

Teachers oppose 'unfair' French exam timetable

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An association of French teachers acting on behalf of 13 schools has complained about official inflexibility over "impractical and unfair" proposals for foreign languages under the new secondary diploma.

The teachers say the plans would put students at a disadvantage by forcing them to sit their final French exam seven months ahead of schedule, and claim officials have attempted to "close the door" on further discussion.

"The students simply won't have enough time to get ready for the exam," said Jean-Luc Rey, chairman of the Association Francais Langue Etrangere Hong Kong (Hong Kong Association of French Teachers).

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education is due to replace the current HKCEE and A-level exams, when students currently in Form Two complete senior secondary in 2012.

Under the new senior secondary curriculum, students will be required to complete core subjects of Liberal Studies, English and Chinese language, plus electives.

Schools have been given the go-ahead to offer French and five other languages as electives, but the exams authority has ruled out preparing local exams in the subjects, opting instead to offer overseas qualifications of an equivalent level. The current proposal for French is for schools to adopt the British AS level. But the timing of the exam - which is held in November and June - has created an impasse.

Responding to concerns raised by the French teachers' association, Education Bureau principal education officer Kwan Siu-kam wrote that the exams authority "does not opt for the June administration because there will not be sufficient processing time for recording the results on the HKDSE certificate". That left the November exam the "only viable option", he continued.

But when the association requested a face-to-face meeting to discuss a solution, they were turned down, Mr Rey said.

Dr Kwan's response to the request for a meeting had been a curt three-line e-mail. "I do think most of the related issues have been discussed. Our line is very clear. Unless you have other new issues which we didn't come across previously, I think a meeting is not value-added," he wrote.

However, when contacted by *Education Post* yesterday, Dr Kwan denied he had been trying to avoid the issue.

"I am not trying to close the door on discussion," he said. "If the association writes to me again, a meeting can be arranged."