

Research Associate

Full-time • Sheung Wan, Hong Kong • Start date: negotiable

Who We Are

HKFEI is a small, independent policy research institute with an outsized ambition: to change how Hong Kong thinks about its most important economic challenges.

We were founded on the belief that Hong Kong has a serious deficit of rigorous, independent, and intellectually honest policy analysis — and that this deficit has real costs for the millions of people whose lives are shaped by the policies that result. We are trying to fix that.

Our work focuses on housing policy, population strategy, and labour markets. We publish in Ming Pao, SCMP, and academic journals. We brief government officials and legislators. We are building a track record of proposals that are taken seriously because they are grounded in evidence and free from the compromises that come with proximity to power.

We are a team of researchers, former civil servants, journalists, and policy practitioners who share a conviction that Hong Kong can be more liberal, more compassionate, more efficient, and more open than it currently is — and that serious policy thinking is part of how it gets there.

The Role

This is not a conventional research assistant position. We are not looking for someone to clean datasets and produce tables under close supervision.

We are looking for someone who wants to help build something — a research associate who will grow into a policy entrepreneur. Someone who can take a policy question from first principles through to a published proposal that lands in a minister's inbox and a newspaper's pages. Someone who brings their own ideas, not just their execution.

In practice, your work will span:

- Leading and co-authoring policy research proposals on housing, population, and related topics
- Analysing government data and published research to build the evidential foundation for HKFEI's arguments
- Drafting bilingual policy briefs and op-eds that translate rigorous findings into clear public argument
- Engaging with government officials, academics, and media contacts to ensure our work reaches and influences the right audiences
- Contributing to HKFEI's institutional development — our research processes, knowledge management, and growing network of fellows and affiliates
- Bringing your own policy ideas and angles to the team, not just responding to ours

Who You Are

We care more about who you are than what your CV says. That said, here is what we are looking for:

Genuinely curious about Hong Kong's future. You read about housing policy, demographic change, and institutional design because you find it interesting — not because someone assigned it. You have opinions about what Hong Kong should do and why.

Entrepreneurial by temperament. You see a gap and fill it. You don't wait to be told what to do next. You take ownership of outputs and follow through without being chased.

Rigorous in your thinking. You understand the difference between correlation and causation. You can read a government statistical release critically. You are not satisfied with an argument that sounds plausible but hasn't been tested against the evidence.

An excellent communicator in both languages. You can write a clear, compelling paragraph in English and Chinese. You understand that the purpose of policy writing is to change minds, not to demonstrate sophistication.

Comfortable with ambiguity. We are a small and young institution. The structures and processes are still being built. You will need to be able to operate effectively without complete certainty about what the right approach is.

Committed to independence. We say what the evidence shows, even when it is inconvenient. You need to share that commitment — not just intellectually, but as a professional instinct.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A strong undergraduate or postgraduate degree, preferably in economics, public policy, urban studies, or a related field
- Demonstrated ability to conduct and write up original research or analysis — academic, journalistic, or policy-focused
- Strong quantitative literacy; experience with Stata, R, or Python is a plus but not required
- Native or near-native proficiency in Chinese (Traditional); strong written English
- Two or more years of relevant experience is preferred, but exceptional recent graduates will be considered
- Willingness to use agentic AI tools as part of your daily workflow — this is a core expectation of the role, not optional
- Familiarity with AI tools (e.g. Claude, ChatGPT, Perplexity, or similar) is a plus
- Experience managing social media accounts or creating content for professional or policy audiences is a plus

What You Will Gain

We will not oversell this. Working at a young institution is demanding and sometimes uncertain. But we can offer things that larger organisations cannot:

- Real intellectual ownership over policy proposals that reach senior government officials and the general public
- Direct mentorship from Professor Michael B. Wong (MIT PhD, HKU) and Professor Yun-wing Sung (Minnesota PhD, CUHK), two of Hong Kong's most respected economists
- The experience of building an institution from its early stages — understanding what it takes to create something that lasts
- A network that spans academia, government, media, and civil society in Hong Kong and internationally
- The opportunity to develop into a policy entrepreneur — someone who generates and champions ideas, not just executes others'

Compensation and Conditions

Salary will be competitive and commensurate with experience. We are committed to paying fairly for the right person.

The role is based in Sheung Wan, Hong Kong. Some flexibility on working arrangements is possible for the right candidate.

How to Apply

Send the following to info@hkfei.org.hk with the subject line “Research Associate Application”:

- A cover letter of no more than 600 words. Tell us: what Hong Kong policy problem do you most want to work on, and why? What is your diagnosis of the problem and what would you want HKFEI to say about it?
- Your CV
- A writing sample — a piece of analysis, a research paper, an op-ed, or anything that shows us how you think and how you write
- Academic transcripts (unofficial copies are fine at this stage)

We review applications on a rolling basis. We are particularly interested in candidates who can start between June and September 2026.