**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

*When the participant is ready, begin the session with the following intro*

**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 be looking at the Comparison Tool and talking about ratings and what information is helpful for Veterans when determining 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.

* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? Yes
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? No
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school? Where did you go?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
* When you were trying to pick a school, what were you looking for in a school? When I went back to school, the first time I was 18 and was first generation like going back forever so wasn’t’ sure what college entailed so I just applied to a local school which was rated well. CofC…and my experience there wasn’t what I needed and when I went back I chose something more grounded, less partying so I chose a local Christian college. And I kind of needed that at 21 years old. It was local and it was boring and I could focus on my schoolwork.
  + How would you determine if it was a good fit for you?
* If you knew a fellow Veteran who'd attended a school you were interested in, what would you most want to know from them?

If I was a Veteran, they always want to know the Veterans affairs department – how good they are and how flexible the professors are in terms of like I’m National Guard, there have been cases where my friend would have to drop the class because the professor refuses to hold off on turning in the assignments until he can get back online. So that’s happened a lot for friends of mine at CofC. Now Charleston Southern has a much better time handling Veterans. I think it’s going to get even better because the new guy whose running the school is a Veteran.

**First Task: Initial Look at Ratings - 5 minutes**

Let's say you received a scholarship for **Insert school** and are curious if the Comparison Tool has any information on that school. How would you go about finding **Insert school** on the Comparison Tool?

Clicked search box, clicked search

This looks like the school, I mean it’s in Davis, CA. I don’t see any other selections here. Do you want me to click into it?

100% state tuition

$2200 housing…gosh, that’s really nice.

GI Bill students: 473…you would think there would be more

Rated by 155 ratings…

View details…does this tell me any more? No

Providing ratings – I’m guessing it’s the 155 veterans providing it

View details – I kind of expect a view details, when you click the card, it automatically takes you to the profile page. I expected if I clicked view details more information would appear down? I’m thinking the name for the animation…like an accordion. Like when you see all the cards, you don’t want that. So yeah, this whole view details button, I get it’s for 508 compliance, but visually it’s out of place

Things to watch for:

* Does the user notice the ratings on the school cards?
* Does the user interact with any of the filters?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of school card?
* What do you think that rating shows you?

Research questions:

* What do users think of the star ratings?
* Who do users think are providing the ratings?

**Second Task - Detailed Ratings - 15 minutes**

You've heard great things about the Veteran experience at **Insert school**, but are curious about the quality of education you would receive there. How would you use this Comparison Tool to see if **Insert school** would meet your needs?

I would want to view more details…clicked it. I really like what I see here with the rating right underneath the title/name of the school. It’s nice that you can just hone in right there and know that this is a 4.8 out of 5 university. Then you have basic info on the school. This says Large size and I know that’s class sizes, but I don’t know if “large size” if that could be associated with anything. Else maybe large class size?

EYB…military details. Yeah…This is so slow (scrolling)…Quality of education…it looks solid. I would probably come down here to veteran programs. Priority enrolment is really nice. 0 student complaints that just stands out – bam. I wouldn’t have to worry about anything as a veteran. And (ratings) very detailed info. This is really nice how it’s broken down like this. What happens if I click on this? (expanded ratings) I really like what I’m seeing…distribution of ratings. Telling me who voted what. Is NA necessary? It sounds like when someone filled it out, they chose not to answer this question. I just don’t know if it’s necessary to mention that.

Number of reviews not adding up? If someone didn’t mention NA, I might think you’re not including the 1 star voters because you want me to assume it’s a good school.

In terms of…if I’m applying for a school today, online instruction and job preparation would be a big deal. I’m not sure what marketing practices is…so let’s click on it and see. Okay. I can see this being important info to know, but probably in it’s right spot being last on the list, least important.

I mean you got the GI Bill support. Veteran community. I’m trying to think because schools have their own veteran scholarships and veteran dependent scholarships…I don’t know if that would be something included in the ratings. Like I’m attending this school or my spouse is attending the school but she isn’t using my GI Bill. How would you rate….I just don’t know.

How are thoughts of spouses taken into consideration. As a spouse, you get moved around. You don’t get shipped out every 2 months, but you get uprooted every 2-3 years.

How collected? I would think this is collected in a seven section form, but the thing is…if I want to make a rating, there isn’t a link I can click on to rate the school. A poor rating can drastically affect whether Veterans go to that school.

