

Stakeholder views on the assessment and certification of English language proficiency in global interuniversity collaboration

Lut Baten¹, Jan Van Maele¹, Yoennis Díaz Moreno², Geisa Dávila Pérez², Frank van Splunder³

¹KU Leuven, Belgium; ²Universidad de Oriente, Cuba; ³University of Antwerp, Belgium

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Background

Creciendo... a cooperation program of the **Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR-UOS)** with the **Universidad de Oriente (UO)** in Santiago de Cuba for promoting sustainable development in Eastern Cuba (2013-19). The authors are members of the transversal project for strengthening foreign language skills for intercultural and international purposes, with a focus on English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP).

This poster outlines the perspectives of the major internal stakeholders at UO with respect to the assessment and certification of English language proficiency, elaborating two vignettes to illustrate the engagement dynamics among these stakeholders.



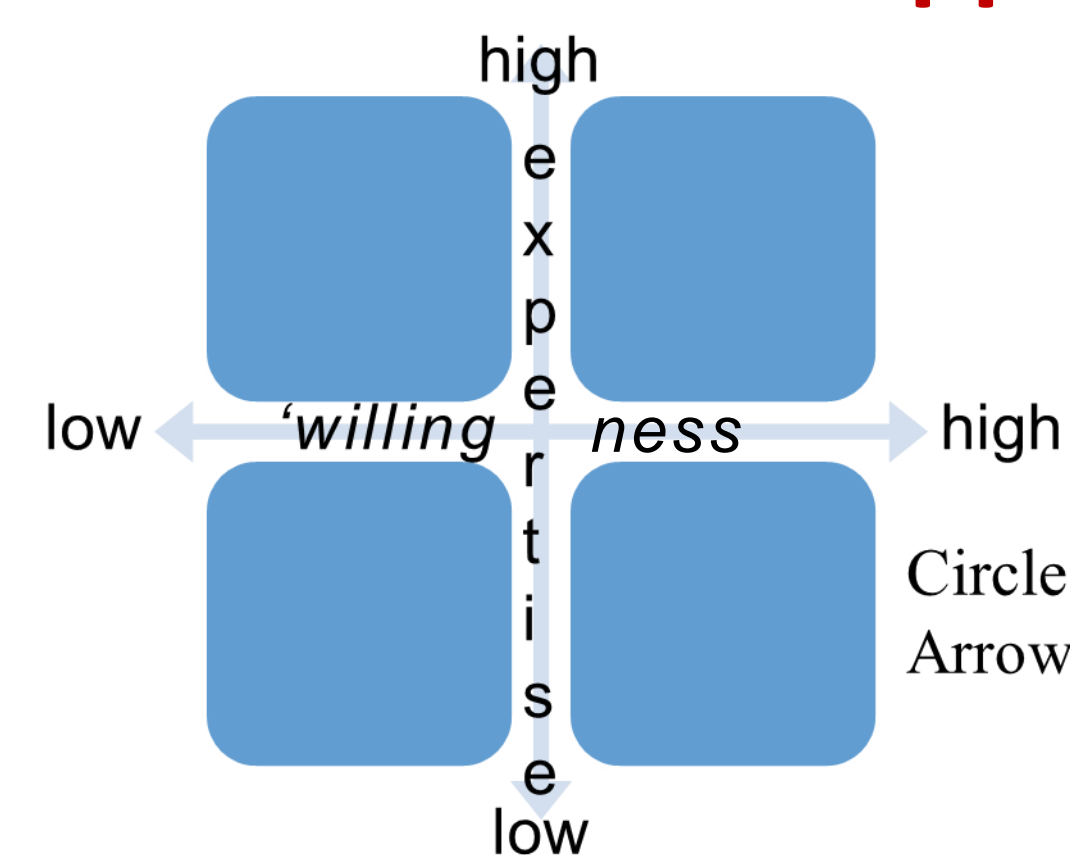
Goals of the transversal language project

1. Self-access resource center (cf. the *CATFLAG* case)
2. Networked teaching, training, research (cf. the timeline)
3. Certification through standardized and local testing (cf. the *local testing team* case)

