are you?
4. Approximately how many months or years of education benefit do you have remaining?
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. 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]

**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: I would go to “Find your eduation benefit form” first. [he opted for the 2nd radio button, then that he’s using his own benefits before selecting “Apply now”.] VA form 22-1995. Alright, since you are signed in to your account…

T: The information is pre-filled for you so you don’t have to fill it out.

P: which benefit are you currently using or have you used? I don’t see one for vocrehab.

T: ok. Let’s go through as if you’re using post-9/11.

P: ok. Continue. Update your education benefits. Ok. [he read intro paragraph on stem page] and I guess if I want to learn more about the scholarship eligibility I can click there [helper link] and I will click no. [chose not to apply]

T: you’re doing a great job of talking out loud.

P: [moved thru 1995] School you want to attend? and I believe you said university of florida? [proceeded to fill out page] Do you expect to get any money…? And no. Are you getting benefits from the US government…? That would be no. [moved on to school last attended]

T: It pretty much repeats the same process, so we can stop there. what did you think of that process?

P: it was a little confusing because the vocrehab is a government benefit [referring to last q on school attending page]

T: ok, great. I will set up the 2nd scenario now. [went back to wizard]

**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?

P: ok, I don’t have control of the mouse. [T gave him control again] Once again I would go to the “find your education benefits form”. Then I would, you said I wanted to apply for the 9/11 stem scholarship right?

T: yes

P: alright, then I would click on that. Then it tell me…[started reading bullet points, seemed to only read the first bullet point] Based on the eligibility requirements, do you want to apply? Yes, I would. Then I would want to start the application [1995 intro]

[benefits page] which benefit are you using or have you recently used? So it would be p9/11 [he is voc rehab but that isn’t on the list]

[on stem page] [read the intro paragraph] and then if I wanted to learn more about eligibility I could click here [helper] and if it’s my first time seeing this, I would click here to see what it’s all about, so read it and then click yes, that I am applying for the scholarship. Are you enrolled in an undergraduate stem degree program? Yes. Have less than 6 months remaining? No. [read the blue alert] So it’s telling me that since ‘m not within the six months or exhausted all my benefits, that I can’t apply for the scholarship right now.

T: alright, what would you do next?

P: I would click continue.

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

P: I did see that I could click finish this application later, but it was kind of confusing. If it told me that I wasn’t eligible, I would think that I would just finish the application later or telling me to end the application.

T: so you want to end the application at this point?

P: yes.

T: if you had clicked finish this application later, where do you think it would have taken you to?

P: I would think it would have taken me to the page where I had started the application benefit.

T: [took him back to stem page]

P: I was seeing continue…if it wouldn’t allow me to go further, I would expect it to take me back to the beginning.

T: what is your impression of what stem degree means here?

[?]

T: let’s say they still wanted to apply and they glossed over the helper text

P: I guess if they said yes and then clicked continue, I would think something should pop up saying are you sure you’re taking a stem degree?

T: ok, let’s say yes, and continue.

P: ok, so it’s asking me, are you enrolled in an undergraduate stem degree program? So I’d click yes. And I’m not.

T: let’s say you’re not. [T changed the answers to not stem]

P: do you have a stem undergrad degree and are now pursuing a teaching cert?

T: the person is not.

P: ok, I would say no [to teaching q] [?]

T: let’s say this person has less than 2 years of benefits left.

P: ok, I’d say no. [he got the additional q] based on the eligibility criteria, would you still like to apply? At this time, I would say no because of the 6 months remaining. Ok, it takes me back to that page [top of stem page] it takes me back to where that was.

T: Ok, so this person reasizes they were not eligible. What would you do next?

P: I would say no, and click continue. [moved on to the rest of the 1995]

T: what do you think about the fact that it’s still asking questions?

P: …and save some time

T: we indicated that we’re not applying any longer. What are your thoughts on why it’s still asking questions? What would you expect it to be doing?

P: I would expect it to if it had saved all my information, to take me further along in the process.

**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:

He wanted a way out of the 1995 if he wasn’t eligible for the scholarship.

Did not expect that his application wouldn’t be submitted if he wasn’t eligible.

Having that additional “do you still want to apply” question seems like we’re persuading them not to apply when they could potentially be eligible. Instead of persuading them to rethink their choice to apply, why not instead offer a way to exit the application at this point? [could be in the alert]