**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

*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 would be looking at the Comparison Tool and talking about ratings and what information is helpful for Veterans when determining if a particular school is a good fit for them.  
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 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.
* **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 (Optional) - 5 minutes**

Let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? No.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school? [Went to school twice. First time, mentioned he was a first-generation college student. First, College of Charleston. Was not for him. Second time, he went back at 21 y/o, it was a Christian college that fit him better.] 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 trying to pick a school, what were you looking for in a school?
  + How would you determine if it was a good fit for you?
* If you knew a fellow Veteran who'd attended a school you were interested in, what would you most want to know from them? They always want to know the Veterans Affairs department, where they are, and they also want to know how flexible their professors are like if they are called in for service. [mentioned he’s had military/veteran friends having issues with being called to service and being forced to withdraw from classes].

**First Task: Initial Look at Ratings - 5 minutes**

Let's say you received a scholarship for **University of California-Davis** and are curious if the Comparison Tool has any information on that school. How would you go about finding **Insert school** on the Comparison Tool?

[SRP] Recognized the school right away. [read card details easily, noted the benefits, gi bill students, and ratings] [identified that 155 veterans are providing the ratings] [thought that he could click the whole card to open, mentioned that “View details” thought that he’d see an accordion effect] [thought that the button visually seems out of place]

Things to watch for:

* Does the user notice the ratings on the school cards? Yes
* Does the user interact with any of the filters? No

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of school card?
* What do you think that rating shows you?

Research questions:

* What do users think of the star ratings?
* Who do users think are providing the ratings?

**Second Task - Detailed Ratings - 15 minutes**

You've heard great things about the Veteran experience at **Insert school**, but are curious about the quality of education you would receive there. How would you use this Comparison Tool to see if **Insert school** would meet your needs?

[Really liked seeing the rating beneath the title for the school.] it says large size. I don’t know if that’s tied to classes. I don’t know if class size, I don’t know if that can be associated to classes, but yeah.

[on school ratings accordion] and this right here, wow! Look at that. This is really detailed [read the categories] I wonder if you could get more information if you click on it. [mentioned the prototype is a little jerky because it is different pages when expanding the categories] [thought N/A wasn’t necessary and we don’t need to show it] [didn’t notice him reading the category descriptions] [finally read the description for marketing practices as he wasn’t sure what it meant. Thought it was least important to look at] [wondered about spouses of veterans and how their thoughts are taken into consideration]

Things to watch for:

* How does the user select the school (School name or View Details)? View details
* Where does the user initially look for information? school card
* Does the user go to the ratings accordion without a prompt? yes

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of the school now that you've seen the ratings?

Research questions:

* Are users interested in the different rating categories or just the overall score?
* Which categories are valuable to users? Are there any categories that aren't valuable? Are there any additional categories they would like to see?
* What do users think the different categories mean?
* How do users think the rating scores are determined (average of submitted scores, calculated value, etc.)? thinks this is collected from a seven section form [counted the categories] if a user wanted to add a rating, I don’t have a link I can click on here….a poor rating can drastically affect veterans wanting to attend a university. [identified about ratings tells him for how they’re calculated]
* How trustworthy are the ratings? I trust these just fine.
* How do users think ratings are collected?
* What level of privacy do users expect if they would provide a rating?
* Do users think the ratings are useful? I would find this very useful knowing about this. The main issue I run into there is no way for a veteran to know if a school is good for veterans outside of the internet, but having something central like this seems like a great way to figure it out.
* How might this affect your feelings about uc-davis? As an east coast guy, I have some animosity towards California, but seeing these ratings, I go into this with an open mind, open state. I’m more willing to give this school a chance.

**Third Task - Comparing Various Rating Aspects - 10 minutes**

Let's say you want to attend the **University of California** and are trying to decide on the campus where you'll take classes. You plan on living on-campus and all the schools offer the classes you want to take. Walk me through how you'd use the Comparison Tool to help you decide which campus you'd attend.

[srp] it kind of throws me for a loop that there are some that are rated and some that are not rated [thought that the rated ones would be first in the search display] when you’re looking at this whole section here, your eye goes to these icons [the gold stars] they are eye catching against all this gray. [wondered about the final decision for the position of the stars] I’m guessing you guys thought about putting it up here at one point or another [below school name] I feel like this is an important visual indicator. If it doesn’t look good down here, then I’m fine with it there. it feels so weird being in the bottom corner. [mentioned he’d be drawn to uc davis over all the other schools due to its high rating] I’m completely turned off by these ones that aren’t rated yet. [on hbcu tag] I can see this becoming a nice indicator. Hbcus are becoming a big topic and becoming a badge of honor for minorities.

-you went to a small Christian college. Did you see the one tagged roman catholic?

I am personally not a Christian, but…I was pleasantly surprised.

Things to watch for:

* Does the user look at the overall rating or delve into the detailed ratings?
* Does the user pause or read the caution flag?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What made you decide to pick that particular campus?

Research questions:

* Would ratings affect the school selection process?
* How does the number of ratings weigh into a user's perception of a particular school?
* Do users think the ratings are useful?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share? [thought that he might not have such a problem with the N/A, mentioned on SRP high ranking schools should be prioritized, but mentioned he also wanted the schools to be alphabetical so was conflicted on that. Mentioned he really liked the institution details ratings display. Thought the jump link was fine]
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chance for the other people on the line to ask a question.

\*\*you mentioned you were thrown off by the not yet rated label. if a school doesn’t have ratings, how do you imagine that should look? Mentioned it was because he thought highly rated schools should be higher in the results

-caution flag and high ratings – would give the school and chance and try to get more details on why they have a caution flag

\*\*when you were looking at the categories, which one was most imporant to you? or which ones? overall experience, online instruction, quality of clases, [online was last – overall, quality, job, online]

\*\*can you tell us your thoughts on that last sentence in the about ratings? [didn’t like it, thought it might be a legal requirement for va to have that]

**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!