**Sec 103 Usability Testing Discussion Guide**

**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 GI Bill Comparison Tool. Specifically, we're looking at how schools within the Comparison Tool comply with a particular law.

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.

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?

**Setting up Screen reader & Sharing**

For our next step, I'd like you to share your screen and screen reader audio with me.

In Zoom, can you select the Share button?

On this next screen, let's go with the default selection.

Also, there is a checkbox in the Share Screen option that says "Share computer sound." This will let us hear your screen reader. Can you make sure that it's checked and select "Share"?

\*Confirm that the screen reader is audible. \*Confirm that screensharing works. If it doesn't work immediately, suggest they restart the screen reader (order of operations isn't typically isn't critical)

**Checklist for Screen Reader Participants**

* Are you using a computer or mobile phone during our session today? Mac or Windows? iOS or Android?
* What browser are you using today?
* Are you using a screen magnifier today?
* Do you have the latest version of Zoom (4.3.1) installed? Check under Zoom > About.
* Which screen reader are you using today?
* Are you wearing headphones today? If so, would it be possible for you to take them off and use your computer or mobile audio? I'm asking so that I can hear your screen reader during the session.
* Would you mind setting your screen reader to its default speed? We want to accurately hear and record what you’re experiencing on VA.gov.
* Do you know your screen reader's verbosity setting? High, medium, low? Is that your standard setting (or do you tend to change it depending on what you're working with)?

**Warm-up Questions (Optional) - 10 minutes**

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

1. Are you currently using or have you ever used your GI Bill education benefits?

P: Currently using.

1. What has been your experience with VA payments to your school?

P: No problems. I haven’t experienced any problems when making payments to the school. I have to contact my VA liaison and they contact VA. It’s been pretty easy.

1. Were you attending classes and receiving education benefits in the Fall of 2018?

P: Yes.

* If yes, do you recall if you had any issues with VA late payments to your school?

P: I think there might have been a delay for a couple of weeks. My housing payment was not delayed.

Any impact when that happened?

P: No because the veterans affairs person let the financial office know. They didn’t put a hold on my account. VA kept the school in loop of what’s going on.

* If yes, can you tell me a little about what happened?

1. Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?

P: [has used it previously]

* If yes, fantastic!
  + When do you think the last time you used it was?
  + What were you looking for?
  + Do you recall how you first learned about it?

**For Screen Reader Participants**

Okay. Now I'd like you to open a new browser window or tab.

I have a website I want you to visit - I can send you the link via chat in Zoom or I can spell out the Url - which would you prefer?

<https://bit.ly/2XFnKix>

**For non-Screen Reader Participants**

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.

**First Task: Find Section 103 - 15 minutes**

You have a friend who had to take a loan back in 2018 due to late VA payments to their school. You know that the VA has taken steps to keep this from happening again, but that schools may require certain documentation from you to attend classes if the payments are late. You’re interested in attending **Midland University in Fremont Nebraska**, how would you use the Comparison Tool to find what information Midland University requires?

P: [landing page – clicked on learn more for “how do you want to take classes?”]

AK: Can you hear me?

P: I know in the past I’ve gotten confused with the Montgomery gi bill and the post-9/11, but this is clear. I know which one to pick. [was going through military fields to ensure they matched him.] Ok, so I’ll put midland. It said midland college so I might be confused. It had midland college and midland university. [tried using country dropdown] [clicked on “view details”].

Gi pays 22…tuition and fees, 28…out of pocket, 5,000…[kept reading down the page starting from the top]. Ok, so I would need 5,000 additional to go here. Housing allowance…total paid to you, 8,000. Ok. Scholarships…yellow ribbon, that’s good. I’d probably want to inquire more about the yellow ribbon for this school. [clicked on learn more for YR]. [Clicked on YR FAQ in modal]. Looking for how to apply for this. So it says “You should provide your Certificate of Eligibility” to the school which will determine the # of slots that are available”. I think I would try to contact the school, Midland, to see if I can get them to pay the extra 5,000 I would need. Eligible for kicker bonus, I’d try to see if I can get that.

Student feedback, 0 student complaints in the last 24 months. That’s good but I’d want to see the source for that. [clicked link] Ok, that’s good but it doesn’t tell me the source for that. Where is the information coming from? I don’t really trust that section there. Contact details, there’s no phone numbers there, so now I have to look up the phone number. A phone number or email address, something like that. Accredited, yes, that’s good. So that’s good. 28 people got the gi bill in 2019. At least I can see other people using it at this school. It’d be nice to see if these people graduated. [student outcomes]. I would want to know that people getting into the program are getting their degree. That would be more reassuring.

Single point of contact for veterans, yes. That’s good. Where’ the contact information? It’d be nice to have that. Can I click on these [institution summary links]. Oh, I see. That’s good. It’d be nice to have that continuity here. Independent study, no. It’d be nice to have that here. Rogers STEM scholarship? I don’t know what that is. [clicked on modal for stem]. Ok, so that’s good. It tells you what it is, so I can now apply for this thing.

Protection against late va payments? What’s that about? [clicked on modal]. Ok, that’s good, but that’s kind of really important, but I kind of have to hunt for that. I think something like that should be more visible. It’s kind of like the small print for legal stuff. Like the very, very small print in a contract. That’s kind of important. Ok, so I think that’s everything.

