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

**P2 - Maria**

**Moderator logistics**

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

*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]*

*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 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.
* **You are free to stop the session at any time. If you would like to do so, 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. **Are you comfortable if I record my screen and audio as we talk today?**
  + 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 - 5 minutes**

Before we get started, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* What is your military status (e.g. Veteran, child, spouse)? Dependent deceased
  + If Veteran, which branch of service?
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? Currently, have been for past 6 years, undergrad
  + If yes, which benefit are you using? 35
    - When did you start school? Where did you go? My undergrad in 2015 org sciences, grad in 2021 georgetown in applied intelligence
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? I think I’ve looked at it. Yellow Ribbon, Fry scholarship, what I was eligible for based on dad’s situation
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**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. Additionally, for one of the tasks in this session, I’ll have you verbally describe to me how you would interact with the site since the functionality isn’t completed yet. 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: Find a Campus - 5 minutes**

* You've recently moved to **San Antonio, Texas**. Prior to moving, you took a few classes at **ECPI University** and you want to see if there is a campus in your area. How would you use the Comparison Tool to determine if **ECPI University** has a campus in your area?

Search by location – type in san Antonio if possible or whatever my address is in san Antonio…within 50 miles I’d probably do. I would clickon update tuition and housing estimate…I would do this to match mine. I would change to child and CH35…keep it at 33. And the next one…cumulative post…can you click Learn more. Sorry…the Post 9/11….okay so I wasn’t in the army so this doesn’t apply to me. I would change that to…I guess there’s no option for that. I guess I would just keep this on whatever it ws. Will you be taking classes in person? I guess with COVID yeah…and refine your search…let’s just need schools…vet tec I don’t know what that is…school attributes, I want to do is accredited. Can I click Learn more cautionary warnings. Okay yeah, so I don’t want cautionary…so click has no cautionary warnings. And then update results. Oh…San Antonio…oh, oh, then I would search by name right?

Ecpi…uhhh…I’d just click search (didn’t want to choose an option). Refine search. Location, State: Texas. I don’t know the county so just search. Yeah, there we go.

View details….okay, it’s a for profit.

**Things to watch for:**

* Which search option does the user attempt to use (name or location)?
* Does the participant use the autocomplete?
* How does the user attempt to search/filter results?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did you think that went? That was definitely easy. For VET TEC, I think there should be a learn more option. I’d have to do a Google search.
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of determining if ECPI University had a campus in your area? 1
* How do you think these results were sorted?

Search card – San Antonio TX with GI Bill students…is that how many students are currently there? Rating in what regard? Who’s rating the school? I like the compare tool. I would compare with other colleges and universities. I think the school rating should explain what that means…is it number 1 on that list. GI bill students – personally I don’t care to know how many GI bill students are there.

Type of information to compare – compare second box, you may be eligible for other universities. If rating was more defined, I would like to compare ratings. Size of university. Compare retention rate, graduation rate. And like how – if you’re able to transfer credits easily. And maybe like distance from my home. Distance from my zip code.

Ratings come from? Honestly I don’t know. USA Today has a list, but there are so many different lists. Maybe if it had a reference. Like 13 on this list. Or even change it from school rating to graduation/retention rate. School rating doesn’t matter – more like accredited matters. Every school is biased in themselves and you could find…my undergrad is 14 on some lists and 40 on others. I look for more the graduation rates and retention rates.

Useful to see? Acceptance rate because that shows the rating of the school…if ecpi has a 14% acceptance rate, I know it’s a better school. A lot of people can leave schools or transfer.

**Second Task: Location Search - 15 minutes**

* Since you live in the downtown part of San Antonio, you’d like to keep your commute under 15 minutes. How would you use the Comparison tool to find schools in San Antonio with a commute under 15 minutes? The zip code you live at is 78205.

Search by location – type in 78205. And fifteen minute commute…I would change the within…to within 5 miles. In this little down scroll, I think there should be a within 10 mile opton. Within 5 miles is the best option. Search.

