**Conversation Guide Template for GI Bill Comparison Tool Compare Functionality**

**P1 – Kevin**

**Moderator logistics**

*Use*[*#feedback-backchannel*](https://dsva.slack.com/messages/C40B45NJK/details/)*in Slack for real-time feedback from observers.*

*Mute your Slack notifications*

*Before the session, send out the*[*observer instructions*](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/platform/research/during-research/howto-observer-instructions.md)*to your observers (Slackbot will do this for you if you type "observer instructions" into*[*#feedback-backchannel*](https://dsva.slack.com/channels/feedback-backchannel)*).*

*In the Attendees section, make sure everyone except the participant is on mute.*

*In the Audio section, click the drop-down arrow and make sure "Play Entry/Exit Chimes" is unchecked*

*Check your [screensharing setup] and share permissions for participants.*

*When the participant is ready, begin the session with the following intro*

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Jen and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we're going to talk about finding and comparing schools on the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

Have you done usability testing before?

If No – I’m going to put a couple scenarios in front of you and ask you to do some tasks on a website we’re working on. As you’re going through the tasks, we ask if you can “think aloud” – tell us what you’re seeing, what you’re looking for and any other thoughts that come to mind as you’re interacting with the site.

Before we start, a few things I want to mention:

* **This entire session should take about 45 minutes.** I do want to be respectful of your time, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* **In this session, we want to hear your honest opinions.** We are not testing your ability. We just want to improve these tools to better meet the needs of our users. I will not be offended by any opinions you express, and any feedback you provide will be really helpful to us.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **With your permission, I would like to record my screen and audio as we talk today.** We use the recordings just to make sure that we captured your opinions accurately. After that, the recordings are destroyed - usually within a week or two.
  + If yes: **Once I start recording, I am going to confirm that you are ok with me recording this session once more.**

*Start recording.*

* **I have started recording**. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen and the audio as we talk today?

**Warm-up Questions - X minutes**

Before we look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* What is your military status (e.g. Veteran, child, spouse)? Veteran
  + If Veteran, which branch of service? Navy
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? I’ve used Post 9/11, now using VR&E, on VR&E for about 4-5 months and Post 9/11 a few years ago. I’m at different school than when under Post 9/11
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit? Where are you in the school selection process?
* When you first decided to go back to school, what factors were important to you in picking school options? The biggest thing was trying to find something to complement work schedule. This time, I wasn’t working, it was just about finding something close to me. Something accredited. So I wouldn’t have any problems translating that. Business administration and management
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering? I was considering Centerra college, but they actually dismantled the business degree. At that time, I only had one vehicle and wife was attending Centura, but couldn’t get both of us in there. I went and he told me about Brian and Stratton.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? Yes
  + If yes, what did you use it for? Initially started some years ago I was trying to find tuition rates for schools in the area. Was also looking at what was covered, Yellow Ribbon, etc. I looked up about 4 different schools and figure

**Initial Take - 2 minutes**

I’m going to start sharing my screen.

~~So you know – the website you’ll be interacting with is still under development, so the site may not function like you expect it to. If that happens (like if you click on something and nothing happens), I may ask you what you expected to see. Sound okay?~~

This is the GI Bill Comparison Tool, which allows you to see what education benefits you can receive at various institutions. Do you have any initial thoughts or questions before we get started?

**First Task: Finding schools - 5 minutes**

* Let's travel back in time and say you found the GI Bill Comparison Tool when you were first exploring schools. Could you show me how you'd use the Comparison Tool to learn about schools you might be interested in attending?
* Location search…23455, clicked Search. Changed radius to 25 miles. That was pretty much what I did….seeing what was close tome. Then clicking through looking at different schools – what they offer.
* What they offer – I wasn’t sure what I wanted to study. When I used the CT, I wanted to make sure that they did participate with the VA – take the GI Bill. I had no knowledge of it. Had a friend in school who told me about it. Using that helped me understand a little more and how to stretch my benefits. Did they cover books…that helped me understand that. Some schools were offering more money for books than others. I wanted something that…I wasn’t sure if I was going to stay in VA so possibly something that had other locations if I moved with no lapse so the program would be the same, so I looked at that as well. That was hugely important to me..so I could continue
* It looks like they’re just giving me this information….this is the biggest thing..The tuition and housing estimates…I wanted to make sure I was selecting the right benefit. So I wanted to make sure I was seeing the right stuff. I saw Veterans going to this school and didn’t know how the benefit worked. We didn’t know until we got on the phone with the GI Bill people. It was about getting my education and getting the best benefit. Yes – accurate.
* Info on the cards – the school rating is important to me. The school I initially chose, it was highly rated. I would probably say when I went, more than 75% of people were using Post 9/11 GI Bill…that was important for something to have a good reputation.
* Now this one…this school has one cautionary warning…opened it…accreditation warning, that would have been hugely important to me. I want a degree that stood on its own for me. Talking about the number of GI Bill students were there…regional accreditation. I looked at all t hat – whether it was regional as far as accreditation was concerned so I could take advantage of that particular opportunity.

