**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 used it from 2011 to 2018. When I used it, I got my associate’s and a majority of my bachelor’s degree.

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

P: I always felt like the va was pretty on top of it. I ran into issues from time to time when there was a cancelation for class. For example, I signed up for a class, and the class was canceled. The va would be late on the ball. At the end of the semester, they’d be like, oh, where’s your credit for this? And then I’d remember, oh, it was canceled. So sometimes they’d be a little late on the ball, but I don’t know if I can knock on the va for that. That could be on my school’s part.

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?

P: I’m a reservist, too. I went on active orders. How did it happen? Basically I went on active orders, and I had to go on training for a couple of months. So, basically, I’m doing training. [?] [he ended up with some debt] at the time, I was using my gi bill for this. The post-9/11 one, what a pain!

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

P: I passed a class, I submitted my orders, and when that got cleared, the va was able to pay for the school. it didn’t go to collections or anything like that. I basically had to clear everything with the reserves and tell them that, as soon as the tour of duty is complete, the va paid it. It was actually a debt to me, but as soon as that was cleared, it was paid to the school. it’s kind of confusing just to recollect. It was over a year ago.

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

* 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?

Ak: have you done usability testing before?

P: I think yes.

Ak: was that in the comparison tool?

P: I went through on the va website. So it was kind of like a website kind of critique.

**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: It looks like type of school is already selected [searched for school in search field] it kind of auto fills so if I put mid…I like how it does this, the autofill. [clicked on midland u]. [searched down profile page] I don’t see anything for loans… This is just telling me information about the school, the housing stipend, and the tuition. I should be able to get the information through the website, right, so I don’t have to go through here [was pointing at school URL].

Ak: right. Just to reiterate…[repeated task].

P: ok, so late payments. [resumed scrolling down screen] out of pocket tuition, tuition amd fees. I’m leaning towards clicking that learn more for tuiton and fees [benefits panel]. I don’t think it’s going to tell me here. I think I have to keep looking for view details. I’m going to click on view details for tuition and fees. Ok, so now I don’t feel like I’m in the right place [about this tool page] I don’t feel like im in the right place. Should I go back to the main page?

Ak: yeah, if you feel you’re not in the right place.

P: cos I’m trying to look for loans, requirements, I don’t see that. I even want to go back to the main main page. So I found the university.

Ak: we’re interested in what this university requires from students if the va is late with payments.

P: [on srp] I didn’t see anything about late payments [was reviewing left filter rail]. I’m not sure. I may have to… I need a little assistance.

Ak: that’s all right. Let’s go back to the university page.

P: [went back to landing page, searched for school again, went to profile] ok, so I’m looking for midland university. I remember you mentioning late payment information, and I clicked this tuition. I didn’t see anything. [kept scrolling down to institution summary section] oh, protection, there it is! Protection against late va payments [opened modal to read] ok, so here it is. It looks like they have a policy. Students can’t impose late fees. So I was expecting to find this information a little more at the top and it was definitely more at the bottom.

Ak: I appreciate your persistence in tracking that down.

P: I would have found it, but it was literally all the way at the bottom. I see why they did that, but it would have been better if they filled it more. There’s a lot of empty space over here [left side] and over here [right rail], but I guess they’re doing it more for cosmetic reasons.

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 looks like they have a policy. Protection against va late payments seems like if there’s a situation where you’re a veteran with the gi bill, but if they can’t make the payments, they’re not going to remove you from the class. I know a lot of times with schools, you have to have a payment before the first day or first week of class.

Ak: have you heard of the certificate of eligibility before?

P: yes. Certificate of eligibility. I’m just reading here, too, because they don’t want just anyone… it’s a means of proof saying that you’re entitled to the gi bill benefit

Ak: have you submitted one before?

P: I remember when I used my gi bill first, I remember I had no idea. I remember filling in, it was a very simple form. It was probably the certificate of eligibility though. They ask some basic questions, what’s your service time, range… I don’t remember what form it was, I remember it was some department of defense form, but I do remember doing something similar.

Ak: do you remember receiving a document from va?

P: yes, a confirmation. Every semester I would get a confirmation. It would always be some physical proof that I’m in the class. They would say something like, “this is paid for or accounted for” something along those lines.

Ak: do you think you’d have the information that you needed to attend classes?

P: yes, if I was familiar with this, then that’s the information I need to at least take classes and take something later.

