**STEM Usability Testing Discussion Guide**

**Participant 7 – Lee B Stedge**

**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're going to take a look at the application for a new scholarship for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries.

Before we get started, a few things I want to mention:

* This entire session should take about 45 minutes. I don't want to keep you much longer than that, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* During this session, we want to hear your honest opinions. We're not testing your ability. We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I won't be offended by any opinions you express and welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.

We will be working in a prototype so some functionality will not work as expected. For example, when you click on a field, an answer or selection may pre-populate or alternatively, you may click on something and nothing may happen. In those cases, I'll let you know that the functionality isn't working and ask what you would expect to happen.

Are you comfortable if I record the screen and audio as we talk today? We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are deleted after we finish analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.

* If yes: Great - thank you. Once I start recording, I'll ask again so we have your audible confirmation.
* If no: Ok. My team will just observe and take notes as we go.

Start recording.

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

**Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes**

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

Usability testing?

1. Are you currently using or have you ever used your GI Bill education benefits? Yes I have. Post 9/11. I am in-between semesters right now. Now I’m working and getting ready for next semester.

* What school are you attending / did you attend?
  + University of Maryland – global campus
* What did you / are you studying?
  + Information Technology Management

1. Are you familiar with the Rogers STEM scholarship? I am not

* If yes, what have you heard?

For our session today, I'm going to give you a couple tasks to do online. While you're going through them, it would be really helpful if you'd think aloud - kind of like you'd do if you were talking to yourself. We are interested in your first reactions, what you're thinking & wondering as you go through the process. The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn.

When you think aloud, it helps us understand what works well and where we might want to make improvements to make things even easier. If you have questions, it’s likely that many other Veterans will, as well, so feel free to ask them along the way.

I'm going to give you control of my screen & mouse. I'll pass control to you and you should receive a message that prompts you to control the screen.

**Task 1: Navigate to STEM form - 5 minutes**

You've heard about a scholarship that the VA offers called the Rogers STEM scholarship and are curious if you could receive this scholarship. Your initial search took you to VA.gov. How would you go about finding the application for the Rogers STEM application from this page?

First I would scroll down to Education and it looks like none of those options are there. I’d scroll down further. Click Education and training. Then scroll down and see if there’s anything about scholarships here. Click Other educational assistance programs looks like something that might cover it. What was the name of it again?

So if I don’t find it here, then I might just …Click Educational and Career Counseling to see if there’s options there to take me to…I’m hoping there’s something that would say educational options…something with scholarships, but nothing jumps out at me. Since there isn’t anything, I figured someone with counseling could help me out. Clicked More resources. Click Home…so I’d go back and do a direct search for scholarships. Global search for scholarship. Clicked Scholarships & Grants…that looks like it’s a general scholarships thing. Scrolling through options. Yeah, nothing really jumps out. Clicked More information and resources. Actually I’m looking for anything that isn’t GI bill specific. I’m assuming that scholarship isn’t part of the GI Bill.

Things to watch for:

* What areas of the page does the participant explore?
* What does the participant click on?
* If searching or talking about the scholarship, what terminology does the participant use?

**Task 2: Determine Eligibility - 10 minutes**

Now let's say you've reached the application form. Based on your real life field of study and the benefits you have remaining, how would you use this page to decide if applying for the Rogers STEM scholarship is a good choice for you?

Scroll down and looked at subway map. Reading through eligibility. As far as eligibility I have plenty of benefits left. I’m enrolled in a STEM program and I’m using Post 9/11. Technically I wouldn’t apply since I’m not within 6 months of using all my benefits

Know how many left?

Well over the six months – maybe a year or two.

Not knowing how much?

I like this Check your remaining benefits link. I would hope that it would take me to a page with the GI Bill showing how much I’ve used and how much I have left. Clicked link…Says right there. I mean it makes sense that I have to sign in to see my benefits. I like the security and having my information private.

Things to watch for:

* Does the user look at the subway map or click the link at the top of the page without reading anything else?
* Where does the user look to determine eligibility?
* Does the user read to determine eligibility or just start the application?

**Upon completion of task**

* What do you think the requirements are to be eligible for the STEM scholarship?
  + STEM program of study / credit hours
  + 6 months or less of benefit left
  + Using Post 9/11 benefits
* What did you think of how the requirements were communicated?
* Would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* If you were unsure if your degree qualified for STEM, what would you do?
* How do you know how much entitlement you have remaining (e.g. something they track, how often do they check, etc.)?
* In terms of determining the requirements for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

Note: User may continue to Task 3 without a prompt

**TASK 3A: Apply for STEM - 15 minutes**

Now we're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Sammy Smith and you're working on an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. How would you go about filling out this application? For this prototype, you will log in as an authenticated user.

\*Remember to think aloud as you go through so we can hear what works for you and what doesn't.

Checking benefits... see what they say / If they don't know and say they'd check, respond < 6 months.

Things to watch for:

* Do any questions cause confusion or require additional research for users to answer?
* Does the user try to skip any questions?
* Does the user click the Additional Info component "What if I don't have a bank account?"?
* If ineligible, how does the user react to ineligibility alert?
* If they click "Check remaining benefits", what would you expect to happen (e.g. modal, new page, etc.)?

