**Section 103 Usability Testing – Participant 6, Jared Awner**

**Warm-up Questions - 10 minutes**

Before we look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

1. Are you currently using or have you ever used your GI Bill education benefits?
   1. Yes, currently using. Post 9/11 GI Bill
2. What has been your experience with VA payments to your school?
   1. As far as I know its been going pretty smoothly. George Washington University waits to submit certifications until students are certain that they will be taking certain courses.
3. Were you attending classes and receiving education benefits in the fall of 2018?
   1. Yes

* If yes, do you recall if you had any issues with VA late payments to your school?
  + There was, but as far as I know, it was because I was a new student. It takes longer to receive new benefits for new students.
* If yes, can you tell me a little about what happened?
  + As far as I know, the Yellow Ribbon and Post 9/11 were a little bit later than usual because I was a new student and I had moved to DC from Miami. Those funds were going to be used for housing so we don’t receive those funds until we’re certified by the university. So my bills and rent were a little late because I hadn’t received those funds.
  + I didn’t have to take loans then. About a year and a half later, I had to take out a loan because the time to took to be certified for the semester. We are paid prior to the semester for school. I was a month late. I think it was Spring of last year to be honest with you. Either spring or fall.

1. Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
   1. I have, but I haven’t used it in a really long time. I think I actually used it way back in 2015 when I was looking at my bachelor undergraduate.
2. Have you ever done Usability Testing before?

**First Task: Find Section 103 - 15 minutes**

* You have a friend who had to take a loan back in 2018 due to late VA payments for schooling. You know that the VA has taken steps to keep this from reoccurring, but that schools may have requirements for you to meet. You’re interested in attending Midland University located in Fremont, Nebraska, how would you use the Comparison Tool to find out what information Midland University requires? Spent a lot of time on EYB, scrolled to the bottom. Scrolled back up to EYB. To be honest with you, I’m not sure where to go. (Fail)

What kind of words/thing are you looking for?

I mean what you said is that I’m looking to see about documentation, but…I don’t really see anything about what documentation is needed. Scrolled to bottom and back up again.

So…am I doing this right, does the screen move? So assuming I’m a veteran and all this is making sense. And I would want to be taking the classes in person. I would enter a city, school or employer field. Typed “midland univ” and clicked Midlanc University. And that’s the one right there, and because there’s only one I would just view the details. Let’s see. Scrolling through EYB. So I’m not sure what I’m supposed to do at this point. Does the university have a yellow ribbon program? For me, I would reach out to the university myself. I’m just very direct. I’m former military intelligence so I’d rather go to the source to get what I need. I would probably open up all the boxes just to see what was in each of them. Opened eligibility details. It talks about eligibility…so probably not, but it’s not always representative. When it comes to late payments, I don’t really see anything. I mean down here you have the school certifying officials, but there is no contact information. It would be useful to have the person’s contact information since I’m already here. I don’t see anything on required documentation…unless I’m just blind. When it talks about Tuition and fees, that’s talking about the funds that would be paid to the university itself and not to the student…clicked the Learn more next to Tuition and fees. So much information on this page…ummm….let’s see. It doesn’t help that some words are purple and others are blue. Yeah, they aren’t black so it’s kind of throwing me off. GI Bill Beneficiaries. Also too…there are a lot of words on this page. I mean, I’m serious. Because I’m a veteran, less is more. Instead of having all these words, it would be easier to click on things for a drop down menu. Buzz words are helpful too. Maybe a guide on the top of the page. If there’s something here (at top)…I’m guessing Subjects is that, but it’s not enough. Ctrl F for late…looking through options...I’m not really seeing anything for that. Yeah, there’s one word for documentation (ctrl F). At this point, I would be frustrated.

Directed to bottom….

Ok, so probably Protection against late VA payments. Opened modal. Obviously need to read through this. So I was right, you need to contact the school certifying official. But the problem is that the contact information for the primary point of contact isn’t on the page. Since I’m being told to do it, instead of spending 15 minutes trying to find this link.

Maybe it’s just the fact that I’m slow….it’s a 6/10…it is all the way at the bottom of the page. I would have had to read through everything…and I’m told to go look at some information I’ve already read. But no contact information was given.

