Participant: *Jennifer*  
Date: 11/06

**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?
  + 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?  
  *I want to go to school for interior design and use my gi benefits so that’s a little complicated, so finding a school that has the program I am looking for is important to me.* Yellow ribbon is also important for me.
  + 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?
  + 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** 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".  
  
*Okay got that… uh 22… that’s cheaper than my husbands prep school ha. Okay… scrolling down profile page… this is nice having this breakdown, this is 95% of the questions I would ask… ya know? What are we gonna get out of that. Okay I like the question, will you be taking any classes in person?   
  
I appreciate the information about the yellow ribbon, and they still do the kicker oh my gosh… ah…  
  
I like the school ratings, and my suggestion would be… id rate it overall so that um people who had less than a perfect expirence… I feel that those ratings should be put towards the top so we me and my husband are prime examples, were more interested in hearing the negatives. I like that you have all the names of folks, but how often is this updated ?*

*Sometimes you call an office and ask to speak with a person and find that person no longer works there.*

*I like the historical information… that’s really good.   
I like the instituation codes, that something I am always looking for.   
  
The date of when a review was given says a lot also… I would like to see the date of the review.   
  
for me true to expectations is that everything that’s being depicted is actually happening at the school.   
  
Id like to see the actual reviews…like not just the stars but the comments people filled out with it.   
  
People don’t trust the VA right now, especially with the current administration so I think a third party company woujld need to handle the reviews and evaluations.   
  
Youre hitting all the bench marks we have…  
I think quality of classes is a really big topic… I was at grand canyon university and it was okay but then it just qnet downhill and so that’s is part of the reason I left a really negative review.  
  
I think job preparation is very important… I think you need a rating for accreditation because it’s a really hot topic.*

*I.also want to know.. do they meet department of ed funding criteria like the 90 10 rule?*

*How would. U rate a predatory school? Having the cautionary flags makes a huge difference for her.   
  
I have a brain injurery and so I want a school that supports me and isn’t just saying they will.   
  
Im not sure if people would use this or more so go onto social media or youtbue to voice their opinion*

Things to watch for:

* Does the user notice the ratings on the school cards?

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)?

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.  
  
*I would expect a bar in the estimate your benefits that says compare schools OR I would also expect to have the ability to add an additional field (on the beginning search screen) for the degree field you are looking for and you can see a list of the colleges and programs at the university and check box the ones you are interested that you can see then a page that has the ones you selected side by side.   
  
I am more interested in seeing the student complaints than the ratings.*

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!