**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

**P5 – Elizabeth Eversole**

*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? Honestly I’m not sure if I have or not. I’ve gone to. A lot of VA education bill website, but not sure if I’ve used that specific tool
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? I’ve used them in the past and looking to use them again. Post 9/11. I’ve identified the school. It’s just signing up for classes and getting approval from the VA.
  + 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? I was looking for one that was local, but had a hybrid program so I could do some online and some in-person. It was actually a school I graduated with previously. So I figured I would just go back.
  + 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? I would ask them I guess if it was like a specific class…what coursework was like, interactions with professors, whether it was supportive environment or self-led

**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?

So first I would make sure everything already entered in dropdowns in correct. I’d keep it as schools online and I’d check which one. Clicked box. Click search. . It looks like there’s one result and it looks like it’s the correct school. And I think it’s nice that it says right here what you’re getting with the GI Bill. It also tells me how many GI Bill students are enrolled and the ratings. My question is whether all GI bill students are given in-state tuition. I would look under view details…I really like that it has the link directly to the school here. I would just look at the breakdown of the benefits on the side here. How much it pays for tuition/fees. Out of pocket. Book stipend and it adds that all up for you.

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?

Clicked See 122 ratings…I would look at the ratings by other Veterans and see if they actually allow you to leave a review or if it’s just on a scale of 1 to 5. I like how its broken down into different categories. I’d go in there and see if those are actually..clicked overall experience +…it shows how many people rated each one, but it would be nice if it also let you leave a review. Maybe someone had a bad experience with the VA office and it would be nice to have a heads up

Valuable – I would say the GI Bill support would be big for me. I haven’t experience this, but I know people who have depended on their housing benefit to pay their bills while in school and they don’t see that money unti 4 or 5 months after they’ve applied. If you see the stars, you can know ahead of time that you might have a problem and be proactive and do what. You can on your end.

Maybe job preparation because I’m assuming most people continue their education to be better prepared for a career and they have specific programs and I wanted to be a CPA and this is an everyday thing and it wasn’t addressed

Not important? – I would say marketing practices…I guess it’s kind of important because a lot of for profit schools target Veterans or don’t have programs that prepare you for a career. If I had to pick one that was least important, it would be marketing practices.

Other categories? – maybe like for people that are going there in person…like campus life. Maybe if they’ll be living in the dorms or food options or gym on campus. The events that the campus has. That really depends on how involved they want to be with the school.

Collected – Maybe like everybody that’s enrolled towards the end of the semester is sent out from the VA. I would assume that’s how that information is collected.

Privacy – I work in research so I would say it would be private and it would remain anonymous and that there isn’t a text option. If it’s rating as a scale from 1 to 5 its presented as an aggregate.

Trustworthy – I would take it with a grain of salt. I think the majority of people who responded either really liked it or didn’t like it.

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 entered UoC and clicked Search and all their campuses come up…and if I was really open to attending any of them and not tied to a physical location, I would look at ratings along with the housing allowance to make sure I could live there and it would cover bills. I see Lakewood with the cautionary warning I would avoid that completely. It looks like some of them don’t have any ratings and others that have very poor ratings.

No ratings? I would think that there just isn’t very many people enrolled using their Gi Bill or haven’t gotten surveys on it. I’d probably look further into their programs or other sites to see if I could find reviews on them. I would probably look at the highly rated schools first and then ones that weren’t rated and then ones with the low rating

Uses jump link to view ratings on Hastings

It looks like it has a decent overall experience. There’s no rating for online instruction – I assume all classes are in-person. And it looks like their Veteran community is very small. And it looks like only 5 people rated it – so that just reinforces that the veteran community is pretty small.

The little box down here on recipients…I’d be a bit confused with 0 recipients but there is money paid. It doesn’t look like they have Yellow Ribbon so that’s something I would need to check into.

Relationship – I would say that that would be an average of all of them added up and divided by the scores.

NA? That nobody entered that. It’s not applicable – that online instruction, someone didn’t take online classes so it didn’t apply to them.

Caution flag – I’ve heard of quite a few schools who have lapsed in funding and closed and people have had a hard time transferring credits and I would want to avoid a situation like that

How would these ratings weigh into your school? Moderate – would delve deeper into the individual ratings

Schools not yet rated – new to GI Bill, surveys haven’t been sent out

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!