Participant: *Adam*

Date:

**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.

* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits?  
  *I am not currently but I have.*
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?  
    education for college – post 9/11.
    - When did you start school? Where did you go?  
      2006-2009 at mallwood university in Farmville VA
* If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
  + Which benefit?
  + Where are you in the school selection process?
* What was most important to you when you were looking for potential schools?  
  um I was going for a business degree so accreditation was important to me, I didn’t want to go to a large institution with large classes, I wanted personal interactions with professors – what do you consider to be small vs large.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?  
  no, ive never heard of it.
* Do you have any benefits remaining?   
  some, not a lot. Might use them in a future but nothing definite.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

\*\*As a disclaimer, we will be looking at ratings data for several schools. This data is fabricated and does not represent the actual thoughts or experiences of Veterans. \*\*

**First Task: Feedback on School Cards - 5 minutes**

Let's say you've done your research and you're interested in attending **Dartmouth College** How would you go about finding **Dartmouth** on the Comparison Tool? When you find what you're looking for, you can say "I found it".

Things to watch for:

* Tell me about what youre seeing? Graphical user interface, text, application

  Description automatically generated  
  a snapshot of the benefits you are qualitfied for.
* What about the ratings here?  
  well it says not yet rated so… oh here we go okay… I had gone down to far – scrolls to top and sees ratingsA screenshot of a computer screen

  Description automatically generated
* And what about the other one that says not yet rated?  
  um my guess is between the school of business and darmouth college is that is just due to lack of numbers (between gi bill students) would be my guess.
* Does the user notice the ratings on the school cards?
* How did you find the finding the college?  
  it was easy

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of school card?
* What do you think of the ratings that you see?

Research questions:

* What do users think of the new school card layout?
* Are users interested in sorting or filtering search results by star ratings?
* What do users think of the ratings?

**Second Task: Initial Look at Ratings - 15 minutes**

Since you've found the school, how would you go about determining Dartmouth college would be a good fit for you?  
  
um the rating definityl helps but if I was actually going back to school then id like to do more research so call \_\_\_\_\_ and just to figure out whats going on on that end so I fully understand. Id like to make sure that these dollar amounts are actauly sufficient enough to cover the costs at Dartmouth

How would you find more information?  
um view details… (clicks it) okay… (scrolling) um money is important but the specific breakdown of the ratings here is … between the veteran friendliness, education… etc. that will be very helpful when people are selecting where they want to go and how they want to use their GI bill.  
  
I think most important would be the overall expirence and I mean right now I think the onlune instruction category would be really important ya know? Um less important… well I don’t see any of theses as a waste of screenspace, they all could serve anybody,.  
  
what is ture to expectations?   
um I think that’s pretty important I think that’s if you show up there as a student and someone is asking you hey is Dartmouth the college you expected it to bE? That’s rpetty important. Id be curious to know why this one is on the lower end.   
  
If I wanted to go to this school id see if there was any way to contact any veteran groups or see if there was any reason as a group of people that they would feel this school doesn’t or didn’t live up to their expectations.   
  
how would ratings like there impact your decision?   
I would wonder if there was more involvement in this rating system how these ratings would look. I don’t put a ton of stock into this but it’s a nice tool to have for sure. Maybe this would be the decision maker for someone between two schools but its hard to say if its only 102 people – that’s a pretty small sample size. At what sample size do these ratings hold more weight in youir decision making process?

I would have faith that my ratings would be kept confidential

Things to watch for:

* How does the participant open the school profile page (School name or View Details link)?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of the school now that you've seen the ratings?
* What do you think of the categories?
  + What do you think "True to expectations" means?
  + Some categories say that a certain number of individuals did not rate, what do you think of that?
* Where do you think the ratings come from?
* Do you have any questions about the ratings?

Research questions:

* What do users think of the star ratings?
* How does the overall rating weigh into the user’s perception of the school?
* How do the individual ratings weigh into the user’s perception of the school?
* Do users understand the “Not yet rated” indicators?
* Do users think the “Not yet rated” scores affect the overall score?
* What do users believe “True to expectations” means?
* What do users think of the “About Ratings” content?
* Are there any aspects of the ratings design that users find confusing?
* Do users think the ratings are useful?

**Third Task - Comparing Prestigious Schools - 15 minutes**

Let's say you are considering attending either **Stanford University** or **Dartmouth College**. Both schools have the program you're interested in and you plan on moving to an apartment close to the school you attend. Walk me through how you'd use the Comparison Tool to help you decide which school you'd attend.  
  
Sure, so I need to back out and search for Stanford now… scrolls down school profile… so this one scored a 4.3 vs a 4.2 and id have to do more research like you mentioned a apt within wlaking distance to campus I mean.. id have to do more research on that, is that something that can be provided in this tool?

Graphical user interface, text, application

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*Um maybe something like an interactive map where you can see where housing is available relative to the campus so you can see are you able to walk to campus? Something wehre you can get a feel for the area around campus*   
  
Hey adam you mentioned a tool to help you get a feel for the area around campus, I know you mentioned housing… what other factors are you looking for when you mention a feature that gives you a feel for the area around campus.  
- proximity of off campus to on campus

– restaurants, general amenities in the area.  
  
*so there are no massive gaps, its pretty similar to Dartmouth*Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated  
*um looking at these dollar amounts here, you know I don’t know a whole lot until I know how much im actually charged but that’s not here. Its nice they haven’t had any student complaints in the past 2 years.*

*The fact that these ratings are collected by the VA and not from the school website I have more trust, I don’t know what motiviation the va would have to give misleading results so Id truest them.*   
  
What are your thoughts on the 5 users didn’t rate this category?   
*You wonder why, did they just leave it incomplete or my thoughts are just curiosity, why would you skip some parts?*

Things to watch for:

* How does the user compare schools (look at them one at a time, open multiple tabs, etc.)?

Upon completion of task:

* How did you think that went?
* What do you think of the schools now that you've seen the ratings?
* Which school would be a better fit? Why?

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.)?
* How trustworthy are the ratings?
* 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?

**Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes**

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the Comparison Tool that you’d like to share?
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chance for the other people on the line to ask a question.

**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!