**STEM Usability Testing Discussion Guide - Round 2**

**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're going to take a look at the application for a new scholarship for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries.

Before we get started, a few things I want to mention:

* This entire session should take about 30 minutes. I don't want to keep you much longer than that, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* During this session, we want to hear your honest opinions. We're not testing your ability. We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I won't be offended by any opinions you express and welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.

We will be working in a prototype so some functionality will not work as expected. For example, when you click on a field, an answer or selection may pre-populate or alternatively, you may click on something and nothing may happen. In those cases, I'll let you know that the functionality isn't working and ask what you would expect to happen.

Are you comfortable if I record the screen and audio as we talk today? We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are deleted after we finish analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.

* If yes: Great - thank you. Once I start recording, I'll ask again so we have your audible confirmation.
* If no: Ok. My team will just observe and take notes as we go.

Start recording.

* I have started recording. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen the audio as we talk today?

**Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes**

Before we look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

1. Are you currently using or have you ever used your VA education benefits?

P: Yes

* + Which benefit?

P: Post-9/11

1. Do you know roughly how much of your education entitlement you have left?

P: 8 months [?]

1. Are you familiar with the Rogers STEM scholarship?

P: No

* If yes, what have you heard about it?

P:

* If no, as a quick summary of the scholarship, the Rogers STEM Scholarship provides up to nine months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (to a maximum of $30,000) to qualifying Veterans/Fry Scholars seeking an undergraduate STEM degree or who have earned a STEM degree and are seeking a teaching certification.

For our session today, I'm going to give you a couple tasks to do online. While you're going through them, it would be really helpful if you'd think aloud - kind of like you'd do if you were talking to yourself. We are interested in your first reactions, what you're thinking & wondering as you go through the process. The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn.

When you think aloud, it helps us understand what works well and where we might want to make improvements to make things even easier. If you have questions, it’s likely that many other Veterans will, as well, so feel free to ask them along the way.

I'm going to give you control of my screen & mouse. I'll pass control to you and you should receive a message that prompts you to control the screen.

Note: Each participant will go through ONE of the tasks below.

**Task 1: Authenticated User with Too Much Entitlement - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Sammy Smith and you're using the **Post 9/11 GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. How would you go about filling out this application? You will log in as an authenticated user.

*When eligibility warning alert on intro page appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw?
  + Where do you think the information is coming from?
  + Do you think this information is accurate?
  + Would you still apply?

*When school information appears*

* What did you think of the pre-population of school information? What would you do if the information wasn't right?

Things to watch for:

* Does the user read the subway map?
* Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
* How does the user react to the eligibility alert message (entitlement)?

**Upon completion of task**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Task 2: Unauthenticated User that is Not Chapter 33 - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Jamie Lee and you're using the **Montgomery GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. You don't currently have an account and aren't interested in creating one. How would you go about filling out this application?

P:

*When eligibility alert appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw? Would you still apply?

*When 2nd (STEM) eligibility summary page appears*

* What are your thoughts on seeing this information again?
* What would you do at this point?

Things to watch for:

* Does the user read the subway map?
* Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
* How does the user react to the eligibility alert message (wrong benefit)?
* How does the user react to the 2nd ineligibility alert message?

**Upon completion of task**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**TASK 3: Authenticated User in non-STEM program - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Jordan Johnson and you're using the **Post 9/11 GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Philosophy** from **Chicago State University**. How would you go about filling out this application? You will log in as an authenticated user.

A: what are you studying?

P: Right now I’m doing a degree in neurological sciences.

A: [repeated scenario]

P: in order to apply for the scholarship, I would scroll down to read about the scholarship to figure out what I have to do because this is very easy. [started reading eligibility requirements] [asked about major]

A: you are a philosophy student

P: it looks like everything is easy to know what it gets ahead of time. Yep, it looks like I would start the sign in and create an account after reviewing the information [clicked sign in at bottom]. Ok, so typical va screen I’ve seen before. It shouldn’t be anything new to a vet. Am I supposed to be a vet, returning back to school?

A: you’re finishing school

P: and I already have my undergraduate?

A: you’re working on your undergraduate degree in philosophy. Here’ you can pretend to sign in with a ds logon. this is a prototype and you won’t have to enter your credentials

P: ok cool. So I’m starting the application as soon as I’ve signed in. looks like my information is put in there, my social is in there. this looks like a really easy application so far. Va has a form where you change your education benefit, so it looks just like that, easy. So I’m currently using, post 9/11 right? [selected it and continued] so, currently, yes [to stem] is philosophy a stem? I don’t know

A: how would you go about figuring that out?

P: me personally, I’d go to google. I’d ask siri. So would I just be able to go to google on here? What would you suggest at this point? I don’t want to overstep my boundaries here.

A: if you’d normally go to google, you can try here

P: ok cool [opened a tab to search in google for “is philosophy a stem major”] oh, ok, so it does not say that it is. So, it is. Oh, it’s separate, so it does not count. So I’d say no. so do you have a stem undergraduate degree and are now pursuing a teaching certification? I’d say no. about how much of your education…am I saying my entitlement?

A: let’s say you have less than 6 months.

P: so I have less than 6 months and keep going with that [got to summary page] so based on your responses, it appears you’re not eligible… based on what I was reading in google, and how philosophy was separated in the 19th century, I’d say there’s a potential va would determine it as a science. I would actually say yes [ to continue applying]

A: tell us the reasons why

P: the reasons being that I believe that maybe the VA would determine, based on the degree, that it would be, that philosophy is actually…I don’t know what they would think. This is kind of hard. Philosophy is kind of hard to classify. I’ll actually select yes

A: oh, no! don’t change your answer based on my account. Can you talk about the gray box and what you saw?