AK: Where do you think it would fit better?

P: Yeah. They should have that under Midland University. Underneath that, they should have the veterans protection thing. I think it should be there, underneath the university [my idea of putting institution summary items at the top]. I don’t think people are going to search for that. People are just going to search for the money part, how much they’re going to get. They have “cautionary information”. They should probably change that language. It could be more clear, maybe “important”. Cautionary is a good word, but it could be more direct, and then when I clicked on it, it didn’t even have a source for the information.

AK: That’s the one that didn’t match up to what you were expecting?

P: Yeah, it says source but it doesn’t have a source of the information. [found caution flag section in about this tool page]. Yeah, see, it doesn’t have a source. Are they explaining the complaints, is that what they’re doing?

AK: I’m curious when it says, “requires Certificate of Eligibility” does that mean anything to you?

P: Yeah, I know what that means because you have to have it to start receiving your benefits.

AK: Do you have one right now?

P: Yes, I have it screenshot when I got it from the va email.

AK: So when someone from the school asked you for that, you’d be able to provide it?

P: Yes, I’m pretty sure the literature from va told me to keep a copy of it.

Things to watch for:

* Where does the user initially look for the information?
* Does the user look under the Institutional Summary section?
* What, if any, interest does the user show in the “Protection against late VA payments” modal information?
* Does the user click on the modal for more information?
* Screen reader: how does the user move throughout the page? (quick tabbing through options, listening to every control/element, etc.)
* Screen reader: how does the user interact with modals?

Upon completion of task: How did you think that went?

**Second Task: Section 103 Content - 10 minutes**

{ Get participant to 103 indicator }

As you're reviewing the information in this area of the page, could you tell me what “Protection against late VA payments” means to you?

P: It means va will protect you against late payments.

* Have you heard of a Certificate of Eligibility before? If so, when? Have you submitted one before?
* Do any other questions come to mind about this?

**Third Task: Additional Criteria - 5 minutes**

Let's say you are also interested in attending **College of Charleston in Charleston, SC** and are curious about their requirements for obtaining protection against late VA payments. How would you go about determining those requirements for this school?

P: [tried searching for “Charleston”] It’d be nice if the college part came up. [searched again for college of Charleston].

P: [went to profile] Ok, so again, it’d be nice if it was right here [top of page]. [started reading down page]. Veteran programs, ok. So I gotta search for this protection thing. Ok, so that’s not good. It says, no information available at this time”. That’s kind of suspicious. [opened modal] so I gotta contact the school’s certifying official. What’s that, transition act? It’d be nice if they had the contact information right here, but I gotta search for it. Oh, it’s right here, but it has no phone or email. So I still have to search for it. It makes me suspicious of this school.

AK: So that would mean no information available in the system yet.

P: I saw Midland first, then if I saw this school second, I would be even more suspicious. You know what I’m saying?

* What do you think “additional criteria” is?
* How would you go about finding out more information?

Things to watch for:

* Does the user click on the modal?
* Does the user search around anywhere else looking for more information on “additional criteria”?

AK: let’s do one more. [had him search for **Chadron State College.**

P: That came up quickly. That’s good. We’re still focusing on the warning? Ok, so that’s good. Requires COE and additional criteria. What’s additional criteria? [clicked modal and read]. So I still have to contact this school because there’s no definition of this additional criteria. Why can’t they just list this on here? That would be a lot easier. So now I have to see the school certifying official.

AK: How would you go about contacting them?

P: They should at least have their emails or phone numbers. Now I have to go on the school website, find this person, \_\_\_ \_\_\_, and search for them. Just a lot of steps to find out about the additional criteria. They should have their phone number and email. That would be a lot easier. A lot of students are not going to search for that information. They’re going to search for a different school.

AK: we don’t have the phone numbers [?]

It’s like 2020. No one’s going to write them a letter. If that was prominent enough for me to see that information, I’d probably look at other schools that don’t have additional criteria. It depends on how badly I wanted to go to this school. Or if you’re facing a deadline to apply. If I’m facing a deadline to apply.

AK: where do you think you might realistically look to find it if you found out va might be late for payments?

P: I would call the veterans person at the school. I would call them and see what’s going on. That’s what I did in 2018 to find out what was happening.

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share?

P: Nothing additional. I think I was pretty thorough. Just like that protection should be underneath the school name. That needs to be more prominent. It should have the protection information, and then the source information [for complaints]. Where is that coming from? Where are they getting these stats from? It doesn’t tell you the source. It makes you lose confidence in that part of the calculator. I think that’s pretty much it. The money part looks good. It lets you know how much you have to pay out of pocket. I guess my only worry is that because schools are always changing, the tuition, I hope the calculator’s always being updated. SO that’s good, then, yeah. Everything else I liked about it. [?] Yeah, I don’t see anything else.

CC: Back in 2018, Did your school notify you that va payments were late or did you learn about that from va or on your own?

CC: Did you know of other veterans who were also affected by the late payments?

P: [Learned from VA of delayed payments in 2018. VA sent him a letter.]

P: [Had buddies that were affected by late payments, as well, but they were ok.]

-[coe q’s]

* We had you look for information on delayed VA payments within the GI Bill Comparison Tool. If this situation arose in real life where do you think you’d look for information on how to deal with this issue?
* Any questions for me?

**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!