

Research Plan
Team: Digital GI Bill (DGIB) - Human Centered Design
Project: DGIB Online Enrollment Verification Usability Testing (2/2022)

Goals

1. What product & team are you doing this research for?

This research request comes from the Digital GI Bill team for the Veterans Benefits Administration Education Service. Digital GI Bill looks to modernize the GI Bill experience in order to improve the user experience, improve claims processing, address the complexities of recent legislation, and integrate the legacy IT systems. This research plan comes from the Human Centered Design (HCD) agile team as we look to conduct usability testing for a new feature within VA education, Online Enrollment Verification, which supports implementation of a recent piece of legislation. Usability testing will inform us how stakeholders understand enrollment verification and how they feel about the ability to verify their enrollment online.

2. Background: Briefly, what is the background on this product? What would a new person on the team need to know about this product?

The prototype (product) that is the focus of our testing, will be presented as a series of high-fidelity wireframes that simulates a user verifying their monthly enrollment online so that they can get paid education benefits including housing, kicker payments, or both for the given month. Currently, Post-9/11 GI Bill students can verify their monthly enrollment using text or email, which will then permit them to get paid their monthly housing allowance, in accordance with a new piece of legislation, Public Law 116-315 Section 1010. Online Enrollment Verification will allow Post-9/11 GI Bill students to verify their monthly enrollment information online, a new method. This feature will be available while authenticated through Va.Gov in order to continue receiving their monthly education payments. Prior to implementation, the only ways for a Post-9/11 GI Bill student to complete their monthly enrollment verification is via text or email links. Non-Chapter 33 GI Bill students use the WAVE system online, but may also be able to use this updated online feature when WAVE is decommissioned.

The design components are aligned with VA.Gov design system priorities. We have brought these designs through the VA Collaboration Cycle and completed a Design Intent & Midpoint Review. Strategy for the usability testing has been approved by VA Product Owners working with the team.

3. Research questions: What question(s) do you hope to be able to answer after completing this research?

As we observe the students' user experience as they navigate through the enrollment verification prototype, we hope to:

- Understand if the entry points for online enrollment verification are intuitive for users and what they would expect
- Understand if the enrollment verification process is easily navigated and if users understand the purpose of it
- Check to see what users understand from the language that we use

- Understand how beneficial it is for users to verify enrollments online via Va.Gov and what channel they would prefer to use (text vs email vs online)
- Check to see if users expect more information from the Online Enrollment Verification screen

4. Hypothesis: What is your hypothesis for this research?

Since monthly enrollment verification is a relatively new requirement for Post-9/11 GI Bill students, we hypothesize that some users might show initial confusion about the purpose of our prototype, but think that the product will be intuitive and straight-forward. We also believe that there will be further refinement necessary to meet the diverse needs of all users.

When comparing to the verification methods that they currently use, we hypothesize that users might be more comfortable and reassured using a website with VA branding to verify their enrollment information instead of other channels (like text).

Method

1. What method of research are you planning?

The team will be conducting usability testing sessions for the Online Enrollment Verification prototype while tracking both qualitative and quantitative metrics. All usability testing will be conducted in a remote, moderated setting. Participants will receive a Perigean Zoom meeting link before their session and will join the link at the beginning of the session.

2. Methodology:

We will be using high fidelity prototypes to conduct usability testing. After joining the Zoom Meeting link, participants will receive a link to the prototype in the meeting chat. We will ask participants to navigate to the prototype link and share their screen so we can observe the participant experience. Participants will be given open-ended tasks to complete where they will be able to freely navigate between screens. Time metrics will be kept for certain objectives.

3. Why this method? How does this methodology help you answer your research questions?

By inviting users to participate in qualitative usability testing, the HCD team will better understand the end-to-end experience. The research is designed to elucidate specific areas for improvement within the prototype. We will be taking notes throughout the test and incorporating the Optimal Workshop software to capture data points and highlight areas for improvement within the user interface. We will leverage the feedback from our stakeholders to inform more intuitive changes.