**Upon completion of task:**

* What parts of the form would be the easiest for you to complete?
* What parts of the form, if any, might you have to do some research to find? How would you track down that info?
* Did any of the questions seem unnecessary?
* For the banking information, how do you think the VA will use that information? What are your thoughts on whether the info you provide here might impact other payments you receive from VA?
* For the school ID and email, would you be likely to provide this information? What do you think it will be used for?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**TASK 3B: Triggering the Alert - 15 minutes**

Now we're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Sammy Smith and you're working on an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. You know you have about one semester left of entitlement remaining, but aren't sure of the exact amount. You would like to apply for the STEM scholarship if you can. How would you go about applying for this scholarship? For this prototype, you will log in as an authenticated user.

\*Remember to think aloud as you go through so we can hear what works for you and what doesn't.

*Prompt at "About how much of your entitlement do you have left?"*: Say you clicked "Check remaining benefits" and found out that you have 7 months left. What would you do?

I’d scroll down and make sure under the Prepare that I have all that info and read all the steps. Here. Then I was ready and had all this stuff that I would then click on the apply. I would sign in and hope that it would pre-populate some of the information. So yeah, it says what I was hoping it would say [prefill]. Start application..continue…Post 9/11 continue. More than 6 months. So that’s basically saying that he’s not eligible.

What would you do?

I would Explore other education benefits. Clicked button. It would also depend on how close I am to 6 months. If I was registered for classes but not actually started, I might actually go ahead and apply. If I had just started classes, but hadn’t completed them, I would be at that 6 month mark. By the time I had finished the classes, I would be eligible for this.

Feel like wiggle room?

Yeah – I don’t know how long the application process will take. By the time they look at it, that I might be eligible. It just really depends on the specific amount of time I had left. I don’t know. I don’t know how to specify a specific spot.

I would put Information Technology for stem degree

School ID is not the same as your SSN. I do not know my ID by heart.

School email – I use it for school specific things. I check it daily.

I would normally put a home phone number in there just in case.

Contact preferably email unless it’s something that needed to be answered immediately. I kind of hope they prioritize it. That they would send email first.

Bank account – does not expect this to affect other VA payments

Opens applicant information and education benefit, program details, military details, and personal information. Clicked check for privacy. Opened the privacy policy. Yeah, I usually go through the privacy policy, but I wont’ do it right now. I look to see what information they may or may not share.

I would print this page – a digital copy.

What did you think – once I got here, it was relatively straightforward and easy. I think if they had an education section that was more categorized.

Most information was pretty straightforward to fill out. Nothing I would need assistance with.

This is like a Post GI bill scholarship – if you have a little bit left this is to help you finish it.

Does this not apply to graduate program? It didn’t say that it specifically excluded graduate degrees.

Rate task – application process was very easy 5, process of getting to application was more difficult. It wasn’t easy to find on the education page. It wasn’t advertised on the page. Unless I’d gotten an email or an other notification I wouldn’t know about it. Eligibility was pretty easy – a 3 , pretty straightforward. What I didn’t see was the point of the scholarship. I knew it was STEM, but I didn’t know it was STEM or teaching degree. I didn’t know it was for also pursuing a teaching degree.

What do you think they are doing with school ID and email? Verifying eligibility at that school

How many credits remaining in degree? Basically have 2 semesters left…12-16 credit hours left

Other communication – VA newsletters, after 20 years in the military I look forward to whatever opportunities are available.

Suggestion – making it more clear on the Education site on what is available. Even the Fry scholarship, that wasn’t something that was immediately evident.

Things to watch for:

* Does the user think the application would let them continue?
* How do users react to alerts and warnings about eligibility?
* Do any questions cause confusion or require additional research for users to answer?
* Does the user try to skip any questions?
* Does the user click the Additional Info component "What if I don't have a bank account?"?
* If ineligible, how does the user react to ineligibility alert?
* How do users exit the application if they are ineligible and don't want to continue applying?
* If they click "Check remaining benefits", what do they expect to happen (e.g. modal, new page, etc.)?

**Upon completion of task:**

* What parts of the form would be the easiest for you to complete?
* What parts of the form, if any, might you have to do some research to find? How would you track down that info?
* Did any of the questions seem unnecessary?
* For the banking information, how do you think the VA will use that information? What are your thoughts on whether the info you provide here might impact other payments you receive from VA?
* For the school ID and email, would you be likely to provide this information? What do you think it will be used for?
* What did you think of the alert?
* What would you do after you saw this message?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes**

Circle back on

* Eligibility alert - For the "Check remaining benefits" helper in the form, what do they expect to happen (e.g. modal, new page, etc.)?
* STEM program dropdown - How would they categorize their "real" degree?
* School contact details - Is your school ID the same as your SSN? If applicable, what would you put down for your school email?
* Direct Deposit: For the banking information, how do you think the VA will use that information? What are your thoughts on whether the info you provide here might impact other payments you receive from VA?

Those are all the tasks I have for you today.

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the application that you’d like to share?
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to 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!