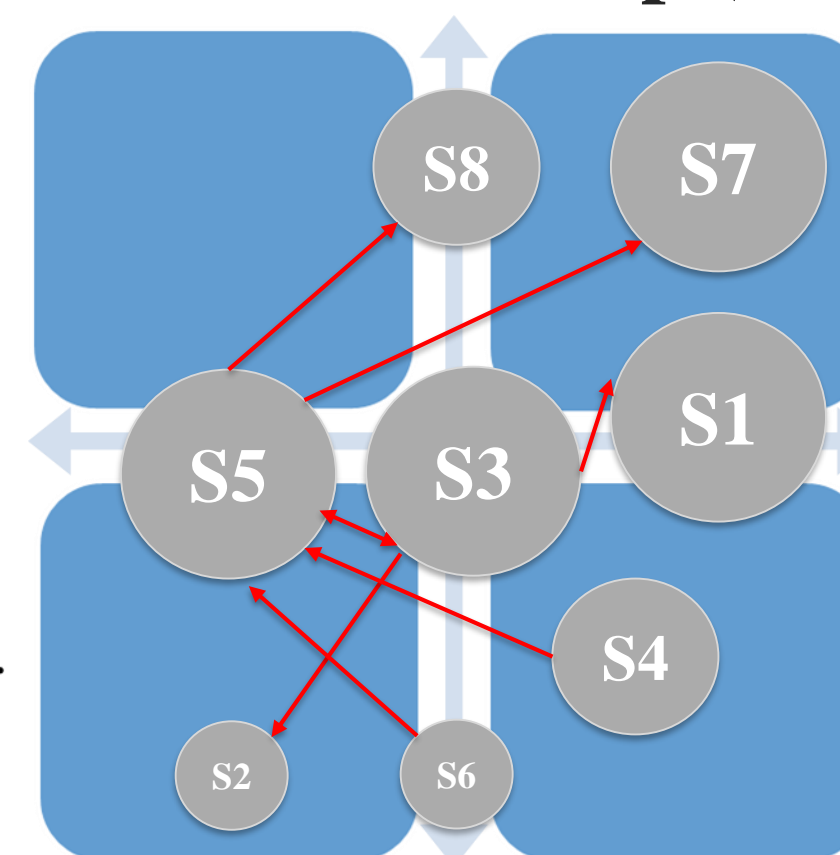
Methodology

Engaging with stakeholders to understanding their values through a **stakeholder mapping** exercise (Morris & Baddache, 2012), broken down into the phases of 'identification', 'analysis', 'mapping' and 'prioritization'. We illustrate the various engagement strategies and evaluate prior and on-going engagement actions against the backdrop of the arrow of time.

