**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: I’m using chapter 33 as part of vocational rehab.

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

P: I go to university. I started in 2015. I go to palm beach atlantic university.

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

P: when I was still in the army, I was planning on using the traditional gi bill. I think I went to the education center. One woman suggested I go to vonapp. So I applied for vocrehab. In 2015, she said it was a better chapter than the gi bill. I applied and got in, and it’s been a pretty good process.

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

P: yeah, I’ve used it when moving and trying to compare what schools have, if they have a vetsuccess on campus, and what my bah would be when I changed schools.

* If yes, fantastic!
  + When do you think the last time you used it was?

P: I think sometime recently. Not because I changed schools, but I remember I was short on getting paid, so I contacted my counselor just to see if I could rectify the issue. They increased the amount and said I’d be getting the money back. I went online to see what it had been increased to.

* + 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: so, I think the first three boxes are really easy, military status, gi bill, that’s really easy. And obviously the 36 months, that’s great. I love how easy that’s always been. Let me see, institutions, schools. I wonder if that’s new, though, or if I don’t remember that or if I’ve skipped over it. I like that option because sometimes people like to know their money options. You said Berkeley? [tried typing it in, had issues with search].

A: it’s university of California-berkeley.

P: oh ok. [got to search page] I always love this setup right here. It excites me. [clicked into profile] is there something specific you wanted me to look for?

A: we’re looking for gi bill benefits, what’s covered.

P: to me, looking at this information here, the benefits, to me that means they cover everything. They would cover all of it. Housing allowance…ok. To my knowledge what you’re asking for is just the information on the right side of this block.

A: let’s say you received 3000 from your local rotary club to help fund your education. How would you go about factoring in that money?

P: I would press scholarships and other funding. Using scholarshps, I would put in 3,000, calculate benefits, and I believe this number here, yes. They added the 3000 and that changes the breakdown…[benefits panel] did it change down here? I’m assuming the benefits per term changed as well because, see, it’s added right here. Which is really nice. I didn’t know that was a thing on the tool…I think that’s really great.

A: talk a little bit about what you’re seeing on the left side of the page if you would, under the estimate your benefits.

P: I would press the plus sign for your benefits… what’s your military status..oh, that’s nice [spouse and other options] it gives you all the options. I like that it gives you all the chapters on the side [gi bills] I think vocrehab should have the chapter on the name. my school is constantly asking me, which chapter, I’m like, brah, I forgot. I’ve been doing it for years. I think it’s chapter 31. Oh, I really like this [cumulative dropdown]. Fun fact, I feel like I know a lot about vocrehab because I’m still using this program for 5 years. Who knew, but yes, I’m still working on my bachelor’s. I really like how you have the different percentages.

A: let’s go up and go ahead and select the vocrehab one. I know some of the controls depend on what selections you make.

P: [changed benefit]

A: did you notice anything change on the screen?

P: what the heck? Housing allowance looks different. Book stipend. The housing allowance is so much lower. I don’t know if that’s true, though. I don’t know if that’s true because no matter how much your books are, they just pay for all of it. Everything else looks the same except the bah and the book stipend. Ok, yeah. That’s what I think about it. I don’t know if those things are true.

A: I was curious to see your thoughts on that and what’s on the right hand side because you have knowledge of that. They’re relevant to you.

P: it’s definitely relevant. My experience with vocrehab, they pay for all of your books, 100% of what you need. I like the layout, it’s easy to read what you need, the bold letters. I just don’t think that the housing allowance is accurate compared to chapter 33. Was that enough information?

A: that’s great. That’s great information.

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’s a great transition. I think it was really easy from the first page. This is nice too. [?] I don’t want to call it fool proof. I hope this doesn’t offend anyone, but whether you’re young or old, this is self-explanatory.
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

I would say 5. I have one more comment. One thing I always appreciated about this is so many options come up, and that’s part of why it’s easy. University comes up and it has so many options and the options stay. I love that [the search]

* Were you able to find what you were looking for? Did it seem like anything was missing?
* Do you have any questions about the benefits you would receive at this school?

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

* What did you think of the accordions (Your benefits, Learning format and schedule, Scholarships and other funding)?

