Participant: *Steven*   
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?  
  yes I used it for my masters and im actually going to enroll into another program with my remainder
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school? Where did you go?  
      Previously GW now Berkley online. I studied computer sciends at GW and now im doing music online with Berkley I had looked it up a long time ago and then recently when I decided to attend I just google searched it and just decided to jump in
* 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?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?  
  yes
  + 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 **University of California-San Francisco**. How would you go about finding **University of California-San Francisco** on the Comparison Tool? When you find what you're looking for, you can say "I found it".

*umm so looks like most of these are already selected to what I want them to be so ill type in dartmouth to the search… and it looks like that’s the correct one and I found it.*

Things to watch for:

* Talk about what youre seeing on this page?  
  if I was specifically looking for the school of business I would look at the second one but since im not ill go for the first one and hten based on location I would assume this is the correct one im looking for
* What else do you notice on the card?   
  *im familiar with housing but for someone who is new I might think a button to show these rates are for in person vs online and then as a veteran you get a different housing allowance then after… so just a little more information on the housing to make it more clear that the rate that is being shown is for a specific thing.*
* *What are your thoughts on the ratings?  
  my first thought Is which critiera is rated? So im not sure the criteria for rating 4/5 stars but I do see the. View details buttons so if I was curious Id click that to see more info… okay (sees ratings on school profile) that answers that question.   
    
  looking at the ratings criteria its pretty self explanatory, I think I can figure out whats being rated just based on what is being shown here. I like that you can expand and collapse, that is pretty nice. I don’t have any questions about what im seeing.*
* *What do you think true to expectations means?  
  so I would think that that would be related to the reputation of the school, for example if you heard the school is military friendly, I think that would be this category ehre… okay so this is about programs and costs, that makes more sense to relate to the title.*
* Does the user notice the ratings on the school cards?
* Which category if it was a low school would be a red flag to you?  
  I think quality of classes is the primary thing I am looking for, how good of an education can I get.
* Which of the ratings is least important to you?  
  probably online instruction.
* Impact?   
  I think ratings would definitely be a factor but not a big deciding factor because if you look at the sample size, yes 102 is a big number but in comparison to the student body that’s relatively small.

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 if **University of California-San Francisco** would be a good fit for you?

Things to watch for:

* How does the participant open the school profile page (School name or View Details link)?  
  *if the schools are very similar I would definitely look at the financial aspect, id like to avoid out of pocket costs as much as possible, housing but that’s relative to the cost of living in the area, um id look at Stanford for example and compare them side by sid.e   
    
  Okay assuming im going to lose this oage id take a screenshot the card for Dartmouth so may be if there was a option to compare side by side that would be kinda usefull but this works, its not that big a deal.   
    
  if it said 0 gi bill students I would see that as a red flag. I know for not maybe a traditional but for profit university I would be very sceptiocal that if there are 0 gi bill students its not the best school to go to   
    
  I see high schools listed here… I don’t know why.   
  I think stats could be useful in these ratings like how I use amazon.   
  I take bad reviews with a grain of salt.*   
    
  Id like to see coments with the rating itself to understand where that point of view is coming from.  
    
  One confusing part, I interpret at first glance GI Bill pays to school as how much the tuition is…   
    
    
  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.

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!