Stakeholder mapping

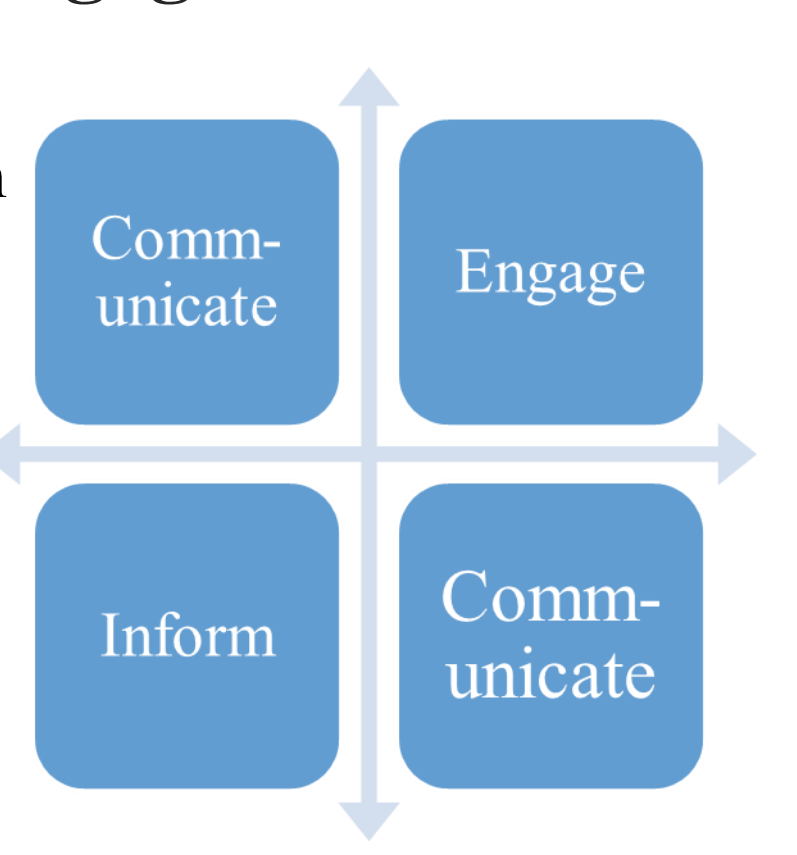


Stakeholder map (March 2015)

