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

**P1 – Johnathan Inman**

**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?
   1. I’ve been using them for the past 4 years with two different institutions.

* (If applicable) When did you start school? Where are you going to school?
  + Just finished the semester at George Washington University.

1. How did you (or would you) find out what benefits VA provides for your education and housing?
   1. I think I ended up just…I think I just ended up Googling it..and looking for blog posts on other sites. I remember it was hard to get precise information from the VA. If I recall correctly, it was difficult to get info on the housing stipend based on the location of the university I was confident in. I wasn’t sure if it was based on where you lived or where the school was located and things like that. It wasn’t hard to eventually figure out it was based on the school’s location. I don’t remember where I eventually found that info. I don’t remember precisely where I found that info.
   2. I studied abroad last year and trying to figure out if housing benefits transferred when you were studying at a different school. It wasn’t until I actually received the money for me to know what I was going to get. Additionally, whether there was a flat study abroad rate or not.
   3. I was at Free University of Berlin. It was fantastic. It turned out I was getting the same rate as the base institution.
2. Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
   1. I don’t think I have

* 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 received $3000 from your local Rotary Club to help fund your education. How would you go about factoring in that money?

That’s convenient because I did consider going to Berkely for engineering. Opened Veteran…kept options the same. Type of institutions looking at schools. Ahh…in person. So I will search for. Typed uc Berkeley, clicked Search. No results. I may have spelled that wrong. On SRP, typed university of California…and clicked first option. On SRP, clicked school name. Ok, so University of Berkeley. So it looks like GI Bill pays full tuition, I’m responsible for nothing out of pocket about 3500 of housing. $1000 a year. Housing here is a lot better than San Francisco. Did I used your Post 9/11.? Ah No…Opened About your school. Are you an in-state student. I’m going to say No…see if that changes anything…it does not appear to have changed. It looks like the same tuition overall…so it doesn’t appear to have changed. Opened Enrolled…I guess if I wanted to work and go half time or less. Clicked Calculate benefits….I’m not sure….oh ok, tuition stays the same, but housing drops to 0….so let’s go back to full time. I much prefer to take classes in person, but I’ll see if the option to take online classes changes any of the benefits. Oh…I guess because I didn’t hit Calculate benefits earlier, it didn’t. I guess I should go back. Went back to About Your school and redid everything and clicked Calculate. I realized I didn’t click Calculate benefits before and didn’t click Calculate. [Doesn’t realize that changes will hold if you open different accordion] Opened Scholarships and other funding. Say yes to Yellow Ribbon…yes, I’m familiar with Yellow Ribbon. I guess it’s not available for undergraduate. I guess I’ll go back to No…unless I looked at that wrong. Yeah, I guess not.Opened Learning format and schedule…No scholarships. Opened About your school. I guess I’m a little confused on whether it’s updated to in-state or out of state. I may have misinterpreted what benefits were for out of state students. Make it out of state student…ok so there is a significant difference for in-state versus out of state. It looks as an out of state, I’d be responsible for a significant amount of tuition per year. Student complaint…that’s not a lot. Ok, it looks like Out of state student, I’d be responsible for a significant amount of tuition . I’d have to find out how to cover $22000 a year. I would get about $3000 a year for housing…which may or may not be a lot for San Fran.

In general, it was very easy and straightforward. Looking now, I don’t know if I misspelled UC Berkeley…but otherwise seems fairly straightforward. I guess I was expecting it to auto-update based on options, so I guess I misunderstood the benefits. Could be the lag with the interface. I think those were the two points that were confusing a little bit.

It would have been nice if Berkeley had shown up for Berkeley and not having to type the whole thing.

I think in terms of what the VA offers I don’t think anything is missing. I am curious about the UC Berkeley’s limits on Yellow Ribbon program. Based on what I see here, it looks like they have strict limits on what they give out. Now that I’m responsible for more out of pocket tuition, using the Yellow Ribbon program would be very useful. It doesn’t seem to be available. I know that each school decides how much YR funding they are going to make available, so I assume Berkeley only makes it available to Graduate students.

For Rotary:

It looks like I would go to the scholarship box, and I’d enter here. It just updates everything and it reduces it by 3000.

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? Yes
* Which accordions does the user open? All of them
* 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?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?
* 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)?
  + Your benefits makes sense to me. I was at first not sure what “About your school” meant. I would have to open it up to see what they meant. I guess I can edit the amount of tuition and fees per year, but not sure under what circumstances I would want to modify that. Going to their website to figure out if there was a different tuition…not sure if I would do that. Otherwise that makes sense…these are options for how I’m going to attend this school. I honestly wasn’t sure what would be there before opening it. Yeah, I’m having trouble coming up with something that’s reasonably descriptive. Learning format and schedule makes sense. And yeah, that’s reasonable. I guess I would…I guess I would already know what classes Berkeley has for their degree. I think that’s pretty straightforward. So I don’t know what the kicker bonus is….does that link work. Clicked Learn more for kicker. Ok, interesting. I guess that would tell me that I’m not eligible if I didn’t know about it. Scholarships…I guess that’s just to tell me what I’m responsible for…not necessarily what the VA is offering, but it’s helpful. Yeah, it mostly makes sense. Unfortunately I don’t have ideas for about your school.
* 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** provides 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?

I guess I’m not sure if it’s an employer or training provider (on home page). I’m assuming there might be different levels of benefits for one or the other. The VET TEC seems that they have a better relationship with the VA. Clicked Learn more on VET TEC…ok. Went to VET TEC, clicked Search. Typed in Sacramento in search, no results. Back to home page. Clicked Employers. Typed Sacramento. Several results. Searched Raging Wire, clicked option. Opened Employer. Get a housing allowance and a book stipend. Opened Learning format and schedule. Opened Will be working. Opened Scholarships and other funding…so I don’t think I would have to change any of the options here. I would probably plan on working more than 30 hours per week. So $2100 a month for housing. $83 for a month. It looks like the program is only 24 months and the housing goes down every couple months. I wonder if that means my salary goes up. So that seems fairly straightforward. It makes sense.

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?

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?
  + It’s consistent. The housing allowance is different, but that’s to be expected with different locations. This is $83 per month which I think is more, even though I know the other one gave it to me per year. Maybe it’s the same? I’d have to do the math, so I’m not sure if it’s more or less. If I was on my own computer, I’d do it real fast.
* 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?
  + My only question would be what my salary would be, if I get one, so if my housing goes down, what my total income will look like. Going from 2100 to 840 is a big change in housing.
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?
  + 4 or 5…I think the trouble I had was knowing what organization to go to. Maybe the fact that I had to pick the type of organization, made it harder. Maybe if I could have typed Raging Wire without having to select Employer or VET TEC option
  + I assume the radio buttons restricts the type of search, so if I search for it with one option, it’ll be because I picked the wrong option. It might be useful to search the whole database without having to filter beforehand.
  + Now that I’m thinking about it, I may have gotten the lower housing amount.

**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**

Those are all the tasks I have for you today.

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share?
  + If I’m thinking about trying to compare different schools, then I’m probably going to open up different tabs. Trying to keep all of the benefits straight may be a little bit difficult. Opening up multiple tabs isn’t that difficult, but if you could save or directly compare benefits across schools, that could be very helpful.
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to the other people on the line to ask a question.
  + I used benefits at George Mason and George Washington. For the school in Berlin, it was a sister school with George Washington and money was being paid to them.
  + I probably would have gone to both and seen that they were different. I would have assumed $1650 for housing rather than the higher DC rate.

**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!