# **Research Plan: Digital Gi Bill (DGIB) - Human Centered Design Team, My Education Benefits Usability Testing 7/2021**

## **Goals**

1. **What product & team are you doing this research for?**

This research request comes from the Digital GI Bill team for the Veterans Benefits Administration Education Service. Digital GI Bill will modernize the GI Bill experience in order to improve the user experience, improve automation, address the complexities of recent legislation, and to integrate the legacy IT systems. This specific research plan comes from the Human Centered Design (HCD) agile team as we look to conduct usability testing with GI Bill beneficiaries on a My Education Benefits prototype to understand our stakeholders’ needs while applying for an education benefit.

1. **Background: Briefly, what is the background on this product? What would a new person on the team need to know about this product?**

Our HCD team built the usability testing strategy and prototype to understand stakeholder satisfaction with a future state design for the My Education Benefits application process. The prototype (product) that is the focus of our testing, will be presented as a series of wireframes that simulates the GI Bill education benefit application process for the Post-9/11 GI Bill program. Design features from the prototype have incorporated user feedback, elicited from our 75 interviews conducted earlier this year. Thus, our prototype was created with beneficiaries, for beneficiaries. The design components are aligned with VA.Gov design system priorities, and strategy for the usability testing has been approved by VA Product Owners working with the team.

1. **Research questions: What question(s) do you hope to be able to answer after completing this research?**

As we observe the GI Bill beneficiaries’ end-to-end user experience as they navigate through the My Education Benefits prototype, we hope to:

* Discover what is working in our current designs and prototype features (Are tasks intuitive and recognizable?)
* Uncover obstacles that could prevent beneficiaries from easily accessing or applying for their GI Bill education benefits
* Explore new opportunities to improve the beneficiary experience and design for a user-friendly interface

1. **Hypothesis: What is your hypothesis for this research?**

We hypothesize that users will find the prototype as a large improvement from the legacy system option, but that there will be further refinement necessary to meet the diverse needs of all beneficiary stakeholders.

## **Method**

1. **What method of research are you planning?**

The HCD team will be conducting qualitative usability testing sessions for My Education Benefits application wireframes. All usability testing will be conducted in a remote, moderated setting. Participants will receive a Microsoft Teams or a Perigean Zoom meeting link before their session and will join this link at the beginning of the session.

1. **Methodology:**

We will be using high fidelity prototypes to conduct usability testing. After joining the Microsoft Teams or Zoom Meeting link, participants will receive a link to the prototypes in the meeting chat. We will ask participants to navigate to the InVision board link and share their screen so we can observe the participant experience. Participants will then test multiple My Education Benefits prototypes on the InVision board.

1. **Why this method? How does this methodology help you answer your research questions?**

By inviting beneficiaries to participate in qualitative usability testing, the HCD team will better understand how the end-to-end-user experiences the My Education Benefits Application. The research is designed to elucidate specific areas for improvement within the app. We will be taking notes throughout the test and incorporating the Optimal Workshop software to capture data points and highlight areas for improvement within the My Education Benefits user interface.

**Participants and Recruitment**

1. **Participant criteria: What are you looking for in a participant?**
   * Target Sample Size: 16-20
   * Age: Diverse distribution preferred
   * Accessibility Preferences: Must have access to a computer or mobile phone to use the testing platform
   * Geographical Diversity: Diverse distribution preferred
   * Login Requirements: Access Microsoft Teams (as a guest) and/or Zoom, InVision board (as a guest)
   * VA Benefit Requirements: Eligible Post-9/11 GI Bill Beneficiaries
   * Familiarity with Technology: Diverse distribution preferred
2. **Primary criteria / Must have** –
   * Participant must have access to a computer or mobile phone to use the testing platform

* Participant must be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill Education benefit

1. **Secondary criteria / Would like to have** **–** Representative and/or Diverse Samples in the following characteristics:
   * With respect to your GI Bill education, what degree are you working toward? (1. Associate Degree 2. Undergraduate Degree 3. Graduate Degree 3. Non-College Degree Program 4. Other. 5.None). Representative sample preferred.

* How many hours do you spend on a computer/week? (None, 1-5 hours, 5-10 hours, 10-20 hours, more than 20 hours/week). Diverse sample preferred.
* How would you describe your familiarity with technology? (very poor, poor, neutral, good, very good). Diverse sample preferred.