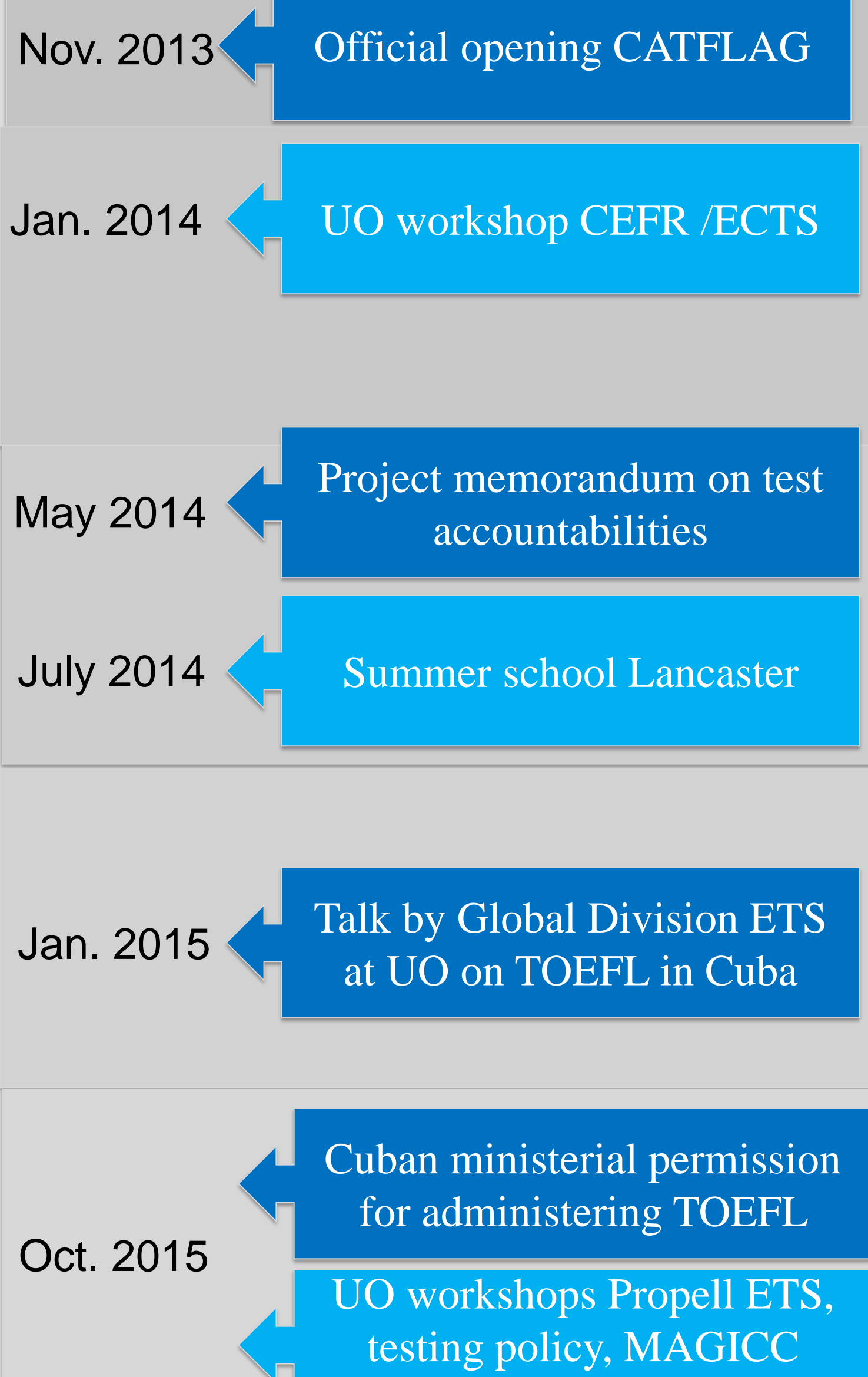


- S1: English language project team
- S2: Other project teams
- S3: University leadership UO
- S4: Other universities in region
- S5: Cuban ministries of education
- S6: Cuban professional org.
- S7: International test provider 1
- S8: International test provider 2
- (S9: VLIR project coordination)