P: this [in-state student q] to my knowledge, I really do like this because I think some schools do it differently. Usually if you’re a veteran you’re able to get in-state tuition. I do like that that’s there because it does matter. I like that you can change it. It’s nice. School calendar. i don’t really care for this one. I do like this one [enrolled]. When I was doing vocrehab, I was not in a good place. I think the va tries to hide work tolerance, if more students knew about it, they’d use it, but the va tries to hide it. [calculated new inputs with enrolled ¼ time] I don’t understand how the housing allowance is that. That is nothing, god bless their soul. I don’t understand why my book stipend is going to be $1229 if I’m only enrolled ¼ time... why would I use my gi bill if I have a scholarship and not get paid? I’m going to close this one [about yoru school] and go to the next one. Ok, learning format and schedule, I really love this. I’ve had to take persons in class and online, and I’ve had questions on how that would change my bah. I want to play with that, if I’m a full time student, and then go back to learning format and schedule…I guess it’s saying 605 and that’s the same amount I was getting. I’m going to go back and change it to post-9/11 and recalculate [ I noticed no was selected under are you eligible for the post911 gi bill?]… I like that this here says where will you take the majority of your classes, and then there’s an option for other location. [?] what if I’m new to the area and I just don’t know the area, and I’m like, I don’t know. It would be nice if each one had like, these are the different locations of university of California tht you could use. Trying to figure out which location is best, that would be really nice. I’m going to close that up and look at scholarships and funding. I really like how you have this [opened yellow ribbon modal]. Eligible for kicker bonus…I don’t know what that is, but I like how you guys have it here, even the fadeout [overlay]. Even a place to add a pell grant. I don’t get pell grants. It would be nice if I could add my fafsa information from the school, but that’s super extra. That would be cool. I would use that.

* What did you think of how the questions were grouped together?
* P: it’s interesting. I never really thought about that. I can say what I thought would be under each one is there. so, hmm, your benefits. Now that I think about it, you’re saying, this is your benefits. Am I expecting to see my military status? I think honestly, no. I don’t think it’s an issue. I think the 3 clustered together does make sense, though. Those first 3 do belong together. I think you benefits makes sense. I think that it works. About your school…mmm. I don’t think that makes sense either that much, now that I think about it. I think the things in it make sense. I think the things in here make more sense than the title. I think, about your school, this is more information about my school [institution summary at top] to me, that’s more about your school. this is more, how are you going to be going to school. but I like what’s in here, as I said. I don’t know if I’d guess if that stuff would be in here. Learning format and schedule, I think that makes sense, the things that are in here, also the title. Scholarships and funding, I think that makes sense. Honestly, I don’t know if I would change it because I’ve been using it so long at this point. Is there a better word for it? Probably.
* 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: [searched and had amy help her with the spelling] that’s a mouthful [clicked into profile] so I’m supposed to be telling them how to do it?

A: the scenario is that you’d find out what benefits you’d receive here.

P: …I would check out the housing allowance. Book stipend is $83 a month. I’ve never done on the job training, I’ve never used that before, but this looks really good. I see here, ok, the least amount of time that I do this, I’d get the most amount of money. If I do this for more than a year, I was looking at the 13-18 month, which is decent pay, you have longevity. I think this is really helpful, I love that breakdown. That’s awesome. I love the book stipend. Just for clarity, there’s no confusion that’s it’s 83 a month for all of them. I love how you guys kept it uniform. I wonder if everything on the side is the same. Oh, will be working… I wonder if this will change anything. [changed to 2hrs. week] oh, wow. This is less. [bah]. I imagine if I change it to in person only, oh it’ll be the same. This is really great. I’m impressed. Obviously, right here, I guess I might think that this stuff right here might change because I’m not using post-9/11. There’s nothing here for me. It’s the same. It feels like, if I’m thinking about my tailor-made needs, that they didn’t even change this part to fit me. Maybe I’m wrong. Maybe with the dependents. This could be a dependent thing.

A: you think that if you’re doing on the job training, you’re not using a gi bill when you’re doing that?

P: to my knowledge, if you’re doing on the job training, maybe I am. I’m not sure, but I guess it is a part of the gi bill tool. Correct me if I’m wrong. I can’t use vocational rehab and use OJT. I could be completely wrong, though. If you’re using vocrehab, you might be going to school [IDEA: ENSURE BENEFIT SELECTION LIMITS PROVIDER TYPES]

I just feel like, I love how this is tailor made to on the job training. It looks nothing like the post9/11 gi bill. If this is tailor made, I’d like it to be more tailor made to someone who’s doing on the job training. Maybe it is different. Maybe you can do on the job traning with a different one [gi bill]. I feel like the book stipend, how it’s zero, no wait, they’re not paying for anything!

A: what would you do at this point? How would you get answers?

P: are you speaking from a place oh, have I been approved for vocrehab yet? Where am I in the process?

A: if you hadn’t applied and where looking for that, where would you go?

P: right away, I would go here [get started with careerscope] if I had questions. [?] I’m hoping they would have some different numbers that I could call or they would take you to a place, like, do you need help choosing a school? [?]

A: so you think you’d want to talk to someone at the va?

P: I think this process could be really confusing, so I’d want to talk to a human being.

[?]

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?
* 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?

P: after I got the naming correct, it was a 5.

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

C: could you tell us about work tolerance and how that works?

P: Work tolerance is when a veteran is unable to take classes because of a disability. You have to be 10% or more disabled to be able to use vocational rehab. You’re able to get a letter from your doctor, like, please allow Veteran to take 3 credits. [?]

**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!