**Things to watch for:**

* What type(s) of search does the user conduct?
* Does the user notice the Compare checkbox?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went? It went pretty well. Pretty easy to understand. Only two instances where I had to call to understand things. After that, everything was pretty self explanatory. I believe there were some schools in the housing, like it was showing me something different for two or 3 different schools and it was in tuition, something that didn’t quite make sense to me. They referred me to the school with further questions. I initially went to Strayer and the tuition and fees and books were separate for them. So the book stipend…the numbers didn’t add up. I eventually went to ITT tech – those were included in the tution. There was no book stipend. I didn’t understand why there would be a difference. I didn’t think it would be different school to school.
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of finding schools on the Comparison Tool? 2 – once I got familiar it was a 1 all the way. Biggest thing was making sure I understood how the accreditation and tuition and fees worked.
* Can you talk to me about the school cards you see here?

**Second Task: Comparing schools - 20 minutes**

* Let's say you want to get a better idea of the differences between the schools you're considering. How would you use the Comparison Tool to determine which school would be the best option for you?

I think it allows you to compare up to 3…I don’t think I was comparing more than 3 or 4. So I could see the difference with tuition, book stipend. Difference in tuition and then did a deeper dive – breakdown of semesters. Clicked compare on one school, clicked compare on another school, clicked compare on 3rd school. Went down to Compare institutions, opened it and clicked Compare. Opened (in the middle of the page)

Scrolling through Compare page….some really good information. I didn’t remember it talking about the size of the school..it wouldn’t have been hugely important then, but now it would be. It’s kind of strange, but with COVID in place, I like the smaller classes. That was challenging for me the first time. Most had 20+ people. Everything moved a lot faster. I was younger then, but still challenging. Now at 40.

Looking at information here, talking about the book stipend. I see the housing allowance is a little different…doesn’t matter a whole lot, but its almost a $200 difference. The school rating would be helpful just to get an understanding of what people think about the school. That would have been important. Now the education rating would have been huge as well. As a financial institution that they have a good reputation. I do like this one – vetereran friendliness. If I had done more research on ITT Tech, I wouldn’t have gone there. Strayer…they were not Veteran friendly at all. That’s why where they are now. I like the cautionary information – anything that’s cause for concern. I don’t’ want to walk into anything unexpected. The complaints…that would have been important. Some are valid some are not. Credit for military training was huge. One school I went to was huge…brian and Stratton there was something in my military training that they didn’t take that every other school did, so I was very surprised by that. The Yellow Ribbon participant was big…I know a lot of schools had this and had hikes in prices based on what period you were in. So that was important. And that’s pretty much it. Clicked Highlight differences. Scrolling down…one of the biggest things I saw…that line Student Veteran Group….I didn’t know that one said No and two others say Yes. It does show the difference. Student complaints..I could have scrolled through it quickly and not seen it. The highlight differnces could highlight it and I like that.

Most important – payments, housing allowance, tuition and fees and what did VA pay. I saw $0 for out of pocket tuition. That’s something I would have looked at. Those were the ones that were hugely important to me. And the length of program was another thing I looked at as well. I wasn’t initially looking at 4 year, so that was something I looked at and the accreditation point.

Nothing missing

**Things to watch for:**

* What type(s) of search does the user conduct?
* Does the user notice the Compare drawer?
* Do users notice the sticky header?
* Do users notice the "Highlight differences" functionality?
* Is user able to easily add schools to the compare tray?
* Is the user able to easily navigate to the compare page?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of comparing schools on the Comparison Tool? 1
* Looking at the compare page, what do you think of the information you see here? Which ones are most important to you? Is anything missing that would be important to you?
* What do you think of the process of comparing schools?
* What do you think of the "Highlight differences" functionality? Is it useful?

**Third Task: YAY Harvard! - X minutes**

* You found out that you were accepted into **Harvard**. Even if you don't end up going, you're curious about how **Harvard** stacks up against some of the other schools on your short list. How would you use the Comparison Tool to see how **Harvard** compared to some of your other school options?
* Clicked GI Bill Comparison Tool breadcrumb, went to Search by name. Opened compare institutions drawer. Removed ECPI. Went to search by name. Typed Harvard. Clicked autocomplete from dropdown. Found Harvard. Added school, clicked Compare. Clicked Highlight differences.
* Now the credit for military training…probably not a huge problem, maybe 12-15 credits from military training. Not a huge dent, but that would have been something I would have considered seeing that with Harvard.

**Things to watch for:**

* *If applicable,* can the user easily remove schools from the comparison?
* Where does the user go to remove schools (compare tray, compare page, search results)?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of adding Harvard University to your school comparison? 1
* For the benefit estimates you see here, do you believe these are accurate for your situation?
* General thoughts – easy to use, easy to understand. Highlight differences – I actually love that button so you don’t have to go line by line.

**Thank-You and Closing - X 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, well thank you so much again, and enjoy the rest of your day!