Engagement tactics

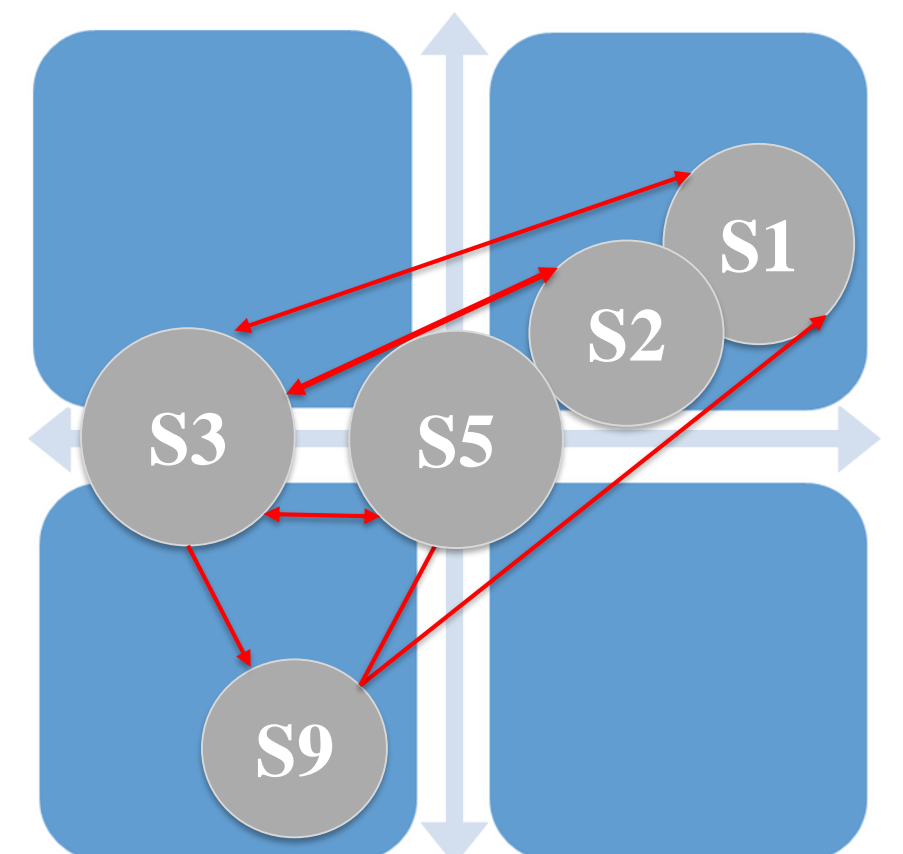


Timeline major language assessment & certification project events



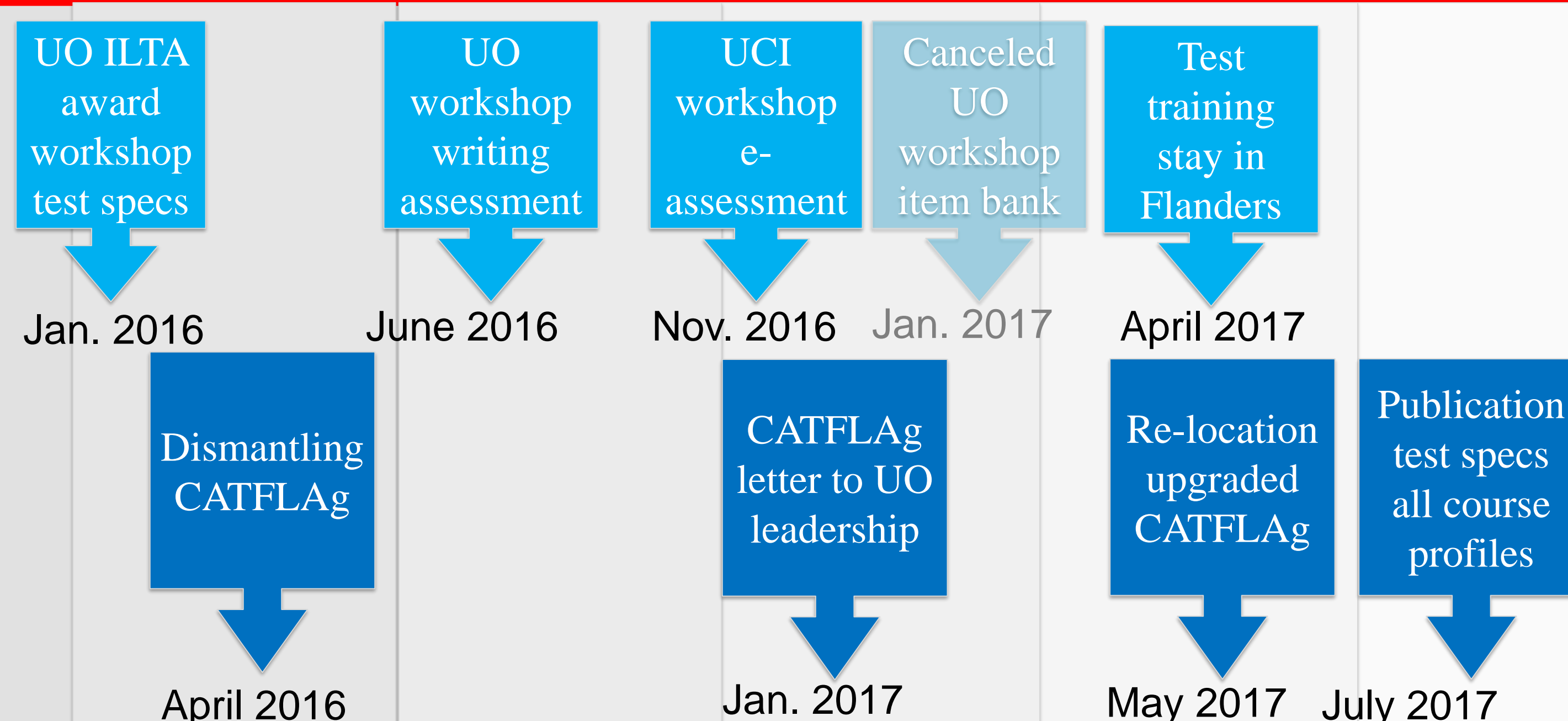
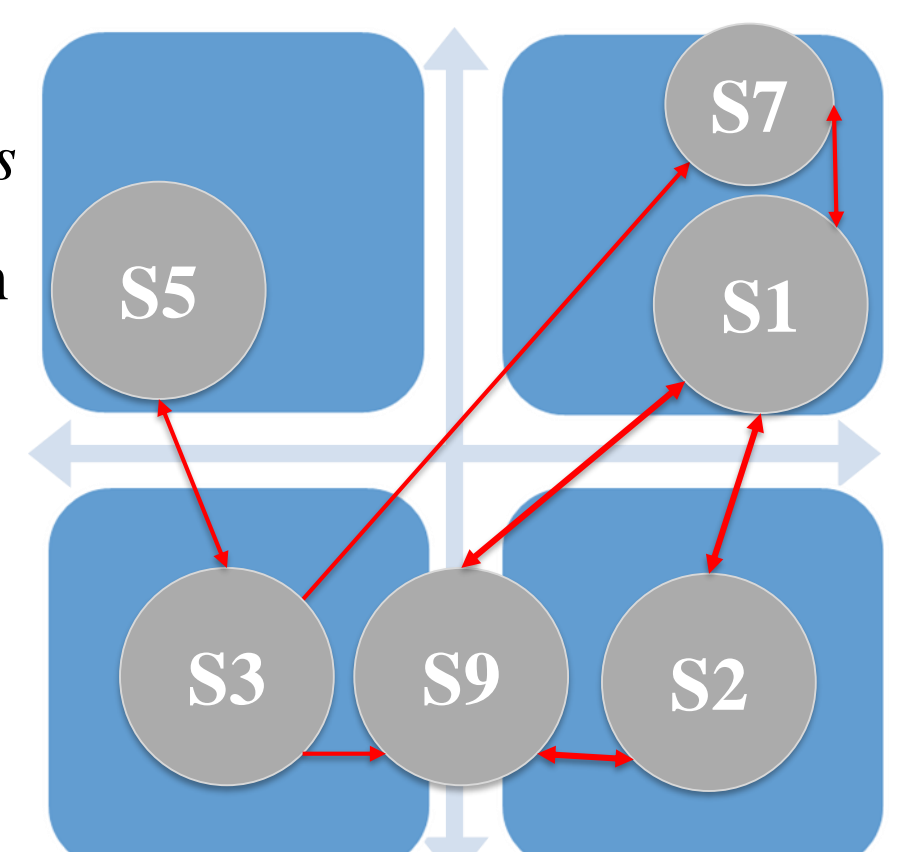
The case of CATFLAG (self-access language learning center for coaching, training, and testing of project members)

