**Conversation Guide: Search Design Concepts**

*Start recording to the cloud.*

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

**Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes**

Let’s start with a few questions...

* Where do you typically go to get information about VA benefits? I usually google veteran affairs then go to the va website that way.
* Which one: I think it is va.gov.
* When was the last time that you remember going to the VA.gov website? Probably a year ago when looking at education benefits.
  + What were you looking for? I think there is an education benefits tab on the left and I went through that.
  + Where did you look? I was trying to find out how much time I had left for my GI bill then the number for customer service because I was allowed to use the Montgomery GI bill and post 9/11 Gi Bill.

**Screen sharing**

I would like you to share your screen with me so I can watch you use a specific website. I'll need to see your web browser. If you want to share your whole desktop, first close any other applications that you don't want me to see. *(refer to Screen sharing instructions above, if needed)*

What kind of device are you using today?

**Task 1: [Submit letter in support of your claim - Form 21-4138] - 5 minutes**

Let's say that in order to support your request for VA benefits, you plan to submit a letter from someone who has first-hand knowledge of your condition. You want to find the form for them to write the letter to support your claim.

Have you ever done this before? No I have not.

Can you look at the page in your web browser and tell me what you might do--but don't do it yet. What would you expect to happen? First I would look at the healthcare and disability tabs because it seems the most relevant then look at the links below to see witch would be best for the letter template. I would look at the disability stuff first, upload evidence seems like that’s what it would be. I would click on that to see if there is instructions or templates or information for the letters there.

Anything else: I would look at the drop down menus to see what would be there. If what I wanted wasn’t there I would use search. The drop down va benefits and healthcare seems like it would be the one. This seems like this could be a real va website.

Now go ahead and try search: I would click the search tool and put in disability letter.

Expect to see: when I click I expect a search box to enter free text.

Before you do anything on this page, what do you think you can do here? Now there are other options. I would scroll down and look at everything on that page. So the find a va form doesn’t seem like it would be that many helpful since they are categorized by the form number but I would still click on that then I would click on resources and support for instructions for the letter since it says step by step instructions and facts. It may answer my questions.

First: Probably go to resources and support.

Go ahead: then I would look down on the page to see hat is included on here. Since it had different topics I would look at those. I see one for disability and it looks like it could be relevant.

Which one: the disability selection itself. Those don’t really seem to be what I would be looking for so I would see what is included under the different tabs on here and I am not really seeing anything that jumps out to me that I would click on for this. I would go back to the top and do the free text search and put in something like disability letter. It doesn’t seem to let me.

Anything else you would try: I would go back to the top search but that doesn’t work so I would go down to CRSC to see what that is about.

Top search should work on the prior page: I would enter disability letter. I would read all of the options to see which would be the most relevant for me. the one that jumps out is upload evidence to support your claim so I would click on that.

Go ahead and click on that: then I would read everything on there. Just to clarify this is a letter I already have and just want to upload it. I’m just reading to see if there is a section on here that says the form numbers that should be completed.

Looking for form number: yes then supporting statements and medical records are applicable. I don’t see a form number here but under additional forms needed to support claim. I would click on that to see the form number

What would you want to do with the form number: I would put it in the search box to see if there is a template I can download. After reading this I would probably go back to the first page where it had the forms tab section and see if theres an option to search on that or go to the previous page and do a general search for supporting statement to see if the form comes up.

Try the first part for me: find a va form, click on that. Then it has frequently used va forms, I would see if they were included there. I would click read more under disability claim. Just looking down to see if there is something I would click on. It doesn’t look like there is.

Now you can go ahead with what you wanted to do.

* *RECORD search query typed:* I would enter something like disability support letter. Then I would look at all of the things that popped up to see if they are applicable. The one sticking out to me is statement in support of claim. I would read the rest but I would probably go back to that one and click on it. I didn’t see anything else that I would click on so I would go to statement in support of claim and probably go to the actual title of it then continue through the other sections.

**Task 2: [Find VA hospital in Knoxville] - 5 minutes**

Now could you please find out if there's a VA hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee?

Have you ever looked for a VA hospital in a city before? No, I have not.

Can you look at the page in your web browser and tell me what you might do--but don't do it yet. What would you expect to happen? I would look at everything on the page. Since I am looking for a hospital I would be interested in the healthcare section. (reading page) I might check one of those out but I would look at everything else on the page before clicking on one of those. Theres a tab down here that says healthcare but as I look through I see find a va health facility. I would click on that first.

Now go ahead and try it: that doesn’t seem to work.

Okay try something else: I would continue to scroll then at the very bottom there is visited a medical center and under that it had find a va location and that works.

Before you do anything on this page, what do you think you can do here? It lets you search by location; I would look through and see everything that is included.

Now you can go ahead with what you wanted to do.

* *RECORD search query typed: Knoxville TN. For facility type can’t change but I would want to see what is there. I would want it to be what I was looking for like hospital or dental. It looks like that pulled up all of the results for Knoxville TN. It looks like there’s an outpatient clinic that has behavioral health as well then another va clinic as well. I would click on both to see if they have individual pages and the services to decided which to be seen at.*

**Task 3: [College credit for military service] - 5 minutes**

Now I would like you to see if you can get any college credit for your military service.

Have you ever done this before? Yes I have.

Remember how you did it or found out how to: I think it was at my out-processing classes and that was 11 years ago. I remember it was an ARTS transcripts so I would google that and follow any .gov sites I could find.

