**Discussion Guide for CT Redesign for Search, Compare and Initial Profile Page**

**P2 - Caitlin**

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

**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 talk about searching and comparing schools on the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

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

* **This entire session should take about 45 minutes.** I want to be sure not to keep you much longer, 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 Veteran's needs. I will not be offended by any opinions you express, and I welcome your feedback.
* **You'll be interacting with a prototype and a demo tool.** This is a demo tool that may not function exactly the way you expect. Some areas of the prototype will be clickable, and some will not. Since it's a demo, none of your actions will affect your actual VA information or benefits.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **Are you comfortable if I record my screen and audio as we talk today?** We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are destroyed after we complete analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.
  + 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 look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? I have previously used my education benefit. I think I used one year’s worth, but I’m only allotted 40% GI Bill. I’m not currently using it – this is in the past. Used 2015-2016. I am hoping to use in the near future…say 2022 time frame I plan to apply to graduate schools this year.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school? Where did you go?
  + 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 were first looking for schools, how did you go about finding potential options? What was important to you?
* Well first it’s the degree/program. Then a degree/program that suits my professional needs. Then if its easy to use the GI Bill with that school. Whether the school has the administrative bandwidth to using the GI Bill so its easy for me as a student. If they understand the math and want to help students optimize their funds, I like them more. That makes it more appealing.
* How would you understand that? Usually it comes from school webpage. Have a Veterans page on their admissions websites. That would be an initial criterion for whether or not I would consider pursuing that school more. If they don’t have that as a minimum, I probably wouldn’t consider them.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? It doesn’t conjure an image in my mind when you say it.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**Initial Take - 5 minutes**

This is the GI Bill Comparison Tool, which allows you to see the benefits you can receive at various schools. Can you tell me what your initial thoughts are when you see this page? What do you think you can do here?

So what I like about it is the simplicity of this dashboard. It leaves it up to the user what dropdowns they want to use and there aren’t many of them. That’s helpful in a good way. It’s very clear where you would start. As far as starting with school or location you can do that. That’s probably as much information as you need. I can’t imagine getting more granular. That’s what I like about it. I’m curious which boxes…so for example with this…we’re going to be in Daytona. So yeah, that makes a lot of sense to have the location or the name.

Expectation of what you can do on this site? My expectation would be to see approximately how much…I don’t expect a very personalized analysis via this tool. I think its an estimate of where to start. So when it comes to…what’s under Benefit Estimates (opened it). I think the major thing…the big thing that matters is full time/half time or online. Certain questions pop up with stuff like that. Opened school preferences. If I’m working full time and going to school part time where do I select that. That would be the biggest data sifter for that. Opened Degrees/majors. I might pull that to the front.

**First Task: Radius from Location - 10 minutes**

* Let's say you aren't sure what you want to major in, but you're moving to **Daytona, Florida** and want to find a school within 10 miles of your location because you don't want a long commute. How would you use the Comparison Tool to find schools that are within that driving distance?
* So I would put my zip code in the location and I would do the dropdown menu for the radius.
* Amy prompted to click Daytona, but she wanted to do zip code “because its more accurate”
* I would use the dropdown to select the correct radius that applies to me. And then I would hit Enter or search. Okay, so its showing me some schools within that 10 mile radius. Very cool.
* That was very easy – very intuitive. Didn’t require any extra steps. I will say that these are the schools and which schools have a relationship with the GI Bill. Would this be considered the pre-approved list and if there were any other schools not on the list, you would have to write to the VA to have that program accepted to funding eligibility? (Amy – yes, GI bill only shows schools that can receive benefits). What I would be interested too…I like that they are broken down by accreditation. It might be worthwhile to Tableau dashboard. It doesn’t appear to be in any particular order. They don’t appear to be in alphabetical order. Or tuition. I imagine you might group them by accreditation. I know that’s been a sore spot for a while…going top to bottom where the VA recommends what you spend your money on. However the VA views the accreditation and the figure of merit for that. Maybe a definition of the accreditation on the side (waving cursor on right hand side). Maybe on one of the margins…the right one. As someone is going along “this is my shopping page” to know what it means. I would just open another tab [to do that].
* User: Very easy, 1
* Jen: 2

**Things to watch for:**

* Where does the user look to enter the search criteria?
* Do they click the search fields?
* What dropdowns (if any) do they open?
* What location format do users say they would input?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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 finding schools by distance from location?
* Looking at the benefits for these schools, let's say someone had only served in the military for 2 years. Do you think these numbers accurately represent the benefits they would receive?
* I’m sorry as my brain was clouded as I served for a long time, but my GI Bill doesn’t reflect that. This current view does not reflect that. I think that would require another filter to apply.
* Amy: What would that be called? Up top you sort of already have it. So it says Refine estimates with Your Benefit Estimates. It might serve well to have another dropdown that says “What is your percentage eligibility?” so you can do that…opened benefit estimates…if someone’s already done this…for example, you have it here. I would almost pull that out to the top. I think its pretty intuitive the way it is. I would expect to be able to tailor the percentage eligibility here (Cumulative – she’s correct). It might be easiest to pop out this block – circling refine search. I don’t know exactly what I would title it. I think there is…I don’t know, but yeah, that’s where I’m at. Where it says Refine estimates and Your Benefit Estimates – I would want 2 ways…in/person or online and % because those are the two biggest effects on your benefits.  
  - If not, how would they go about determining what benefits they would receive?
* How do you think the school search results were sorted?
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see?
  + I’m not sure. I don’t think so.

