**Estimate Your Benefits Usability Testing Discussion Guide - Standard Desktop**

**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 to calculate your GI Bill benefits for institutions and programs within the Comparison Tool.

Before we get started, a few things I want to mention:

* This entire session should take about 50 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?

**Warm-up Questions - 5 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

* (If applicable) When did you start school? Where are you going to school?

1. How did you (or would you) find out what benefits VA provides for your education and housing?

P: I depend on VA.org, just reading through that and utilizing the school resources when it comes to gi bill and so forth.

A: when did you start using your education benefits?

P: a few years ago. I just finished my masters, but I used it sparsely when I got out of the corps which was roughly 2011.

A: where did you end up going to school?

P: George Washington university

A: we get a lot of testing participants from George Washington university…we’ve heard great things about the veteran community at that school for testing participants.

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

P: [likely not] [later mentioned that he had used it before]

A: what were you looking for?

P: just some basic local school in the area, what I’d be expecting with bah, the general facility, comparing it with other programs. You have vet training, the general gi bill.

A: how did you learn about it?

P: I get va email notifications. I think it was a callout highlighting things. I just type in comparison tool or something like that, gi bill… and I think it linked me to this page, but I also remember seeing it in a regular newsletter the va sends out, like va benefits.

* 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?
  + If no, no worries. We're checking that out today and always appreciate getting a fresh perspective on it.

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: Calculate Benefits at School / IHL - 15 minutes**

You are considering attending **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-BERKELEY** for data science and want to know what costs (including tuition, fees, etc.) are covered under the Post 9/11 GI Bill. How would you use the Comparison Tool to find out what benefits you would receive if attending University of California-Berkeley?

*Potential prompt:* Let's say you were interested in taking classes at this school remotely, how would you go about incorporating that information?

P: to be frank, I’d probably be looking online just because I’d be in California, and then just typing in uc. Ucla, is that what it was?

A: university of California Berkeley is what we’re trying to find.

P: [kept struggling with the search] [eventually got to srp] ok, so housing, in person. There you go. That’s the extent of it for right now.

A: it seemed like you knew what was going to be on the left side of the page.

P: I do

A: so when you wanted to change it from online to in person, it looked like you scrolled down the page. Did you know that that was down there or where you checking out the page?

P: I personally didn’t know. It was based on an assumption. I figured the functionality would allow me to play with these. To your point, for anyone that wants to go back and forth, it might be nice to have a back, like a call out. That functionality would be nice to have because when you’re trying to compare, you want to go back and forth. Let’s just say, for distances, I don’t have a particular school that I’m interested in, but I have a state. I think that functionality isn’t there. as well. I do like this call out [ veteran programs ]. These are really nice, so you could narrow it down even further.

A: let’s say if you wanted to find a little more specific information for uc Berkeley, how would you get to more detailed information?

P: like addressed, or contacts? What do you want me to kind of pinpoint? [was hovering over view details, then clicked into profile]

A: […]

P: I think you guys did a nice job with the initial callout, the housing benefit, the tuition. Those are things that veterans really care about.

[profile] public school, 4 year program, this is nice to have. [scrolled past eyb section] I wish I had this tool when I was looking because it calls out all the information that I deemed relevant, like the veteran programs that they have.

A: if you wanted to fine tune the amount of money, how would you go about doing that?

P: fine tune? You’re talking about what I have left, like this right here, this call out right here [p911 q]. I think this is more about how long you served. I guess I’m not following your question. What’s unique about my situation? If I indicated that I qualify for 100% of post 9/11, then that’s what I should be expecting.

A: what if you got a 3000 scholarship from your local rotary club and you wanted to incorporate that into your estimated benefits? How would you go about doing that?

P: great question. I guess these little features. [accordions. Hovered over scholarships accodion] is it not popping up? Does it not allow me to add? Scholarships and other funding, I’m trying to add that. Oh, here it is [the clicking was laggy]. You said 3,000? Oh, here we go. If I’m eligible for a kicker…

A: do you know what a kicker is?