Oh yeah, it’s here about ratings

Trustworthy – I think I can trust these. I’m a fairly gullible person.

I would actually find this very useful…knowing about this. There’s no way for a Veteran to know if a school is a good fit for Veterans and this is good.

As an east coast guy, I have some animosity to west coast. But seeing these ratings, I’d go into it with a more open state…I’m willing to give them a chance.

Things to watch for:

* How does the user select the school (School name or View Details)?
* Where does the user initially look for information?
* Does the user go to the ratings accordion without a prompt?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of the school now that you've seen the ratings?

Research questions:

* Are users interested in the different rating categories or just the overall score?
* Which categories are valuable to users? Are there any categories that aren't valuable? Are there any additional categories they would like to see?
* What do users think the different categories mean?
* How do users think the rating scores are determined (average of submitted scores, calculated value, etc.)?
* How trustworthy are the ratings?
* How do users think ratings are collected?
* What level of privacy do users expect if they would provide a rating?
* Do users think the ratings are useful?

**Third Task - Comparing Various Rating Aspects - 10 minutes**

Let's say you want to attend the **University of California** and are trying to decide on the campus where you'll take classes. You plan on living on-campus and all the schools offer the classes you want to take. Walk me through how you'd use the Comparison Tool to help you decide which campus you'd attend.

I’d probably do Inperson and online.

Why would you want to make that change? I like the idea of having the option of taking certain classes online. I don’t need to be in an auditorium of 100 people for history 101.

Typed that so fast you didn’t even see it.

Clicked search.

The first thing I notice is Berkeley and then I see Davis and Davis is rated. And it kind of throws me that those that are rated are below those that aren’t. Like when you’re looking at this your eye tends to go towards those icons/images and you aren’t picking up on the names. They are eye-catching against the grey. Also…is this a final decision about where we put ratings? I don’t know…if this is where you guys have decided to put it. I’m guessing you’ve discussed putting it here (waving cursor beneath location). I feel like ratings are an important visual indicator. It feels weird being in the bottom corner. That’s where I’m at with that. If I’m looking any school in UoC..I’m probably going to be drawn to Davis…because it’s the first five star rating and 155 people have rated it, so that tells me It’s consistently good. Here’s another 4.4..but not a full 5. I’m completely turned off by those that aren’t rated. That’s kind of where I’m at with that. I can see this (tag) being a nice indicator. It doesn’t necessarily apply to me, but I know HBCUs are becoming a bigger topic. I was just going to say…on a personal level, I’m not a Christian. I went to a Christian school because I got a scholarship and I was like they’re all going to be creationists and not going to take me seriously. I was pleasantly surprised. But tell me it’s a Christian university, I’m very turned off by that. Like Liberty University. That really turns me off. As a scientist, you don’t want to be a laughing stock. And there is a lot of discrimination against people who have science degrees. Charleston Southern was good about making there were good scientists and not just dedicated to the church.

Think high rankings should be higher, instead of alphabetical…but if you’re searching for schools, it’s good to be alphabetical. I don’t know.

Not sure about location of ratings

I feel like it’s more important and I want to see it closer to location

On profile page – that looks really good.

Idea – only displaying when 5 or more ratings? Experience with Veterans is that they want to see everything (regardless of number of ratings)

I want to know that’s not yet rated…it’s also weird that there are 557 students but no ratings.

When I see something like this with a high rating, I’ll want to click View details. I’m not completely turned off by this (cautionary warning), but I’d need to do more research. So school is facing a potential lapse in program approval…and it doesn’t take me anywhere. Several complaints…but 4 complaints..overall rating is 5. Oh geez…4 stars…12? 12 users decided I’m going to do the ratings review, but I’m not going to click on anything? Is that worth mentioning?

I think there is something worth mentioning for veteran dependent support?

Privacy – I don’t know if I will like that…I’m guessing legally, the VA might have to do this, but I don’t think I want my school to know that I’ve given them a bad rating.

Things to watch for:

* Does the user look at the overall rating or delve into the detailed ratings?
* Does the user pause or read the caution flag?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What made you decide to pick that particular campus?

Research questions:

* Would ratings affect the school selection process?
* How does the number of ratings weigh into a user's perception of a particular school?
* Do users think the ratings are useful?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share?
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chance for the other people on the line to ask a question.

**Thank-You and Closing - 3 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, thanks so much and enjoy the rest of your day!