**Things to watch for:**

* How does the user try to get back to the home page?

**Second Task: Degree / Program Search - 10 minutes**

* Let's say you've recently heard of someone who received a Bachelor's in **Citizenship Activities**. You don't know of any schools that offer this program, but are curious about what the program would be about. How would you use the Comparison Tool to see if any schools covered by the GI Bill offer this as a program of study?
* Click Degrees/majors…search major (straight to citizenship)..and I would click Citizenship activities…although I didn’t know that was an actual degree. Boom.
* User: Level 1 (very easy)
* Jen: 2

*Prompt* You see that **Indiana University-Bloomington** is highly rated by Veterans. If you wanted to ask a few questions about the school, how would you use the Comparison Tool to find out who to talk to?

So it looks like I have an opportunity to View details so I would go there. Scrolling down and clicked Contact details link to get to bottom of page…that’s how I would go about it.

In general, the out of pocket tuition and whatever that book stipend might be. Quick note on this banner (navigation). Not in alphabetical order or what the VA would want me to click on. The hyperlinks are important to help me jump to things…maybe give them a click box to help people intuitively understand what they’re going to happen. Maybe to the left of the banner say “Scroll to:” and bump each one out in an individual clickbox. I know it’s a page hyperlink. It wouldn’t be intuitive to someone…they might think its going to take them to a different page. Cautionary information…interesting. Institution details – this is really busy. It’s not clear why they’re bolded and underlined. Otherwise good info. Fields of study – okay. Yeah, that’s all…all good.

Amy: can you return to Search results?

Gosh I don’t know…I’m trying to click on one back (GI Bill Comparison Tool)…or I would click back on the browser window (and it looks like it did).

*Prompt* Where would you go to see how much tuition would be covered at **Indiana University-Bloomington**?

**Things to watch for:**

Part 1

* Where does the user look to enter the field of study?
* Do they click the search fields?
* What dropdowns (if any) do they open?
* Do they open the "Level of degree" dropdown?

Part 2

* Does the user click any of the jumplinks or just scroll?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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 finding schools by program of study?
* What do you think of the school cards?
* How do you think the school search results were sorted? (Why were some schools higher or lower on the list?)
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see?

**Third Task: Compare Schools - 15 minutes**

Looking at these search results, let's say you're interested in **University of Massachusetts-Amherst** and **Indiana University-Bloomington**. How would you go about comparing these two schools to see which school would be a better fit for you?

I would hit the Compare button…oh I was not expecting that. (Tray) clicked other school and hit Compare. And that’s how I would compare.

“Compare tray” opened up – what were you expecting to happen?

Scrolling through – huh (on EYB)…Amy prompted what?...oh its good, fine…Okay why do I care about Principles of Excellence…and do I care if it has Vet Success. If I knew what that was I might care. It’s not an intuitive terminology…I guess if I had done some research on what it was I might care.

Reading ratings….ok, I’m done viewing.

*Prompt* After looking at these two schools, **University of Massachusetts-Amherst** doesn't look like a good option for you. How would you remove that school from the comparison and add another in its place?

I would go to Return to search results unless there was something at the bottom I could do that faster. Maybe this Compare carrot…otherwise I would just go back to the search results and deselect what I had. When you’re at the bottom of these pages…I would recommend putting one of those carrots that says “Top” because this is really laborious. Clicked Return to results. Unchecked Amherst in tray. And I kind of want to see the search results, but I can’t get this to go away (tray). Selected Emory and Henry. And clicked Compare.

Jen: 2

How many schools to compare? Up to 4.

Any specific information you would like to compare? I feel like the nut I still have to crack..there should have been a toggle to make sure they aren’t comparing apples to oranges somewhere that you have to attend on-line or in-person. I saw that you were attending on-line or in-person. But what if its 90% online but you’re going to come in once per cohort. It’s not going to help me to say what’s going to give me the most money if the one they want is online is at one school and in-person at another. It’s unclear if that data set has been applied to each school before they are applied side by side. What if Indiana only offers that online or Emory in person…that completely skews that data. Hopefully if someone cares that much, they’re making their own spreadsheet.

Anything unnecessary on this Compare page? I mean…Veteran programs, it’s my own personal bias, but I literally don’t care whether someone has Principles of Excellence or 8 Keys. And then as far as these subjective data sets (student complaints)…unless Student Complaints…if they were submitted through the GI Bill Feedback tool (reading it)…This space on the page is not entirely relevant. If schools have more than 50 complaints…if a data set were worth tracking, then would that GI school might hold that upfront banner “Hey this school has this many complaints and the VA should do something” So the cautionary information and student complaints aren’t needed if data set is less than 50. It’s all subjective – I don’t really care if someone is not good at using their GI Bill and they have a complaint.

What were you expecting with Compare tray?

I wasn’t expecting it to pop up since there was only one school since you can’t compare with one school. I was expecting to select the schools I wanted and then hit a Compare button.

On the page or in the tray? That’s a good question, I was expecting it on the page.

**Things to watch for:**

* Is the user able to successfully add schools to the gutter to compare?
* Is the user able to navigate successfully to the Compare page?
* How does the user try and navigate back to the search results?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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?
* How many schools would you want to be able to compare at one time?
* What information is important for you to see when comparing schools?
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see on the Compare page?
* Was there any information you didn't think was necessary?
* What did you think of the general layout of the page?

**Post-Task Interview - X minutes**

* Any questions for me?