**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

**P4 - Steven**

*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 actually just completed a Masters program. At this point, I’ve used about 18 months and I’m actually enrolled in another program.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using? Post 9/11 GI Bill
    - When did you start school? Where did you go? Previously at George Washington University. Now doing courses through Berkeley online.
* 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?
  + So for me, what I’m studying now is something I’ve always been interested in but not my top priority. So I wanted to do my top priority first. And it’s nice that I can have the benefit to do something I’m interested in. George Washington was Computer Science. And this is Music online…so it’s not something I’ve done professionally as my main job. So I had looked it up a long time ago, but recently when I decided to attend, I searched it once I finished my degree and I just decided to jump into it. Looked on Google. What did you search on Google (terms)? Interested in online and looked at housing rate for online courses. So when I did my Google search, was looking at the program I wanted to attend. Had heard of the program previously.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? I have – many times actually. Looked it up for Berkeley program? I did – it’s nice because it just aggregates everything in one spot.
  + 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 College** on the Comparison Tool? When you find what you're looking for, you can say "I found it".

It looks like these are what I want them to be. Typed in Dartmouth. Selected option. Clicked search. It looks like that’s the correct one. I found it.

If I was specifically looking for the school of business, I would go to this one. So I would be going to this one and the location. I’m just drawn to that one as the correct one. Just based on location, I assume this is the right one. I recognize this format. For the housing, I know for…I’m more familiar with it, but to someone who’s new. It may be helpful to have more information to show that this is for in-person classes versus online and the rate at which they would be getting. As a Veteran, they may have had a different rank and housing allowance. And now that they’re using the GI Bill, they’ll be getting a Rank 5 housing rate. I think. Just to make it more clear what that rate is. E5 rate? For me, it was lower. I don’t know the average rank of those using the GI bill, but for me it was lower.

I see the Rated by and my first thought would be which criteria would be rated. Just looking at it, I’m not sure what the criteria would be for rating is 4 out of 5 stars. I do see View details (clicked for more info). Clicked jump link. Ok, so that answers that question. Opened overall experience.

Looking at the ratings criteria it’s pretty self-explanatory. I think I can figure I can figure out what is being rated just based on what is being shown here. I like that you can expand and collapse. Pretty nice. Everything seems pretty clear. I don’t have any questions as far as what I’m seeing.

True to expectations? I would think that that would be related to the reputation of the school. So for example, if you’ve heard that they’re military friendly school that would be this category.

Okay so this is about explaining requirements, programs and costs. That actually makes sense. I was guessing the first time around.

Aggressive marketing – where represented? Just based off what I’m seeing. It would fall under this category (True). Just being honest and clear to the student. Because I would think that this wasn’t a high rating, there would…I wouldn’t say issue. But something….I think 4 out of 5 is pretty good. If it was a 3, I could think it’s not all on the school. There’s also the student element that people have to do their end of the research. If it was like a 3, I could think that maybe it could be on the student. 4 or higher would be good though.

Low score red flag? Quality of classes. I would think that’s the primary thing I would look for. I’m going to get an education.

Least important? Probably online instruction.

102 is a small sample size…the number of individuals would be important.

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 **Dartmouth College** would be a good fit for you?

So I’ll go back one page here real quick. I would definitely look at the financial aspect if they’re very similar. How much does it cost. Does it fall in the cap. Is it a Yellow Ribbon school. Personally, I would avoid paying out of pocket costs. Housing a little bit, but not really because I know its respective to the area. I would take this info and get the info for Stanford and compare the info.

Assuming I’m going to lose this page, I’d take a screenshot of this page and then go to Stanford. Or maybe if there was a…maybe if there was an option to compare side by side. This works, it’s not that big a deal. I’d pull up the other screenshot I had and compare. It looks like the tuition is about the same. (He’s on SRP). Then I’d compare ratings…looks to be about the same. Also nice to see the number of GI Bill students. If there were 0 students, I’d take it as almost like a red flag. I know for not maybe a traditional public univeristies, but the for profit, I’d be skeptical if there were no GI Bill students, that it wasn’t the best school. For profit with no students would be a red flag.

The categories look the same…I wasn’t paying attention to the text down here, but I’m expecting it to be the same. It looks like they have higher ratings in some areas.

Quality of classes – this is really good, almost everyone says 5/5. I’m always interested in what the bad one thinks. Would be nice if there were comments. And that’s the thing I’ve noticed about bad reviews…you take them with a grain of salt.

Decide Stanford/Dart? I’m kind of curious about True to expectations. Having been to a school I value Veteran community more, but I think initially when you’re looking at a program it has to be educational.

Trustworthy? I trust the VA, so I think they’re trustworthy. Only other thing would be to see comments to know where that point of view is coming from.

Helpful? I think its really helpful. Anyone who is willing to do the research. I think it’s a good place to go to see the financial aspect.

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.

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!