



In the meantime, the computer is busy choosing the next question from an item bank of several thousands of questions prepared by professionals in the appropriate discipline.

When the driver chooses an answer, he or she is placed on a knowledge scale. The computer, using latent trait test algorithms, sizes up each response and chooses the next question accordingly. In this way, the system tailors or adapts the test to each applicant.

Studies indicate that more demanding driver's tests stimulate a need for better training. One recent program in the Eastern U.S. shows a reduction in accidents among new drivers (predominantly teenagers) of 19 per cent as the result of better testing and training.

According to Dr. George T. Woods, who is overseeing the project, the test breaks new ground in a number of significant areas.

"This pilot project is the first use of NAPLPS for testing that we know of," says Wood. "It's also the first full-scale use of latent trait testing theory, a statistical technique developed for the U.S. Government at the University of Tennessee."

The B.C. system, operated by Adaptive Testing Network, calls for NAPLPS colour terminals to be installed at Motor Vehicle Department offices throughout the province.