The quantitative measures collected during sessions will look to consider individual's accessibility and inform us whether tasks are duplicative and time-consuming, or intuitive and simple. Online Enrollment Verification was created to make the experience of contacting VA *easier* for the Veteran – thus, we want to emphasize the importance of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

Participants and Recruitment

1. Participant criteria: What are you looking for in a participant?

- Target Sample Size: 10
- Age: Diverse distribution preferred
- Accessibility Preferences: Must have access to a computer or mobile phone to use the testing platform. Participant should indicate their preference before scheduling.
 - i. **Note:** VA has identified underrepresented demographic populations that should be prioritized for user engagement and feedback sessions. We want to be sure to include the following Veteran groups below:
 1. Live in rural or abroad
 2. Identify as Latinx, Biracial, Asian, Native, or LGBTQ+
- Geographical Diversity: Diverse distribution preferred
- Login Requirements: Access Zoom (as a guest)
- VA Benefit Requirements: GI Bill Students Actively using their GI Bill Benefits
- Familiarity with Technology: Diverse distribution preferred

- **Primary criteria / Must have –**

- Participant must have access to a computer or mobile phone to use the testing platform
- Participant be actively using their GI Bill Benefits. An ideal spread would be: 60% Post-9/11 GI Bill Students, 40% Other education benefits (e.g. MGIB-SR)

- **Secondary criteria / Would like to have –**

Diverse Samples in the following characteristics:

- Location of the participant and basic demographic qualifiers screening, including: age, race, sex, state of residence (country if outside the US); what GI Bill benefit they are using
- With respect to your GI Bill education, what degree are you working toward? (1. Associate Degree 2. Undergraduate Degree 3. Graduate Degree 3. Non-College Degree Program 4. Other. 5.None).
- How many hours do you spend on a computer/week? (None, 1-5 hours, 5-10 hours, 10-20 hours, more than 20 hours/week).
- How would you describe your familiarity with technology? (very poor, poor, neutral, good, very good).

- **What is your recruitment strategy?**

Recruitment will be conducted remotely from **Perigean**:

1. **If approved for this research request**, we would like assistance from Perigean to recruit additional students that fall under our primary participant criterion characteristics. We have conducted UT before- so we can work with them so that we don't double-dip with participant recruitment.

When?

We plan to begin usability testing in late February - March, 2022. We are open to hosting usability testing sessions from 9am – 7pm (Est.). We will have the complete prototype built and finalized a week prior to data collection. Each UT session will span 45 – 60 minutes. Exact dates and times for testing sessions are flexible and we will coordinate with Perigean once the research request is approved. Reaching our maximum goal of 10 participants will determine if we need to extend the data collection time window. There will be multiple pilot runs of our usability testing. We encourage VA collaboration teams to attend any of our pilot testing sessions.

Team Roles

Please list the people who will be serving in each role. Include the primary phone number for moderator and the emails for moderator, notetaker, and observers.

- **Moderator:**
 - Alternating HCD Team Members:
 - Isabel Herrick, isabel.herrick@accenturefederal.com, +1 571-429-9345
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- **Research guide writing and task development:**
 - HCD Team
- **Participant recruiting & screening:**
 - Perigean
- **Project POC:**
 - Matthew Self matthew.self2@va.gov, Va.Gov Representative
 - Audra Ayotte, audra.ayotte@accenturefederal.com, +1 571-429-8956
 - Russell Lyons, russell.lyons@accenturefederal.com, +1 571-414-6157
 - Ricardo Da Silva, ricardo.dasilva@va.gov, Project Product Owner
- **Participant(s) for pilot test:**
 - HCD Team Members
 - Any Necessary Va.gov Personnel
- **Note-takers:**
 - HCD Team
- **Observers:**
 - Ricardo Da Silva, ricardo.dasilva@va.gov, Project Product Owner
 - Monique Rodgers, lakisha.rogers@va.gov, Project Product Owner
 - Tammy Hurley, tammy.hurley1@va.gov, Project Product Owner
 - Robert Holbrook, Robert.Holbrook@va.gov, Project Product Owner

Resources

- Project Brief: [VA.Gov GitHub](#)

- Convo Guide: To upload
- Synthesis: Will be completed after usability testing sessions conclude.
- Lessons Learned: Will be completed after usability testing sessions conclude.
- Read-Out/Results: Will be completed after usability testing sessions conclude.