P: I know the green check marks let me know those are the ones I’m good at. I know the x is because philosophy is not a science. In order for this to really go through, I’d have to probably select, I guess if I went back and selected yes here [to first stem question] I guess that would change. See, I’m going to be honest with you because I don’t know. My responses are kind of torn between if I was a student and I’d be wanting, oh, you know what. I’d be wanting to use the rogers stem scholarship for philosophy, which in my mind, philosophy would count as a science. That’s why I’m kind of torn because I feel like it’s not a science, but I feel like it should be a science.

A: what would help you, is there anything va could do to help you figure out if it’s a science or not?

P: the only way is if it was determined or not. I would suggest, select no, and then have them review. So let’s go to continue, and then yes, I would like them to review, to continue, so what’s the name of your stem degree? Right here, I’d say philosophy. That’s good. [read school id copy] so, I’d definitely put those in. ok, cool [as they prefilled] and the reason I’m saying is because sometimes I know the va can get a little time to do things, so if I can get my application in faster by providing my simple student id and my email address, I’d put that in there.

A: do you normally use your school email account?

P: yes [?] so I’d select no there, and continue. So personal information for va, email address so they can get in touch with you, sounds good. Best way to contact, I’d do all of that, but I’ll put in email and phone so I don’t miss any information. and I’ll continue. Ok [on DD page] so I’d at least do my direct deposit, and I’d do bank account, routing number, easy enough. So any bank account information here will only affect your, so that’s perfect.

A: what if any changes that you made would affect your payments for compensation, pension, and education payments?

P: I’d definitely put in different account information there. I’d use in another bank account information. that note right there makes it really easy to understand that there’s no crossover.

A: if there was a crossover, would that impact the account that you put in there?

P: if they did, I see that there’ s a little line there, what if I don’t have a bank account or don’t want to use direct deposit? I’d click that little arrow and find out more information. so if you don’t have a bank account, you have to receive it through a card. So I’d have to call a number or apply at that website. Ok, alright cool. That’s funny that they encourage you to participate in EFT. At that point, when I read that, I’m going to try to do this EFT thing because it’s going to be a headache if I don’t. at that point, I would, I would definitely go on that website here or call that number because it seems like the best…

A: am I understanding correctly that if you thought it would affect your other payments, that those would be directed to the same account? You would want to put it on a bank card instead?

P: right.

A: can you talk about your reasoning for that?

P: my reasoning is because I’ve moved my accounts around a lot sometimes. The primary account that I have might be a.. I would treat the scholarship as part of.. I would have them go into a savings account personally. That’s just my personal reason, and then I would transfer it over. Usually I transfer things over and keep them in my account because they’ll accrue interest.

A: thank you that was really helpful.

P: do you want me to continue?

A: sure

P: so last step, you can review your information and submit. Of course I know it’s important. According to the law… got it. I’m going to select the check box even though I didn’t read the policy. I don’t read the policy.

A: very few people read the policy. I’m sure of that.

P: so right here, I’d submit my application. I see it takes 30 days. At this point, I’d be wondering, is the 30 days with that added information with my student id and my email address? Is that 30 days extra or less? I’d want to know there…it says they usually process applications in 30 days. Back on that one screen where it was saying about the student email address and the student id. I’d want to know how much time I was saving by adding that email address and that student id. At this point, I’d obviously submit the application and wait for that answer. I know because of dealing with the va…[?] at this point, I could select what happens after I apply. I’m pretty sure I know what happens. Pretty much gotta wait.

A: how did you think that went?

P: it was easy. Very easy to follow. I liked it. If I was looking for this scholarship, which I may get, yeah, this [?]

A: in your personal field of study, would you expect that you’d be eligible for this scholarship?

P: in my degree right now, see I don’t know the liberal arts and sciences counts as sciences. So liberal arts is all the arts. In my current degree, it would depend on the track that I chose to take. If I definitely did, yeah, it would depend on the track I chose to take. I don’t personally think it would. I’m doing more artsy stuff than sciences.

A: [showed him the intro with the approved programs]

P: on that question where it asked if I qualified, it would help if I had that link there and I could open a new window. I didn’t even see that there [on intro page] usually when you have things like that in bullets, I know that I personally scroll through that. I don’t even read the fry scholarship part. It would help if that see approved stem programs link was the first part of the sentence, up at the top. I’m just scrolling through this real quick. See, now that I’m backtracking, and thinking of what I’d be doing here, I’d suppose that would be the first thing I clicked on. If I would have seen that, that would be the first thing I clicked on first. Instead of philosophy.

[J asked about what he thinks would happen if he clicked approved programs link. He hypothesized a page would open with a list of programs where he could control + f to search]

[C asked about remaining benefits. He mentioned he hasn’t checked online, that he usually gets letters in the mail with how much he has left. Mentioned his school id is not the same as his social, and that he frequently checks his school email address]

*When eligibility alert appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw? Would you still apply?

Things to watch for:

* + Does the user read the subway map?
  + Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
  + Does the user check the Approved STEM programs document?
  + How does the user react to ineligibility alert?
  + If they click "Check remaining benefits", what would you expect to happen (e.g. modal, new page, etc.)?

**Upon completion of task:**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes**

Circle back on

* School contact details - Is your school ID the same as your SSN? If applicable, what would you put down for your school email?

Those are all the tasks I have for you today.

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the application that you’d like to share?
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to 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!