Corrected zip and got options

Let’s refine my search – counties? Country…go down…okay, it doesn’t have any…you can go back to the 17 results.So these don’t have how close it is to my zip code, can you click san Antonio college view details? 2 year program…can you scroll down? Looking at school locations. The main campus 78212 must be close. It looks like a decent option. So if you go back to the last page

I don’t want to go to St Philips…keep scrolling. Keep scrolling…I’m looking for schools I’m interested in. Technical vocation schools…my thought process here. I would click on St Mary’s because its regionally accredited. Can we do one scroll up to see any other accredited universities? University of the Incarnate Word – no thank you. I like to recognize the name of the school. Trinity, yeah we can click on. Let’s compare those.

Scroll down to locations…okay, same zip code…so those are both in the same area. That and the first college…and can we click on st mary’s?

What was the zip code…I assume this one is farther.

Narrow down results? I guess that’s what VET TEC meant when we were looking at comparison tool? And it says VET TEC – and yeah, I assume that’s what that means. Maybe click update search.

Filter out vocation schools and took accredited. I think accredited for almost prestigious?

* *Prompt* Let's say when you performed this search, there were a lot of results. What factors would be important to you in narrowing down your search to find the right place for you?
* Would you be able to narrow down your results here on the tool?

**Things to watch for:**

* What search criteria format does the participant use (city, "city, state", "use my current location" etc)?
* Does the participant use the autocomplete?
* Does the user notice the "Update housing and tuition" accordion?
* Does the user interact with the filters?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did you think that went? I think it went pretty well…it was definitely easy. Can we click back on view details on one of these schools? Can we go back into one of these schools? And scroll down…click scholarships and other VA funding…I just wanted to see what that was. I think the student complaints is a nice tool.
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of searching for educational institutions by location? I would say in the middle because it doesn’t….I feel on the search result page, it should have some sort of estimated distance from your zip code. Because I had to Google search on my own. I think it would be helpful to have it right on the page. Or estimated distance. 3
* What do you think of how results are displayed?
* How do you think the search results were sorted?
* What information would be important to you if you were choosing where to take training?
* What types of education options do you think you can find on the Comparison Tool?
* Do you think these benefit estimates are correct for your situation?
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see?

**Third Task: Map Utilization - 5 minutes**

* You've looked at training opportunities in Austin and San Antonio separately, but want to see all of those results at the same time. Could you talk me through how you would use the Comparison Tool to see all the training opportunities offered in both San Antonio and Austin?

**Things to watch for:**

* How does the user expand/interact with the map?
* Does the user try to enter any additional search criteria into the search fields?

**Upon task completion:**

* What do you think of how the map showed your results?
* What do you think of the filters offered? Which ones would you use? Are there any you wouldn't use?
* For you personally, how far would you be willing to commute to go to school?

**Alternate Questions**

- When you are conducting searches online, do you ever use the map functionality? Yes, Airbnb or tracking my package. For example, Airbnb, I use the map function instead of the list function. That’s actually a good idea to have a list view and a map view

- If yes, what are you typically looking for?

- Which sites are you visiting? Hotels tonight…I travel a lot. Marriott.com, what else. Or even like…no that’s it. Even in Google something near me. I definitely like the users interface with Hotels tonight and Airbnb. You can move the map with your finger. Also saunder.com. If I want to expand search results or look in a particular area or refresh in a particular area, it’ll come up with different results. It helps to visualize. And people are better with visuals. I think this would have been helpful if I had learned about this in high school..I think it would be useful for transferring universities or people in high school to see what their options are. At least in my school, I had to teach everything myself…tools like this would definitely be helpful to students. For those that

- What do you like about those sites? Any frustrations?

When clicked Post 9/11 cumulative active duty – didn’t see what you were looking for? What were you looking for? - umm…zero? I think is this asking for my sponsor. The learn more didn’t make much sense either. I was never active duty service so my first thoughts would be there is a zero option. For military status, if there was an option to say dependent. That cumulative active duty should go away because I clearly wasn’t on active duty.

Looking at school ratings – maybe have a learn more section and don’t know if it has to be a learn more, but explain that its from Veterans or other GI Bill students. Just to clarify what it means.

GW has given her a hard time accessing her benefits. It would be useful to hear horror stories, but other times I treat ratings like Yelp. Sometimes you just have one bad experience. It’s not going to determine me choosing that school. Me I look at prestigious universities and schools like that. That would make me more inclined to apply to a school. I do think reviews are helpful and I think in the details there are student complaints which could be helpful…so maybe that’s redundant?

**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!