**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

*Participant 4 – Thelma Coe*

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Amy and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we would like to talk about ratings and what types of information help Veterans determine if a particular school is a good fit for them.  
Before we start, a few things I want to mention:

* **This entire session should take about 45 minutes.** I want to be sure not to keep you much longer, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* **In this session, we want to hear your honest opinions.** We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I will not be offended by any opinions you express, and I welcome your feedback.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **Are you comfortable if I record my screen and audio as we talk today?** We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are destroyed after we complete analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.
  + If yes: **Once I start recording, I am going to confirm that you are ok with me recording this session once more.**

*Start recording.*

* \*\*I have started recording. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen and the audio as we talk today?"

**Warm-up Questions (Optional) - 5 minutes**

Let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? Yes – I’ve used Voc Rehab. September of 2019. It coincides with me starting school.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**Ratings Experience and Overall Value - 15 min**

I'm curious about how you use ratings when you're looking at a particular product or service. For example, if you're purchasing a new vacuum cleaner or trying a new restaurant, how do you decide if you want to try that product or service?

* Do you typically look at ratings when making your decision? No, yes I shop for objects online. Amazon. Target and Walmart. If its something for electronic, I absolutely look at how people rated them. Basically I look and see how long the product lasted and if the person had any issues with the product or any issues returning the product. If it’s something below 3 stars, I don’t pay any attention to it. Trustworthy – I guess if it’s something that sounds like it’s too good to be true. I wonder if its someone who bought the product or if it’s an employee of the company. I would say it affects my decision 6/10.
* When you're looking at ratings, what aspects do you pay close attention to (e.g. number of stars, number of people who rated it)?
* Are there any aspects that aren't important to you?
* Why are these aspects important or not important to you?
* What helps you decide if a rating or review is trustworthy?
* Do ratings influence your ultimate decision? If so, how much?
* Are there any particular sites that you frequently visit that use ratings? What do you like about these sites?
* Have you ever looked at sites to compare schools? Yes – mainly I used Google. I put in the information for the school and it gave me sites where it said other people went to school. I was looking at pros and cons of the school and I picked the one that seemed to fit me. I don’t remember the name of it (the site). I was looking for something online because I tend to do better in an online class.
  + If yes, which ones? What did you like about those sites?

**Categories - 15 minutes**

The VA would like to give prospective students better visibility into the educational experience other Veterans have had at a particular school. Some sites like Amazon allow users to rate a product or service on a variety of factors such as product quality, timeliness of delivery, etc.

* If someone who had previously received VA education benefits provided ratings for schools (particularly ones you were interested in attending), what factors would be most valuable to you? I guess the quality of the classes – how long the classes are and how easy was it to get into it. Did you have any issues getting into it.
* Is there any other information that you would like to know from Veterans who had attended a school you were interested in? How hard was it to actually find a job given that basically every class was online? What advice would you give someone to improve chances of getting a job after doing an online school? It would affect me – knowing that other veterans had the experience and received a job. It would affect my decision a lot knowing other veterans went through it.
* How valuable would that information be in making a decision to attend the school or not?

**Pull up categories visual provided by EDU**

* (As applicable) In terms of school ratings, there are a few factors I would like to get your feedback on.
  + What do you think this factor means?
  + Would it would be helpful in your decision making process?

Five Star Ratings:

* Institution Overall – I would probably try to make, I would probably want to know what exactly are you asking about? Are you online or in the classroom?
* Quality of Classes – it’s fine, it’s letting you know how the classes are.
* Veteran Friendliness – I wouldn’t change anything about this. How does the school treat you?
* Employment Preparation – Wouldn’t change. Letting me know how does the school prepare you for employment once you have a degree
* Recruiting/Marketing Practices – I think that’s talking about what the schools do to bring you in. Ads, do they keep in contact with you through the whole process.
* Most important – Employment Preparation and Veteran Friendliness
* Don’t care – Recruiting/Marketing Practices. Once I have my mind set, there’s nothing they can do to make me want to come more.
* No, no other categories
* Are there any other types of ratings that you would like to see? (For example, the percentage of Veterans who would recommend a particular school)
* Who do you think should be able to submit ratings for a school?
  + Someone who applied and was accepted – Probably wouldn’t matter since they haven’t taken anything
  + Someone who applied and was rejected – I would want to see why they were rejected
  + Someone who attended classes, but didn't complete their degree – I would want to know what happened for them not to complete the degree. Was it classes or the whole school
  + Someone who finished their degree – Would definitely want to talk to them since they finished the whole process and got the degree.
  + Veterans versus beneficiaries – should include family as well if they are using benefits, they will want to know what issues family had using benefits at the school. So I think everyone using the benefits.

**Pull up a school profile page on the CT**

The VA is considering incorporating ratings into the GI Bill Comparison Tool so beneficiaries of education benefits can provide feedback on the schools they have attended. The page in front of you is a school profile page on the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

Changed to Voc Rehab. 1 Dependent. Online only. Typed independence u and clicked school. Scrolling through….I guess I would want to see the rate of graduation and the ease of getting into the school using your benefits. Clicked view details. Scrolling through page – stopped to read cautionary warning at bottom. Under student complaints would be a good place to have it. Trustworthy – if it was coming from veterans, I’d trust it. But I’d want to know what caused them to have issues. I know sometimes the VA pays for that, so are they overcharging? (Student complaints) Maybe click on student complaints or source to see if it takes you to an outside option to see the complaints. Clicked on source…so clicked on source and this is the page it brought me to…clicked Student Complaints. It brought me to the same page.

Other factors – the price

Factors to attend the school – one of the biggest one was to have classes online. When assignments were due. Could listen to lecture at a different time.

Does school have veteran office? Yes – it’s all over the phone. If I had an issue, the VA-ONCE I can always call them and they can deal with it. But I haven’t had any issues with it

* If ratings were incorporated into the Comparison Tool, where do you think it would make the most sense for the ratings to appear?
* What are your thoughts on the trustworthiness of ratings that would appear in the Comparison Tool? Why?

Talked to a recruiter and helped her get everything in order. Also provided a computer that you could keep so start up costs were good. She saw an ad online for the school.

**Post-Task Interview - X minutes**

* Any questions for me?

**Thank-You and Closing - X minutes**

Well we really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Your feedback is so helpful to us as we continue to work on the site and make sure it really works for Veterans.

Thanks! Lastly, do you know any other Veterans, caregivers, or service members who might be willing to participate in a future user research session? If Yes: Thank you! I'll have our team send you an email with a little blurb that you can pass along.

Great, well thank you so much again, and enjoy the rest of your day!