**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, currently using Post-9/11 GI Bill.

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

P: as far as I know, it’s been going pretty smoothly. George Washington University does this operation where they wait to submit certification until the students are ready that they’re taking a number of courses.

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

P: yes I was.

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

P: there was, but as far as I know, the reason was because I was a new student. It takes a bit longer to receive benefits for new students.

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

P: as far as I know, the yellow ribbon program and the post-9/11 benefits were later than usual because I was a new student, because I had just moved from Miami, obviously those funds were going to be different… my bills and my rent were a little bit late because I hadn’t received my benefits.

Ak: did you have to take a loan when that happened?

P: not when that happened, no. later, down the road, I had to take out a loan. I was a month late when it came to my housing and bills because I was not receiving my funds. [?] I think it was spring 2019. It was either spring or fall. These days I don’t even know what day it is.

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

P: I have back when I was doing my undergraduate at university of Miami, but that was back in 2015.

* 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: [searched for midland u] [srp] and that’s the one right there. because there’s only one university called midland university where I want to go, I would click view details. Let’s see…so I’m not sure exactly what I’m supposed to do at this point. Does the university have the yellow ribbon program? [scrolled up and down profile page, bypassed inst. Summary] to be honest with you, I’m not really sure where to go.

Ak: what kind of words, what kind of thing are you looking for on the page that would make you feel you’re on the right spot?

P: what you said is that I’m basically looking to see about documentation, but I don’t really see anything about what documentation is needed.

Ak: what would you do at this point?

P: I would contact the school. I’m former military intelligence, so I’d rather go to the source. I’d probably open up all the boxes that I’d need to just to see what’s in each of them….

Ak: [?]

P: it talks about eligibility, but probably not. As far as late payments, I don’t really see anything. Down here, you have the school certifying officials, but there’s no contact information. if I were to see this, it would be definitely useful just so I don’t have to go searching around if I’m already here. But as far as documentation goes, I don’t really see anything requiring documentation [had hovered over inst. Sum again].

Ak: it’s pretty small. It’s almost like a treasure hunt, but we just want to see if it’s in the right spot.

P: so you know where it is.

Ak: oh, yeah. But to your point, that’s one of the problems we’re trying to solve for. We ask folks, what would you do in real life?

P: also to, I’m guessing, when it talks about tuition and fees, that’s the funds that would be paid to the university itself. If there’s anything regarding late tuition payments, then I’d probably go to the tuition and fees to learn more [gray benefits panel]. Am I going off topic? [clicked learn more]

Ak: no, that’s fine. That makes a ot of sense.

P: [continued to look around about this tool page] it doesn’t help that some of the words are purple or blue. I’m like, is that it? Also, too, there’s a lot of words on this page.i’m serious! Here I’m a veteran. Less is more. Instead of having all these words here, you click on something and there’s a drop down menu, it’d be a lot easier to find things. Also I guess, buzzwords are helpful too. Also a guide on the top of the page instead of having to scroll down to find something. Can I do control f here?

Ak: I think so

P: [tried ctrl+ f, typed late] so, late. I’m not really seeing anything for that? At this point, I would get frustrated.

Ak: can you get to the midland university page again?

P: yes

Ak: if you scroll down all the way to the bottom of the page, down here in this bottom section, see if you can track down what we’re looking for

P: ok. Ok, so probably protection against late va payments? [opened modal]

Ak: yea, that’s what we were looking for.

P: there it is. [continued reading modal] the problem is that the information for the primary point of contact, for the sco isn’t even on the page. It would make it easier to have it on the page so I don’t have to go off and continue searching for the next 15 minutes.

Ak: on a scale of 1 to ridiculously difficult, what would you rate it?

P: I would give it a 7. [?]

Ak: very good. Very good input. Let me ask you the question about where it says “requires certificate of eligibility”. Are you familiar?

P: yeah, so basically I receive that prior to every semester before I start.

Ak: how do you usually receive that?

P: I receive it in the mail.

Ak: what do you do with it?

P: what I do with it is I send it to the university, either to the certifying official or to their office. They need to have it. That’s when I store it in my files.

Ak: let me ask you about protection against late va payments. What does that mean to you?

P: it’s kind of a kick in the guts. The va should be on top of their operations when it comes to their education benefits. We do receive a housing allowance from that, and if we’re not certified on time, we’re left to fend for ourselves. As a veteran, you really want to focus on one thing at a time. Having a job on top of that, it’s really difficult to work and try to go to school. it’s really difficult to try to find other ways to fund for our stipend, our housing and things like that if we’re already supposed to be provided for that.

Ak: that’s a really good point. This is something that no one would want to have happen yet. In the event that they are, that there’s some protection in place. I’m curious. What’s a way to effectively communicate that to va and other beneficiaries that this is what happened.

P: the va does [?] but they’re just empty threats, basically. The SCOs tell us that you have nothing to worry about and there are notifications that you’ll be receiving late payments. The thing is that when payments are late at the beginning of the semester, bills accrue. Sometimes when you pay the funds that you haven’t received from the beginning of the semester, then you get back pay, there’s still the money that you haven’t paid when the loans accrue. [?] I’m still paying that back.

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, CHARLESTON, SC**

P: [searched for school, went to 103 modal] Schools can’t impose late fees, deny access to facilities or classes, or otherwise penalize beneficiaries…that’s good. So the schools can’t impose late fees, deny access to facilities if va is late. One thing I’m curious about is that I took out a loan for the university, and I’m imposed late fees [?].

Ak: that could be helpful if you learn about the transition act.

P: oh, well. Thank you for that.

Ak: for this school, it says “no information available”. What are your thoughts on that message?

P: everything above here says what the university provides [inst. Sum], but protection against late fees, there’s no information at this time. I wouldn’t need to click on it. That would tell me there’s no information at all.

Ak: it doesn’t sound like you’re making a judgment against the school

P: oh I would definitely make a judgment against the university. This isn’t the first time that this has been an issue. That information should be provided to the veteran that’s looking to attend the university.

Ak: how would you go about finding out more, if no information is available at this time?

P: as far as I know, obviously it’s highlighted in blue and underscored, it means there’s an explanation for it. When I click on it, there’s no explanation for it.

Ak: for college of Charleston, do you think there are protections?

P: I would say there is protection because it says schools can’t impose late fees. I’d feel pretty protected if that were the case.

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?

* 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 chadron, went to 103 indicator] so this is helpful. It says requires coe and additional criteria. So that’s definitely helpful [opened modal]. Basically same information as before.

* What do you think “additional criteria” is?

P: maybe a dd114. That’s if the service member is out of the military. If the service member is still in the military, not really sure. But I don’t know. Not really sure. The dd214 is the end-all be all document, so it’s possible that might be the additional.

* How would you go about finding out more information?

P: like I said before, to learn more about the transition act or to reach out to the certifying official or if I needed to reach out to the va directly.

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: I think having this tool provided when they’re going through taps would be useful and showing them how to use this tool, that would give them a great running start as they’re leaving the service… even if they just have one day of va talk where they provide what types of offerings va has for veterans, this would be a great tool.

[mentioned that higher up on the page would be a better position for the 103 indicator, such as having a dropdown for additional information above.

[would like to see phone numbers/emails for SCOs]

P: are you familiar with natcon? It’s basically in January and it brings together veterans from all over the united states. Veterans can go around and interact with different companies and different programs, networking. That might be something that you’d want to look into if you want to get a bigger pool of veterans to share this information with.

* 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!