1. **What is your recruitment strategy?**

Recruitment will be conducted remotely from any of the three sources:

1. *Previous Participant Interest* – We conducted multiple user feedback sessions in early 2021 from which we can recruit beneficiaries for additional research activities. Our past participant recruitment will span across multiple Digital GI Bill team’s participant recruitment efforts.
2. *GI Bill Email and Sign up* – We may also reach out to a Vsignals distribution list to garner interest and sign up for sessions.
3. ***Perigean Contract* – If approved for this research request, we would like assistance from Perigean to recruit additional beneficiaries that fall under our primary participant criterion characteristics.**

## **When?**

We plan to begin conduction of usability testing on August 2nd, 2021. We will have the complete prototype built and finalized by Friday, July 23rd. Each UT session will span 45 – 60 minutes. Exact dates and times are flexible but should ideally occur between August 2nd through August 14th. Reaching our maximum goal of 20 participants will determine if we need to extend the data collection time window. There will be multiple pilot runs of our usability testing before August 2nd, with the first dry-run scheduled for July 21st, 2021. We encourage VA collaboration team to attend any of our pilot testing sessions.

## **Team Roles**

Please list the people who will be serving in each role. Include the primary phone number for moderator and the emails for moderator, notetaker, and observers. If you need Perigean to take notes for you, indicate that next to Notetaker

* **Moderator:**
  + Alternating HCD Team Members:
    - Audra Ayotte, [audra.ayotte@accenturefederal.com](mailto:audra.ayotte@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-429-8956
    - Isabel Herrick, [isabel.herrick@accenturefederal.com](mailto:isabel.herrick@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-429-9345
    - Leelah Holmes, [leelah.holmes@accenturefederal.com](mailto:leelah.holmes@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-775-5432
    - Russell Lyons, [russell.lyons@accenturefederal.com](mailto:russell.lyons@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-414-6157
    - Jake Buller, [jacob.l.buller@accenturefederal.com](mailto:jacob.l.buller@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-733-9205
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    - Mark Meardon, [mark.meardon@accenturefederal.com](mailto:mark.meardon@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-429-8041
    - Miya Furukawa, [miya.s.furukawa@accenturefederal.com](mailto:miya.s.furukawa@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-414-4160
* **Research guide writing and task development:**
  + HCD Team
* **Participant recruiting & screening:**
  + HCD Team
  + Perigean (if applicable)
* **Project POC:**
  + Audra Ayotte, [audra.ayotte@accenturefederal.com](mailto:audra.ayotte@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-429-8956
  + Russell Lyons, [russell.lyons@accenturefederal.com](mailto:russell.lyons@accenturefederal.com), +1 571-414-6157
  + Ricardo Da Silva, [ricardo.dasilva@va.gov](mailto:ricardo.dasilva@va.gov), Project Product Owner
* **Participant(s) for pilot test:** 
  + HCD Team Members
  + Any Necessary Va.gov Personnel
* **Note-takers:** 
  + HCD Team
* **Observers:** 
  + - Ricardo Da Silva, [ricardo.dasilva@va.gov](mailto:ricardo.dasilva@va.gov), Project Product Owner
    - Monique Rodgers, [lakisha.rogers@va.gov](mailto:lakisha.rogers@va.gov). Project Product Owner
    - Joseph Maltby, [joseph.maltby@va.gov](mailto:joseph.maltby@va.gov), Stakeholder Engagement Team

## **Resources**

* Project Brief: [VA.Gov GitHub](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3A2e79f273f6a8460ca3bb3bc85221803a%40thread.tacv2/tab%3A%3A1d020468-8ce9-49e9-b33a-b6c53d94ba1a?groupId=8839b3a3-8436-4316-a1e6-7b81fce57c7e&tenantId=0ee6c63b-4eab-4748-b74a-d1dc22fc1a24)
* Convo Guide: <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/tree/master/products/my-education-benefits>
* Synthesis: Not yet started.
* Lessons Learned: Will be completed after usability testing sessions conclude.
* Read-Out/Results: Will be completed after usability testing sessions conclude.
  + \*\* Don't forget to add a link to your research folder to the research tracker! <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/platform/research/research-history.md>