**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? Yes, ma’am. I think it was a ch 31, vocrehab.

T: ever used post9/11 benefits?

P: I haven’t used those yet.

1. What type of degree are you pursuing? Business administration, but I was also doing some tech stuff on the side, but it was mainly business administration.
2. How far through the program are you? I finished, I did the bachelor’s but I was going through again to try to get my master’s. It was hard to get employment because a lot of organizations are looking for master’s because it’s competitive.
3. Approximately how many months or years of education benefit do you have remaining? I think I only have like a month left.
4. [If STEM] Do you have any interest in obtaining a teaching certification after you graduate? I would be interested in doing that because I used to substitute years ago.

**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?

**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?

P: So technically you’d go to whoever is your advisor or counselor and notify them that you want to make the change. I’ve never seen online where you can do that. I would click here and there’s a dropdown there. [read radio button options] so I would be updating my program of study, right? [she bypassed second set of radio buttons and kept reading on the page] ok, so I like how everythin is informative and how they have everything in bold.

T: if we scroll back up the page a little bit [directed her to wizard] what do you think about this question here?

P: [opted no, she’s using own benefit] I guess it’s important, but this isn’t just focused on the actual benefit because that could apply to the veteran child. Interesting. So you’d click apply now. It says manage your education benefits [1995 intro] ok, so can you go back and make changes?

T: you can. Let’s go ahead and click that green button.

P: ok, you aren’t required to fill out…

T: and this is one of those places where we’ve prefilled information.

[benefits page]

T: I don’t know that we have 31 right now. You can use 911 for today.

P: [opted 9/11] all of this will be focused on folks with 9/11? There won’t be anything with vocrehab for veteran benefits?

T: I think there are other places for that.

P: [opted to apply for stem] [y,y,n] [got gentle blue final alert] The rogers stem scholarship is for…[didn’t read the full alert, so kept on applying for stem] [she seemed to breeze through the application]

[continued through school questions]

T: ok, and you got it [stopped her at school attending page] Thoughts on the scenario?

P: no, I think it was easy and simple. It wasn’t very hard.

T: [went back to wizard] this time we’ll go through the second scenario.

**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: so I would be applying for a new benefit, yeah?

T: this is something called the stem scholarship.

P: oh, here it is. [Breezed through all the content and went right to answer the apply q.] Blah blah blah [was breezing through 1995] Are you applying for it? Yes, I am. Are you enrolled in stem? Yes. Less than 6 months? Yes.

T: actually, this person has less than two years left.

P: [went back to stem page] [opted no to exhaustion q and continued to next page]

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

P: I feel like we’re moving forward. I don’t think it’s finished [?] yet.

T: im curious about your impression of this box.

P: it’s kind of confusing. [?] wouldn’t I still have access to this scholarship?

T: if you know that you have two years, would you want to go ahead and submit an application to the va?

P: my thing is always just trying to see what happens [meaning she’d likely apply]

T: ok, let’s go on to the third scenario. In this case, you’re going through as a history major, and you still have less than 2 years left.

P: [went to stem page] [read intro paragraph] are yo applying? Yes I am. Are you enrolled in stem? Yes I am.

T: in this case, do you have any impression of what the stem degrees are?

P: engineering, science, mechanics, anything in the science or engineering fields.

T: ok,, and this time we’re a history major.

P: oh, oh, no! [changed her answers] ok, I would not be applying for this because I’m not a science major [opted right away to not apply for the scholarship]. [continued to 1995]

T: thoughts on why they’re still asking questions even though you opted not to apply? [seems like we shouldn’t be asking this q as this can’t be helped, having stem in the 1995 right now] ok, let’s try a different scenario. Let’s say somebody doesn’t know what stem means. They aren’t a stem major. [brought up yellow warning alert] I’ll let you pick up from here.

P: now it says you may not be eligible. That’s what I was waiting for. Yeah, the other scenario you gave me, after you did a couple of prompts where it didn’t correlate with what the eligibility standards were, it would give me a prompt and stop there.

T: what would you see next?

P: so I clicked continue. Are you on active duty? I wouldn’t be seeing that because I’m not eligible if I’m studying history.

[t lost audio, but came back]

**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:

What people seem to really be looking for when they learn they may not be eligible is a way to exit/stop the application, and our UI isn’t providing them with that option other than the “Finish this application later” link. Regardless of whether they only see the alert or the additional “would you still like to apply option?” they would still want a way out if it seems they’re not eligible.

Way to track from the wizard if they opted to apply for stem, which could affect their options on the stem page.

It’s pretty clear participants want a way out if they learn they may not be eligible.