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

**P3 - Lou**

**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? USMC
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? I have and currently using benefit now
  + If yes, which benefit are you using? Post 9/11
    - When did you start school? Great question – as soon as I got out 2012. It’s been a while. Right now I’m with UCLA executive
  + 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? Definitely approved by VA of course so that’s number one. If they were private, if Yellow Ribbon approved. Make sure
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering? I was considering New York University Stern business school and Columbia business of excellence.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? I actually have – I have and liked it
  + If yes, what did you use it for? The general – the cost of school, not so much to worry about it, the BAH comparison, whether online or full on-campus

**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?

I liked simplicity of it – I would have preferred a map of the US, by state. But then you have this search by location. I’m thinking you want to be too individual – one who knows what school they’re looking for and those that don’t. Clicked search by location. I prefer to go

**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?
* Autocorrect, I love it. Selected seattle under location. Changed radius to 25 miles. I know its not very intuitive because I’m just scrolling by. I’m conflicted because, you don’t have all the data. I would like to see more listing of schools. You have this…but not the listing. Like what I would see on Google map. Instead of me specifically selecting this location…I would prefer to have all the list of schools instead of one by one (selected pin earlier and jumped). People are super excited about job prospect after the fact as a qualifier beside these two indicators (benefits). Clicked name of school….let me see what information I could get. I remember this page because I used the tool before, so I think this is fine. If you’re transitioning, this is probably where military status matters…how does one know…this might be something that someone might want to input on the first page…on the initial landing page. (benefits) It might be better to have that up front. (Uses Back button to return to search results)
* Where military status on this page? I’m conflicted…I’d like to give that info up front so here’s my status I’m a Veteran boom. Honorably discharged boom. Been in the service for…whatever they use to calculate the GI Bill…that might be a separate tool. This might just be trying to find the school. I think its fine, but I don’t know how many schools are listed so how do you narrow the search even farther?
* What other criteria can I narrow down by? Like private or public that would be one underlying factor. Some people want to do that…that would be something I would love to see…all the basic metric that most people use or research on potential universities. US News or something like that…type in graduation rate, job placement…I would love to see that as a metric to search or filter out. To narrow my scope even more.
* I would start by search by location…I would put a filter immediately. It just depends on…I would prefer a map…that’s how I would approach this. Okay, I see a map of the USA of all the institutions approved by the USA. I would put in filter criteria before I search. Most people know what state they want to be in. Maybe even zoom in or draw a radius for what I want. It’s about being…the right intention to filter. Think about when someone is looking for a house
* This tool would need to be compatible with a mobile phone…that’s how I would…I would think ease of use

**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? I think it’s a start – it gives me a starting point and from there I have to do my own research. I like that you do provide the certifying officer, but a lot of times they don’t have the specific…you have the certifying officer who can answer the questions about the VA program, but sometimes when people are looking on undergraduate level, they just need admissions. Someone who is able to handle a Veteran, is a different customer base. That gets overwhelming when you go in a queue…for a new guy that has never been to college, that has been overwhelming. They need a bit of handholding. That contact information would be helpful if you could get it
* 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? 1 – just to get you started. Say you have a dream school…like Harvard
* So this is news to me…employer. I’m just expecting this is a school.. Any idea of what it could be? That’s the thing, I don’t know. I’d just have to click on it to see how it does.
* 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?
* Again…you know, you allow me to select…this is part of the ummm…I hate that its slow…let’s say I want to compare the extension and that one. Did it work? That one….I just picked two and now where do I go next…there’s no call for action…no click Comparison button.
* Expect it – either at the bottom or at the top…Comparison button or something like that. I prefer at the top. I’m scrolling down, I get my search results and now I’m just clicking here…let’s see where Harvard University
* Asked if could see bar at bottom of screen…ok, I’m seeing it. Yeah, I don’t like this feature at all…so this is saying I just selected these and clicked Compare. (Appeared in middle of screen)…
* Highlight differences…okay let’s see what that is…what is ratings…I think this would be your holy grail.
* Compare page – it does its job. It’s just a regurgitation of the information I had before. I don’t see an issue with that…it allows you to see 3 differences. I would challenge your team to give me more control…how can I filter it out farther. Give me more ways to filter it out. Do they have expensive Veteran programs? Veteran advocacy groups that I can rely on? What’s the student count? How many Veterans go there?
* For this page, the only page I love this rating…this would be my number one information…I shouldn’t have to go to the comparison. Let’s say I can’t decide from Harvard or Harvard extension…then they are looking at BAH. That’s only going to be different based on their state. How do you qualify the school when those are the same.

**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?
* 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?
* I would probably put it right here…from a housing allowance you might see a difference.
* Click return to search to add…
* Typed yale…this is good….clicked top option. I hate this…how you have Yale University school of law, school of art…it should all be under one umbrella…so I just saw this GI Bill student…I like this metric…so there is some…lenth of program don’t really care…tuition fees…so I would probably say Yellow Ribbon sponsor and BAH is super important
* That tool bar, I would prefer it to follow me and it be at the top….

Update tuition and housing etimates and refine search buttons – expect? Oh so I didn’t notice those at all…so this was what I was talking about, refine my search. Let’s see what options you gave me. I think you just gave me the old school comparison tool looks like…yeah, this would work. I stand corrected. I think its good you have the refine my search…I just didn’t even see it. Single gender school…that’s interesting.

Opened update tuition and housing…yeah, this is exactly what I was looking for. 100% agree with you on this Emma.

Compare institutions tray – Activate the actual banner…when I select 2, now give me the compare button right off the bat…that’s something I would prefer. Something more directive and right in my face. It’s a useful tool. A very wonderful tool. It helps the user to narrow a little bit more.

Note: Never explored the full comparison page (stopped at ratings)

**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 Law School to your school comparison?
* For the benefit estimates you see here, do you believe these are accurate for your situation?

**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!