Ak: [asked him to search for **COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON, CHARLESTON, SC** and read task]

P: so now that I’m a little more familiar, I’ll know where to go and look. Should be faster. [expected search to be suggestive as he typed in Charleston and nothing popped up, tried putting college first] ok, so now we’re at the college of Charleston, and this has all the information so we’re going down. [browsed filters] I gotta go to view details.

[profile] [scrolled down to 103 indicator] ok, here we go. We’re here for protection against late va payments. I’m just going to click it [opened modal] ok, so this looks like the same information [it seemed he expected different info this time]

aK: what are your thoughts about the message no information…?

P: it seems they’re out of date. When I click it, they tell me otherwise. I may have to inform the school. it seems the policy is in, but the school isn’t aware. That’s how I see it.

Ak: can you talk more about that?

P: it seems the va, they passed this transition act here on the bottom. It seems as long as you have your certificate of eligibility. It seems like the va has put out a policy and it just seems like this school is unaware. I don’t know why it would say no information available at this time. It seems as long as the school is getting money from va, that the school has to abide by these rules.

Ak: how would you go about getting to the bottom of that?

P: I know every school has a va counselor. I would talk to them first. I always had a good relationship with every counselor… they just have enough understanding of, oh. It always seemed they always knew the basics of getting you to where you need to go.

Ak: how would you go about finding that person that you needed to talk to?

P: I would talk to admissions. [he’d ask them for the va counselor] usually, they’d know. Admissions is the first place to start.

Ak: how would you track that information down?

P: I would usually call…usually, the school was kinda helpful. They didn’t always want you hanging on a limb.

Ak: that’s great. Did you see any information on this page that would give you ideas on who you’d contact and how?

P: no. do you want me to look around some more? So maybe the va counselor for this school. oh, ok, single point of contact for veterans, it says no. That’s kinda surprising. I know where Charleston is. They have an air force base there. so maybe the va site needs to be updated with the school site.

Ak: do you see any other information here on how you could contact the school?

P: [scrolled up] oh, so one of these people might be… it seems like the person. Ok, so \_\_\_ \_\_\_ is the primary, secondary…ok, so they do have the address. I mean you could mail a letter. It’d be nice if they had a phone number. It has everything except the phone number.

* 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 **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, went to profile] So we’re just going to scroll down to the bottom. I don’t know. They may want to put this eligibility at the top nowadays. Ok, so here I am. I’m at the additional information, protection against late va payments. It looks like it requires a Certificate of Eligibility and additional criteria, That’s interesting. [opened modal] this is something that all schools have to do, right? It’s not something that all schools deny it.

Ak: based on the gi bill benefits, this school has to comply

P: there are certainly a lot of veterans in Charleston. It seems they have to be aware of it.

Ak: what does this particular school require?

P: requires coe and additional criteria. Ok, so what’s additional criteria? Let’s see what additional criteria is [opened modal, seemed to think it would have that information ]. [read modal content] ok, so I’d have to, it looks, I don’t know what they mean by the additional criteria, but I’d have to contact the school to get that.

* What do you think “additional criteria” is?

P: I’m guessing, so if you have your coe, I’m guessing they want to make sure there’s reasonable time. Maybe your gi bill is going to expire in, like a month. Maybe that’s that additional criteria. Maybe they say, well you gotta have at least enough time. Or, because I know schools sometimes are pretty flexible in letting, even if you have some kind of disability, they’ll still let you go to school. maybe you have to have a good credit score, I doubt it, but maybe if your credit score is too low. I don’t know what they mean by additional criteria. Maybe you have to contact the school.

* 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?

P: …it seems like one of those things. The more you use it, the easier it is. It’s hard to change government stuff. I don’t want to change it like if there’s that empty space. But just making them convenient and easy to find. It seems like they try to do that… there are ways to do it, but it seems like, it could be frustrating to someone who’s not used to reading a lot or they’re not used to using a webpage. Especially in the military, you got guys that are like, I quit. They get so frustrated that they give up. I think it’s pretty solid. What you got here is solid. If you give it enough time, you should be able to find what you need.

* 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: if I needed additional help?

Ak: yeah if that came up in real life.

P: I just could not find it.

Ak: where would you look for it?

P: I would probably go to the school website first, but that might be, it might even go to google first.

Jj: [position of 103] thought it would be by tuition and fees learn more in benefits panel

[?]

Cc: learned about late payments from? School [?]

* 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!