

## New Course Development

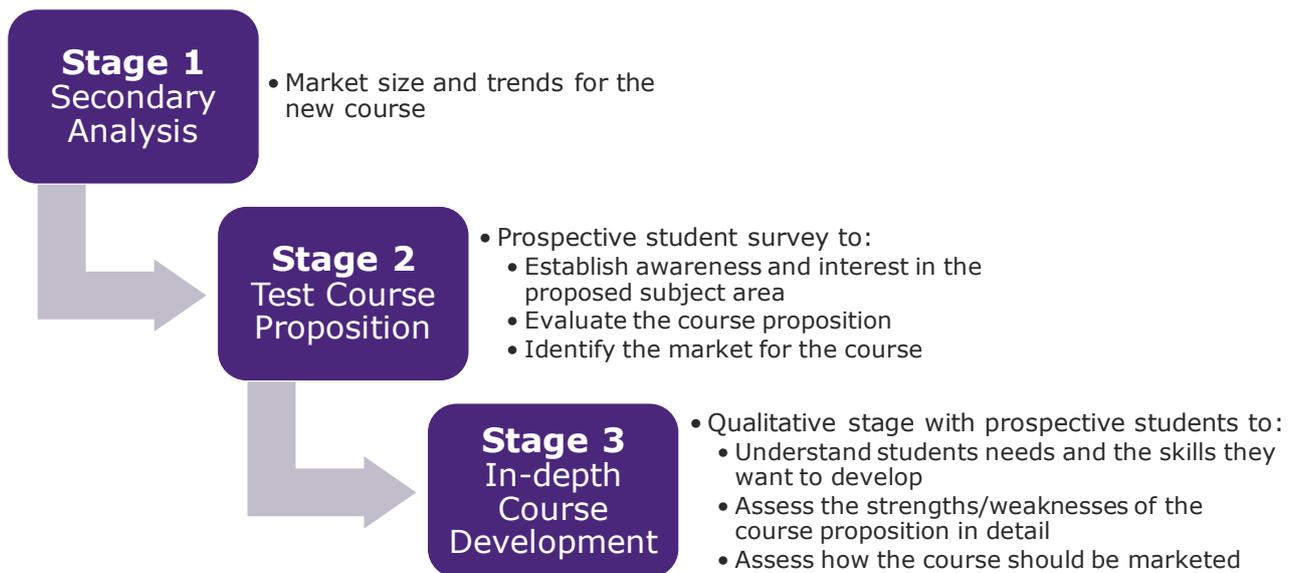
At TKP we spend a lot of time helping universities to evaluate their courses. We examine lots of existing data sources including trended enrolment data, application data, marketing materials and tuition fees all at a course level to understand the position of each course within a market and how best to re-enforce the strengths of a course and to mitigate any weaknesses.

This is a robust, data-driven approach for an established market but what do you do when the course idea is in a brand new market either to the institution or to the sector as a whole? How do you evaluate the potential demand for a course so as to ensure return-on-investment? And how do you optimise the marketing of a course when there is very little 'best-practice' to draw any firm conclusions from?

We know from our [i-MAP](#) study that 56% of new PGT programmes fail to recruit 10 or more students in any active cycle and for new single subject UG programmes only 10% managed to recruit 10-15 students. How can you ensure that your new course idea will be successful?

The answer is to conduct original research and to create the data you need to inform your decision making.

We have devised a method which typically comprises three key stages. The end of each stage provides a natural pause in the course development cycle for you to determine whether or not to proceed with developing the new course.



Having already completed stage 1 by reviewing the existing data and deciding that you need more information to support your decision making, the next stage is to test your course proposition and to establish the potential interest and demand for this new course. To do this will require a quantitative approach as you are looking for numerical evidence.

Firstly, you need to consider *who is the likely target market for the course?* Clearly defining your target market will help to define your sample and qualification criteria. For example:

- Postgraduates or undergraduates?
- UK or international markets? If international are there any key county markets?
- And there are likely to be more detailed criteria e.g. What is the subject qualifying criteria for the course? What industries might prospective (post-graduate) students be working in? Is it designed to appeal to a particular subgroup e.g. widening participation students.

Having defined who you want to interview, creating your research ready course proposition is the next step. Your course proposition should be detailed and cover features such as:

- What the subject area is and why it is important, particularly for a new subject area
- Outline of the course content including module titles
- How the course will be taught and who will be teaching the course. Will it be academic staff or will there be guest speakers from industry? What facilities will the university offer?
- Any USPs like work-place experience or unique field trips
- What are the skills and knowledge graduates of this course will have? How will this help their employability? What kind of sectors will this course prepare students for?

Importantly the survey will ask questions on likely appeal and demand giving you the opportunity to estimate a quantitative return-on-investment.

Providing the survey shows a demand for the course, you can progress to the third stage of the development process which will be a qualitative approach in order to obtain more in-depth findings, particularly on marketing, course content and the detailed strengths/weaknesses of the course, helping to finalise the new course concept and optimise chances of success.

Many people would use focus groups or depth interviews for this stage, but it is also worth considering an online approach. Running an online community or forum for a week as opposed to a focus group has some advantages:

- Participants can complete the tasks when it is convenient for them
- It is very cost effective for involving participants from a large geographical area
- Participants can interact with each other as well as complete tasks on their own
- Lots of different media e.g. video, print, website etc can be assessed online and participants can also upload their own images and videos

Once the final stage has been completed and analysed you will have compiled information on the likely demand for the new course, you will know much more about the target student who will find the course appealing and why and you will be able to provide a detailed and effective marketing brief.