**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: Yes, I’m currently using it at George Washington.

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

P: Everything’s been pretty timely. The only time was when the budget was delayed and everyone was having trouble worldwide.

AK: was that in fall 2018?

P: Yes.

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

* If yes, do you recall if you had any issues with VA late payments to your school?
* If yes, can you tell me a little about what happened?

P: The payments were delayed to GW. They didn’t make me pay any late fees, but it was nerve wracking. I wasn’t sure if it was going to be paid, am I going to be on the hook for payments? It eventually did get paid, and our military advocate was in communications.

Ak: the military service office, you were getting communications from them?

P: Yes, whenever anything did happen, we were getting communications from them.

[?] I was still getting active duty payments, and then I retired the last week of November 18. I had saved up just enough money in case the bottom gave out. I saved up just because all that stuff doesn’t go smoothly.

Ak: good planning

P: I was a medical planner, so leaving without a plan wasn’t a good idea for me.

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

P: I think so. Is that to show who will pay what?

Ak: yeah

P: ok, when I first started out, I did use that.

Ak: how did you find out about it?

P: I’m one of those people that googles and researches the heck out of everything so that’s what I did.

* 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] so are they going to use just the post-9/11 gi bill? [typed in school name and searched]

[srp] [clicked view details]

[profile] [ak reminded her to think out loud] so I searched for midland university. I’m looking to see for them to figure out how to pay… some of these, tuition assistance programs and veterans programs, if they need more information, they can look there [veteran programs]. So for the protection against late va payments, they have to do the certificate of eligibility, and if they need more information about the policy, it clicked back to take me directly to their website [she clicked on policy link above, same as p2]. So there’s information about scholarships, like I’m looking specifically if someone needs assistance for a loan they took out? I’m sorry.

Ak: yes, we’re looking to see if va is late on payments, what documentation would the school require from the student?

[she went back to profile page and opened 103 modal][…] so this lets people know that va is going to pay for their education.

There’s the information here, and it also tells you if you’re not 100% sure, you can either contact them or hit this to learn more about the transition act. So to me, it feels like there’s enough information there, and even in the site, it says, hey who are your school certifying officials. It tells you who to contact, and to me, that’s important. To me, sometimes finding someone at the school isn’t the easiest.

Ak: how would you find out who to contact at the school?

I would go to the veterans link [policy link again] and I would see who to contact. [searched around the school website for that] sorry about that.

Ak: that’s ok.

P: it doesn’t look like they have the contact information there, but if I searched on their website, I’d probably be able to find a quick contact that way.

Ak: let’s hop back [directed her to inst. Sum. Section]

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 **COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON IN CHARLESTON, SC**}

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: to me, it means whatever payments va would be liable for to pay the school, that’s what it means. Whatever you don’t see, but you benefit from it.

* Have you heard of a Certificate of Eligibility before? If so, when? Have you submitted one before?

P: yeah, at gw, I have to do a certificate of eligibility every term that I’m going to use benefits. For ours at gw, I have to do it online, and they also send us emails reminding us, hey, it’s cert week. Don’t forget to certify your stuff.

Ak: how do you submit that?

P: we have gw banner. It’s our registrar system. That’s how I register for classes. It’s basically all my personal information for the school. we have a veterans tab. You click which term you’re requesting certification for. There’s a couple of questions there, and then you hit submit and it goes to the military services office. When I first registered, I went in person and it gave me a sheet that had all the instructions, and usually when I email they, they get back to me in a day or two so they’re pretty responsive.

Ak: so you have to submit every semester?

P: yes, for every semester…as soon as I register for classes, I immediately go and submit my coe.

Ak: are you submitting a screenshot or do they have your actual record from the va?

P: when I first started, I had to get my stuff approved through the va, I can’t remember the form, saying that I was going to gw. Once that’s all on file the first semester, it’s just going back and submitting the coe.

Ak: it sounds like they have you covered

P: they’re pretty phenomenal, and I don’t have to figure this out. I have a traumatic brain injury, and me coming back as a student in my 40s, I have it pretty easy.

Ak: [asked her to search for COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON IN CHARLESTON, SC]

[went to profile page] it says there that they don’t have any information specific to the school. maybe the college of Charleston hasn’t updated this tracker, or that they don’t have a policy, they may charge you. This website tells me that college of Charleston hasn’t at least filled in that information. I wouldn’t be too sure of it.

Ak: if you were trying to contrast, would you feel more or less comfortable compared to midland?

P: less comfortable. [?] I see that they have less recipients at college of Charleston. I’m sure that they have something figured out. But their institution summary isn’t as robust as midland’s.

Ak: can you talk about that?

[?] if the fact that they haven’t filled in the protection against late va payments, if the fact that they haven’t filled out a lot of these little thing, when I’m trying to make a decision, that would weigh heavily on me. Especially if I have to uproot my whole family. To me, I look for the small things, are they updated. If you’re not paying attention to the small things, you’re likely not paying attention to the big things either.

Ak: this is test data. It’s a real school but we popped in some data for testing.

P: I look at all the information they have. I’m sure they have, even in the test world, a real program, but if I was on a student salary, I would be concerned.[?]

Ak: generally, the law that was passed says that there has to be some sort of compliance with this law, so we want to make sure that the veterans are covered. They don’t have to have late fees or take out loans. That was a hideous time.

P: yeah, I was getting a little concerned.

* Do any other questions come to mind about this?

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

Let's say you are also interested in attending **Chadron State College in Chadron, NE** 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: [searched for school]

[profile] [went down to 103 indicator and opened modal] it says requires coe and additional criteria. To me, I would contact the school’s military services office and find out what that is. If I were a new student, I would try to figure out what those criteria were.

Ak: any idea what that might be?

P: let’s see…it might be maybe something saying I registered for that semester on time. I’m not 100% sure because everything we do is the COE. It might be a special form the school has, especially if it’s yellow ribbon. So maybe depending on what type of benefit you’re using, there might be something additional. To me, it might be university or institution specific. That’s why I would contact them. To me, it would be very specific to them.

Ak: well, that was all the tasks [?]

P: I live in the dc area. I found it incredibly helpful.

Ak: what was it about the geography that was helpful for you?

P: every university has a different website. You don’t [?] to me it was very helpful because I didn’t have to spend as much time tracking down information that isn’t alike. So having one place for standardized information is great [the CT] so I had an idea of what I wanted and to find it quickly in one place, to me it was really helpful.

* 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”?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

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

P: to me since I’m already registered, I would look for the gw emails. Also, I would go to the va page because they’re pretty good about posting that information. I was trying not to look at any crazy news blogs. Between my university and the va page, I stayed informed. I stayed with reputable horses. I wanted it straight from the horses mouth, to be honest.

Ak: was there one page on the va website that you would go to?

P: I would go to their site to see if there are any updates. [?] everybody and their mother would be calling the gw office, so I wanted to see if I could find out any information first.

Ak: it sounds like you were being proactive and going out and looking for stuff.

P: yeah, this was a lot of money. I live in dc, so I was like, oh, lord. This is a lot of money, so I wanted to be as educated as possible.

[?]

Cc: general thoughts are on the process for finding the indicator for protection against late va payments?

-Thought it was in a good location at the bottom, suggested it could stand out a little more.

JJ: [asked about what was important to her in institution summary]

* 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!