P: yeah, I think it’s if I paid more, an additional payout. [clicked calculate benefits button]

A: did you notice anything change?

P: I guess an additional callout [in benefits panel]. I don’t know if that kicker helped, that $200 kicker. Let me go back and see if that changed. Oh, yeah, see, it’s paid out as part of my housing. [kept using calculate benefits button when making changes].

A: it sounded like you were gonna say something

P: I don’t know about the callout for scholarship, why it’s different. I guess you’re using this to call out if the veteran has scholarships, because it doesn’t affect this, right?

A: […]

Things to watch for:

* How does the user select the school (School name or View Details)?
* Where does the user initially look for their benefit information?
* How often and after what actions are users viewing “Estimate your benefits” panel to track changes there?

Accordions

* Does the user engage with the accordions without prompting?
* Which accordions does the user open?
* When making changes to inputs located in several accordions, do users go back and check previous accordions to see if changes are holding?

Calculate button

* Do users click calculate for every accordion or just once after all changes are made?
* When users click Calculate, do they notice which values have changed?
* When do users expect re-calculations to occur (as they are making them or after clicking Calculate)?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?

P: I think it was fine, very high level. I don’t need the specific tuition and fees. I envision the 12, 13k per year is all inclusive. For the initial research, I think this is fine. I don’t need to have itemized information. I don’t think I would care right now. I’m just expecting, oh, how much do they charge, like general numbers. This is a nice to have. It just gives you a breakdown of spring/fall [per term benefits].

* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

P: 5. I like the whole looking down, scrolling down. It’s very attractive to the eye.

* Were you able to find what you were looking for? Did it seem like anything was missing?

P: let me see. [scrolled down profile] yeah, so this right here. If I wanted more information [sco details] I would have loved to have an email or a contact number, a general mailbox, that’d be a nice callout or to fire out an email.

* Do you have any questions about the benefits you would receive at this school?

P: no, I think you guys did a good job on this. From a high level, this is what I would expect.

Accordions: Let's take a look at the Estimate Your Benefits part of the page.

A: what do you think those are for?

P: I don’t know. See, this is completely what I didn’t think of. We’re starting all over now, your benefits [had clicked on benefits accordion]. When we came into this page, I was looking at more this type of thing. I didn’t expect it to go back and do the search again. I expect that function to be on the previous page, but I think it’s fine because someone might not want to go back to the previous page. [thought veteran, gi bill q and others that were in landing and srp shouldn’t be here]. [opened about your school accordion[ so this is contrary to what I was thinking. Here, you’re having me redo the scenario. It looks like it’s prefilled…I want to say we’re researching for a particular school. let me do a recalculation [clicked calculate benefits]. See, completely different than what I thought.

A: what do you think is happening?

P: I don’t know. [clicked T&F learn more]…so if I understand it correctly, if I knew the tuition was different than what is here…as far as the purpose.

A: let’s talk about what you think might be happening under the learning format and schedule

P: I imagine if we wanted to confirm what was on the previous page, if I wanted on line, in person. Oh, I see, I didn’t expect this right here, other location [107 Q]. interesting. I just put 20001. Is that DC? Let’s see. Oh, I’ll be taking classes outside the US, too? Let’s see. Calculate.

A: did you notice if it changed? Oh, yeah, my housing allowance changed. I think it defaults.

[THOUGHTS: Since calculate button is all the way at the bottom, and benefits panel is in line with questions, it can encourage people to expect things to change on the right before they click calculate.]

P: […]I see what it’s doing. We can do 28210. That’s charlotte. I would expect it to say $2200. Ok, interesting feature. Took a while to understand what it was doing, but it’s useful. I think this might be misleading. I don’t think from a certification standpoint, UC-Berkeley would not let you do a certification outside of California as an in person. I take that back. George Washington university has several off campus locations. Maybe that’s’ what it’s for.

A: ok, this is where we’ll have to move on. Just talk briefly about what you think will happen under scholarships and other funding

P: this is where you’d put other funding like scholarships. what about if I get a grant? Is that still considered a scholarship? Ok, excluding pell grant. What about money from my mom and dad, help?