Did you find out how to get it: yes but I don’t remember how to do it.

Can you look at the page in your web browser and tell me what you might do--but don't do it yet. What would you expect to happen? I would look at the page, automatically the education page jumps out at me but I would go down to see if theres anything else. Theres another education and training site below that. I keep looking to see what is included in the page, there’s a lot of links at the bottom but it doesn’t seem like it would take me directly to that so I would go to the top and look under the education tab. There isn't anything that could take me to an education page so I would go down to education and training thing by the bottom to see if it takes me to an education home page.

Anything else: I would go to the top and search. I would put college credit for military in there.

Now go ahead and try it: I would see if there were any specific links that seems to fit and theres not so I would continue to type into the search bar. See what all comes up and which is the most applicable. Not the lender stuff, there va education and training so I would look at that but look at everything that is included in the first page of results. There are a few different education tabs so I would read these to see if any mention converting credits or transferring credits

Which would you start with: I would start reading the blurb below each. I would probably pick the va education and training benefits and click on that one. I would read on there to see if there are helpful links. I would look for transferring credits for military time. I am not really seeing anything that would be super helpful. I would probably click on the tabs at the top, get GI bill and other benefits and manage ebenefits and more information and resources is where I would start here

If you click on education benefits, it will move to the dark header: got you. Then I would continue to look down here and probably go to about GI bill benefits tab then go down one by one to see if there is helpful information.

Start opening links to see if they have what you are looking for: Yes

What if they did have it: I would go back to the search and maybe just try college credit or something like that. That is the search I did before. My guess is that it will have the same results. I would go back and one this page I would probably see if there would be something under find va forms, maybe a form to fill out for college credits for military time or resource/support to see if they have a link to guide me through the GI bill application process and transfer credit

Which first: probably the resources and support link. then I would under education and training and I see how I get college credit for military service. That’s what I would click on.

Where you were looking at find a va form and resource/support, why considering both: I was think with find a v form, if I didn’t have luck with previous searches it would come up with eh same topics that came up. Not knowing the words to search I would go to resources and support first because it would me more general information or FAQ that is it common so it would be listed.

Find va form, thought it might be a form: right.

**(if time) Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

*Type into #feedback-backchannel: "Any questions you want me to ask?"*

* What did you *like* about what you've seen today? I really appreciate the search bars. A lot of the time I feel like there aren’t direct information I want when on the va site. so having the ability to free text search things is helpful. I really likes the resource and support tabs because of the FAQ that are directly answered there for relevant topics that you can go through and find information
* The resources and support exists or can get form here: both.
* Anything else: those are the big ones
* What did you *dislike* about what you've seen today? Nothing in particular. I feel like it was clunky to navigate at times but I think that is because most of the things that were disabled or the search results were the preloaded ones.
* What would you like to *change* about what you've seen today? I think that what might be helpful is when there’s another link or tabs on the side and need to click on it for another page, instead of automatically taking you to the page have a drop down with different topics within the next page so it could automatically take you there. If clicking on the education tab, have the pop out with the dropdown options
* Seen that in other places on va.gov: I probably have but I know when I go to the actual va website it takes me forever to get somewhere. I have to click 9 or 10 things. When I actually find the link I email it to myself so I can see it. I would never get back there on my own. Maybe reduce having different things on pages
* Save bookmarks: yes but I have 4-5 different computers so I just email it to myself so I don’t need to find it from different computers.
* How does that work: yes, it has been very helpful. The biggest hassle is when the webpage expired but normally it works just fine.
* Other suggestion: I think that’s it.
* How you got to this page you used search in the header, do you expect the results here would have everything you would find on different pages: I expect it would not have all of that just because there are so many different options and pages for each topic. I would not expect it all to come up and with search engines it’s the art of the right wording. I think it is the search engine doing the best it cane, I don’t expect it to know what I want. For va loans came up when looking for college credits. It looked for credits so it came up with financials.
* found that the result in particular was not relevant: right
* resources and support and found the link for college credits. Make sense to have to go to resources but wouldn’t have came up for main search: yes. I would have hoped but I didn’t expect it to. I know somewhere on the website it exist so I just need to explore to find it
* thoughts on different pages: it can be confusing due to different pages with similar content. It's not necessarily all in one page so if theres an education tab I may not see it but if I do a search it might. It would be helpful if it were consolidated into one page. It would be easier if all on one page.
* Search link broken then another one worked: yes.
* What improvements could make search easier or better for you?
* Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know? So really the most success I have had is using google or an outside search engine. I can get there quicker and I make sure it is from a .gov website so I know it is from the va website instead of an outside source.
* Is this a reaction to trying to search on va.gov or the way you search for information no matter: I think it is both but especially with the va website I have noticed that it will take me a lot longer to find it if looking through the website rather than looking outside.
* How does it work with google, right place in va.gov or have issues there too: I would say 90 percent of the time I can find what I am looking for quickly.
* Prefer you could d0o search on va.gov or are you okay with finding va information on google: I am find either way. If I had more success on va.gov I would go there all the time but because I have had experiences where it’s easier for google it is my go to now.
* Anything else you can think of: Not that I can think of.
* In terms of the language question, is there another language you speak: no I took high school Spanish. I think that was a typo on my part if I needed to put it in on my part.

**Thank You and Closing - 1 minute**

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 improving the VA website.

Thank you so much again and enjoy the rest of your day!