* You’re interested in attending College of Charleston located in Charleston SC, how would you use the Comparison Tool to find out what information College of Charleston requires?

Scrolled to bottom of page. Ok so there’s no information at this time, but there is (opened modal). Well that’s useful. Schools can’t impose late fees…that’s good. The restriction on penalties…so the school can’t impose late fees or deny access to facilities. One thing I’m curious about since this happened to me. I took out a loan for the university and I am imposed late fees for not paying in a timely manner. So that’s not included in this. I mean everything it says right here above it – yes or no, is this provided or not. Well the university provides STEM scholarships yes. I would take this as No info at this time. That would tell me there is no information. I would definitely make a judgment against the university. That information is definitely something that should be told to the veteran wanting to attend the university. The information is at the bottom so are they just trying to keep that information away from the veteran? It’s highlighted and underscored and in blue and that means there might be an explanation for it. I would say there is protections. I’d feel pretty protected if that was the case.

**Second Task: Section 103 Content - 10 minutes**

* What does “Protection against late VA payments” mean to you?
  + It’s kind of a kick in the gut…because the VA should be on top of their operations. If we’re not certified on time to receive those benefits on time. As a veteran, we really want to focus on one thing at a time. I’m in graduate school right now and it’s really hard to work while going to school. It’s kind of a nuisance to find a way to fund for our housing and books when that is supposed to be provided. The school usually sends threats to students that they are at risk of losing their classes. It’s usually empty threats. The certifying official basically tells us not to worry about it and that the VA will make the payments. When the payments are late at the beginning, the bills still add up. When you get back-paid, you get the money, but you’re already in the hole from the interest and fees from taking out the loan. That’s something I’m still paying for.
* Have you heard of a Certificate of Eligibility before? If so, when? Have you submitted one before?
  + Yeah, I receive that prior to every semester. How much I’m being provided for book stipend, housing, etc. I receive that in the mail. As soon as I get it, I send it to the university – either to the certifying official or the office. And then I store it in my files.
* Do any other questions come to mind about this?

**Third Task: Additional Criteria - 5 minutes**

* You are also interested in attending Chadron State College and are curious about their requirements for obtaining protection against late VA payments. Please determine the requirements for this university.

Hopefully I’m spelling this right. “chadrun” no autofill “chadron” and clicked options. View details. So this says COE and additional criteria…so basically the same information as before (in modal). Maybe the veteran DD214…if the service member is still in the military, not really sure, but I don’t know, I’m not really sure. To learn more about the transition act or reach out to the certifying official to find what the additional criteria is.

* What do you think “additional criteria” is?
* How would you go about finding out more information?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share?
* We had you look for information on delayed VA payments within the GI Bill Comparison Tool. If this situation arose in real life where do you think you’d look for information on how to deal with this issue?
* Any questions for me?

Additional Questions:

What type of contact information would you like to see?

Where would the best place for this information to be?

I actually used it in South Korea. I looked through it, comparing universities. I didn’t make a decision based solely on the tool, but I cross-referenced it against other programs. I think this would be great for veterans as they are leaving the service – I think TAPS. So they know how to use it when applying to schools. Even if it was just one day of VA topics. I went through TAPS – wasn’t a big fan.

Thought process for Tuition and fees?

My understanding is that you receive your tuition and fees from the VA. So when it comes to getting those payments, that information would be provided in the Learn more section. When it comes to late fees and tuition, you know what the protection is meant to be for, that it would make sense for it to be there.

Any other part of the page?

Maybe if it’s provided…If there’s like a drop box (in EYB), that would be helpful. Because you have to go all the way to the bottom. Maybe if there’s a dropdown for Additional Information. Then I think that would be useful. The way I understand it...Veteran programs, cautionary information, that’s additional information to me.

What information would you like to see?

What would be useful is a phone number and an email. I know they’re busy so if they can’t answer in one medium, then there’s another.

Do you like seeing more than one individual?

I think it’s good, depending on what you need. I’m not sure about Project Coordinator, but Financial Aid or Admissions…if you have questions about that, then you can contact them.

NATCON

National Convention for Veterans. It brings together veterans for all across the US. They have this thing called University Village to interact with businesses and schools to do networking.