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

**P3 – Lou Luangxay**

**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. Yes

* (If applicable) When did you start school? Where are you going to school?
  + A few years ago, I just finished my master’s. So at least 2 years ago. I used it sparsely…back in 2011. Went to George Washington University.

1. How did you (or would you) find out what benefits VA provides for your education and housing?
   1. Me personally – I depend on VA.gov. Also utilizing the school resources – going through GI Bill and so
2. Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
   1. Yes – my default is to go to VA resources

* If yes, fantastic!
  + When do you think the last time you used it was?
  + What were you looking for?
    - Some basic questions – local schools in the area, what to be expecting in terms of BAH. Like VET TEC training or other GI Bill. I default to Post 9/11 because I think it’s most generous.
  + Do you recall how you first learned about it?
    - I get a email notification. VA will send out a call-out, highlighting concerns, organizations they work with. It was probably like 2 years ago. I typed in comparison tool and I think it linked me to this page. And I think the VA sent me something.
  + 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?

Veteran…Post 9/11…so I have 36 months…Quite frankly, I’d probably be looking at online since I’m not in California. Trying to type in initials…typed university of cal, clicked right option. Then I probably would go back and look at the actual in-person as well. Scrolling through filters. Changed to in-person on SRP. That’s the extent of it, right now. So I personally didn’t know that was down there, just an assumption based on prior experience. I figured it would allow me to play. For someone that wants to go back and forth, it might be nice to have a Back. When you’re trying to compare, you want to go back and forth. In this particular interest, I don’t have a particular school I’m interested in, just a state. I do like this program being called out…does it have a Student Vet Group or Yellow Ribbon. This is really nice so you can narrow it down even farther. Clicked View details. I think you guys did good with initial callout of what I would be expected to get. And I haven’t even gotten to this page yet. Yeah, all this is really good. I wish I’d had this. Like calling it out, what veteran programs they have.

Fine tune prompt

So I guess I’m not following the question. If I indicate I qualify for 100% of Post 9/11, that’s what I expect to get.

*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?

Great question, so…I guess these little features. Hovering over scholarships and funding, opened it. Entered 3000 into scholarships. Oh here, if I’m eligible for a kicker. Yeah, it’s my understanding that if I pay a little more then there’s a payout. So I see the payout incorporated the scholarship. The out of pocket didn’t’ change. The housing stayed the same. So I don’t know if that kicker helped. Changed kicker and clicked Calculate benefits…so yeah, it’s paid out as part of my housing. The question I have is, I don’t know why to call out the scholarships. If it doesn’t affect the veterans (in terms of out of pocket tuition?).

For the initial information, it’s good. I don’t need itemized information. A general number, what do they charge. Blah Blah Blah. This breakdown by term is nice. The school certifying officials. I would love to have an email or an admissions contact number. That would be a nice callout. Just to say Hey I’m interested in this school and I’m a veteran. I think you guys did a good job on this. From a high level, this is what I would expect. The out of pocket tuition to me is important.

Let’s just see what’s about your school…for your benefits, you’re asking me to redo the whole scenario. For about your school, it looks pre-filled. Say I want to look at a school with $5000 tuition, I want to say it’s researching for a particular school. I’m going to click Calculate benefits…completely different from what I thought. That’s the thing…I don’t know what’s happening. The information has completely changed. Clicked Learn more for Tuition and Fees per year. So if I understand correctly, I want to go to USC Berkeley and I know the tuition for me is $5000 and I want to know the exact dollar number. I don’t know about that…not sure on the purpose.

Learning format and schedule…again I would imagine it would be pulling stuff from previous page. Online or in-person. Opens it…Yeah, yeah. So I didn’t expect this…other location. Interesting. I’ll just put 20001. There you go. Clicked Calculate benefits. Housing allowance changed. It looks like it defaults too…I think it’s reading as an online. I think I was doing 3500 and I put in other location, I assume it would override that. Oh no…odd. So I’m getting even less if it’s online. So I was completely wrong again. Yeah, ok…wow. Maybe it doesn’t mean anything. Oh it does mean something. I see what it’s doing. It’s treating it as in-person, but is using the postal code. Interesting feature…took a while to understand what it was doing. I don’t think from a certification standpoint. I don’t think they would let you do that as an in-person. I’ll take it back, GW has several off-campus locations, maybe that’s what its for.

Scholarships and other funding – I’m expecting this to be where I put scholarships and other funding. So yeah, this is Yellow Ribbon, scholarships and kicker. If I have a donation or anything, is that considered a scholarship? I mean I don’t know. It’s a form of scholarship…what if I get a grant? Like a financial aid grant…what about money from mom and dad? Oh okay, I expected this to be something different. This is where I would put my true quote unquote, true cost of going to attend the school. It looks like based on the payout with the VA. When you put in scholarships, they are reducing their payout. When I’m trying to do my cost analysis if my parents gave me $2000, but all of that doesn’t mean anything to the government. Thinking of it as a payment calculator.

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? No
* Which accordions does the user open? Scholarships – only when prompted
* 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)?
* 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?

Clicked Employers. Typed raging wi, clicked option. Look at that. We just want to know what OJT is…interesting okay. Tuition is N/A…I get housing and books. No GI bill students. Clicked into it (not sure which) Scrolled to benefits. This is a puzzle…I don’t know what OJT benefits are. The most important things for me is what it will cost me. When it’s on the job, are they paying me and I get this on top of it? When I think of educational benefits, what is it going to cost me? Even here for example, for VR&E, they’ll pay 100% tuition and provide you stipends. Clicked VR&E. See..completely different. Went back to Post 9/11. Very interesting. Ok. One – I’m glad. My understanding of the program is completely flawed. My understanding is that they are paying 100% and stipends…but as you can see, that’s completely wrong. Again...I just know from my experience. One of the things that most people do…if you’ve exhausted your GI Bill, your other option is VR&E. It’s more vocational…because they aren’t committed to 36 months of benefits. They default to VR&E because you get the payout. I didn’t realize it was that different between 9/11 and VR&E. Wow…in a high cost area, I don’t know if you can live on $500.

Process? It’s fine. I think it’s fine. I have no…my…I’m probably thinking…if I’m looking for OJT, this makes sense to me. The funny thing is if we go back to (Landing page), change to Post 9/11, OJT, in-person. Clicked Search. Yeah, that process right there is pretty seamless. No complaint on my part.

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?
* 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**

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?
  + Maybe have an indication of what benefit is best for helping veterans identify what benefit is best for them to use.
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to the other people on the line to ask a question.

**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!