A: I don’t know what va’s policy is on that specifically.

P: oh, I understood it to be something… this is where I would put in to see where my true “potential” for out of pocket tuition to the cost of going to attend the school. it looks like based on the payout for the va, when you’re putting scholarships, they’re reducing your payout to the school. when I was trying to do my cost analysis, I’d be thinking, what would be my true cost?

A: you’re thinking about it as a payment calculator?

P: yeah, you’re right. I thought it was an opportunity for me to play around with it, but this purpose is completely different. This is more va related as far as benefits.

* What did you think of the accordions (Your benefits, Learning format and schedule, Scholarships and other funding)?
* What did you think of how the questions were grouped together?
* When you were clicking through the accordions, what did you think about how they opened and closed?

**Second Task: Ivy League school - 10 minutes**

You know that the Post 9/11 GI Bill covers Ivy League schools like Brown University, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton. Let's say you wanted to know what costs would be covered at one of those schools. Pick an Ivy League school of your choice and see what benefits you would receive at that institution.

Things to watch for:

* How often and after what actions are users viewing “Estimate your benefits” panel to track changes there?

Upon completion of the task:

* How do the benefits at this school compare to what you'd get at UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-BERKELEY?

**Third Task: OJT or VET TEC - 10 minutes**

OJT - A friend of yours told you that **RAGING WIRE DATA CENTER in Sacramento, CA** does on-the-job training for veterans in data science. Can you find that data center and let me know what benefits you would receive if you trained with this employer?

VET TEC - A friend of yours told you that **GALVANIZE INC** is a VET TEC training provider with a program in San Francisco, CA for data science. Can you find that provider and let me know what benefits you would receive if you took this program?

P: so I think I heard raging wire?

A: yeah, raging wire data center.

P: [searched] [srp] so we just want to know what the on the job is?

A: we want to find out what the benefits are for that employer.

P: tuition is n/a. i get a housing and boos are 1000. [clicked on view details].

[profile] amy, I’m puzzled because I don’t understand what on the job benefits are. The most important thing for me to say is how much would it cost me. When it’s on the job, basically they’re paying me and I get this on top of that? Basically, I don’t know. When I think of educational benefit, I think it’s going to cost me to attend the school. even here, vocational [dropdown], if you get accepted to vr&e, you get 100% tuition and they’ll provide you stipends. See? Completely different [housing and book stipend after selecting voc rehab]. Very interesting. Ok.

A: what are you thinking?

P: my understanding of ojt is completely flawed. My understanding of vocrehab is that they provide you with tuition[…], but I guess that’s wrong.

A: it’s possible that there are other things that aren’t being displayed. [vocrehab] it’s one of the things that veterans default to [after post 9/11 and mgi bills]. So you went from 2100 to 500, and you don’t get a book stipend. In a high cost area, I don’t think you could live with that.

Things to watch for:

* How does the user navigate to this program/employer?
* What, if any, fields do they change within the EYB section?
* How often and after what actions are users viewing “Estimate your benefits” panel to track changes there?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What did you think of this information versus University of California/Ivy League school?

P: [?]

* Were you able to find what you were looking for? Was anything missing?
* Do you have any questions about the benefits you would receive at this school?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Fourth Task: Benefits Change - 5 minutes (Optional)**

You recently found out that you are eligible for the **Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment** GI Bill. You are curious how your benefits with this bill would compare to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. How would you go about changing your GI Bill selection within the Comparison Tool?

Things to watch for:

* Where do users try to change their benefit?
* Do users realize they can change “Your benefits” values on Search Results page?

Upon completion of task:

* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

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

P: [went to landing page and hovered over learn more links] I would love to see what these callouts are. I would want to have a similar callout here, just what the difference is here, like between the apprenticeships and the schools [ seemed to want more explanation for the different types of providers].

* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to the other people on the line to ask a question.

C: any other questions that he didn’t expect to see in EYB section?

P: no

J: did you hear about CT in out-processing?

P: No

[found va.gov through ebenefit]

P: I wish I new about [it before]. This is good stuff you guys are doing.

**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!