

# French seek elective option

**Liz Heron**

French teachers are demanding that foreign languages be offered as electives in the government's proposed senior secondary reforms.

The Hong Kong Association of French Teachers has drawn up a paper putting the case for foreign language electives and sent it to the Education and Manpower Bureau plus all secondary schools and universities. It is inviting institutions to add their names to a list of bodies supporting the demand.

The move comes after the teachers' group met with ministers last month to voice fears that French would be squeezed out of the senior secondary curriculum altogether by the reforms. The language is not on the list of electives

in the government's consultation document.

Jean-Luc Rey, chairman of the HKAFT, said officials told the group that schools would be able to offer French and other foreign languages in the "other learning experiences" section of the proposed curriculum, which would account for 15 to 35 per cent of the timetable.

"But it is important to have foreign languages as electives," he said. "Hong Kong is an international city and you need people with the ability to speak foreign languages rather fluently in various sectors of the community, whether tourism, trade or business."

The EMB's suggestion that foreign languages should be offered as an "other learning experience" would not allow students to reach

adequate proficiency in a language because it would not involve enough study time or any recognised certification, said Mr Rey.

French was offered as an HKCEE subject at about 12 public sector schools and was commonly taken as an alternative to Chinese by ethnic minority youngsters who did not have Chinese as their mother-tongue. If it was not given the status of an elective, it could disappear altogether from such schools as early as Form One, leaving these children without a second language, he said.

In the paper, the association calls on the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to work with schools to develop exams and coursework for foreign language electives.