- Official opening (November 2013) by VLIR project coordination (S9) and university leadership UO (S3)
 - Establishing a space for English communication for scientific and academic purposes - aiming at *autonomous learning, e-learning, internet, certification*
- Dismantling (April 2016) upon unilateral decision by university leadership UO
 - Surrendering space for the visibility of university-level internationalization
- Relocation+upgrade (May 2017) upon project leaders' demands (S2, S1), also because of new national language policy (S5)
 - Claiming a space for autonomous learning, for coaching, for standardized and local testing
 - UO Teachers and Students (...?): **Owning a space** for research, collaboration, socializing



The case of the local testing team

- Tensions
 - Faced with demands for local model tests of project coordinators (S9) and university leadership (S3) versus project leaders' & team members' (S2) need for local availability of standardized tests and targeted preparation
 - Lack of time for growth in assessment literacy and confidence in an ESAP perspective (Gaillard et al, 2016) => Vulnerability of the novice tester (S1) who is expected to make decisions about careers of peers
- Addressing the tensions
 - Memorandum with accountabilities all stakeholders in the justification chain (May 2014) (Van Maele et al, 2015)
 - Cuban ministries (S5) grant permission for administering TOEFL (S7) at Cuban universities (October 2015)



References

- Gaillard S., Van Maele J., Davidson F., Baten L. (2016). Co-creating test specifications: a fast track to enhancing language assessment literacy? *Language Assessment Literacy Symposium 2016*. Lancaster University, 16-17 September 2016.
- Morris, J., Baddache, F. (2012). *Back to basics: how to make stakeholder engagement meaningful for your company*. BSR. www.bsr.org/reports
- Van Maele J., Rodríguez González R., Díaz Moreno Y., van Splunder F., Baten L. (2015). Weighing the consequences of introducing an international large-scale English language test in Cuba. *LTRC 2015: From language testing to language assessment*. Toronto, 16-21 March 2015. www.vliruos.be/en/countries/countrydetail/cuba_3850/

Corresponding authors
 lut.baten@kuleuven.be
 ydiaz@uo.edu.cu (Yoennis Díaz)
<https://ecatflag.uo.edu.cu/>