

Agile Testing Certification

How could that be useful?

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Disclaimer/Disclosure

- I do not run any certification courses (agile or testing) ...and I do not intend to do so in the future
- I have no certifications (unless a PhD counts as a certification) ...and I do not intend to take any
- Why did I get involved in test certification?
 - to provide some assurance on the quality of testing courses
- I founded ISTQB, but am not sure I didn't let the 'test certification genie' out of its bottle

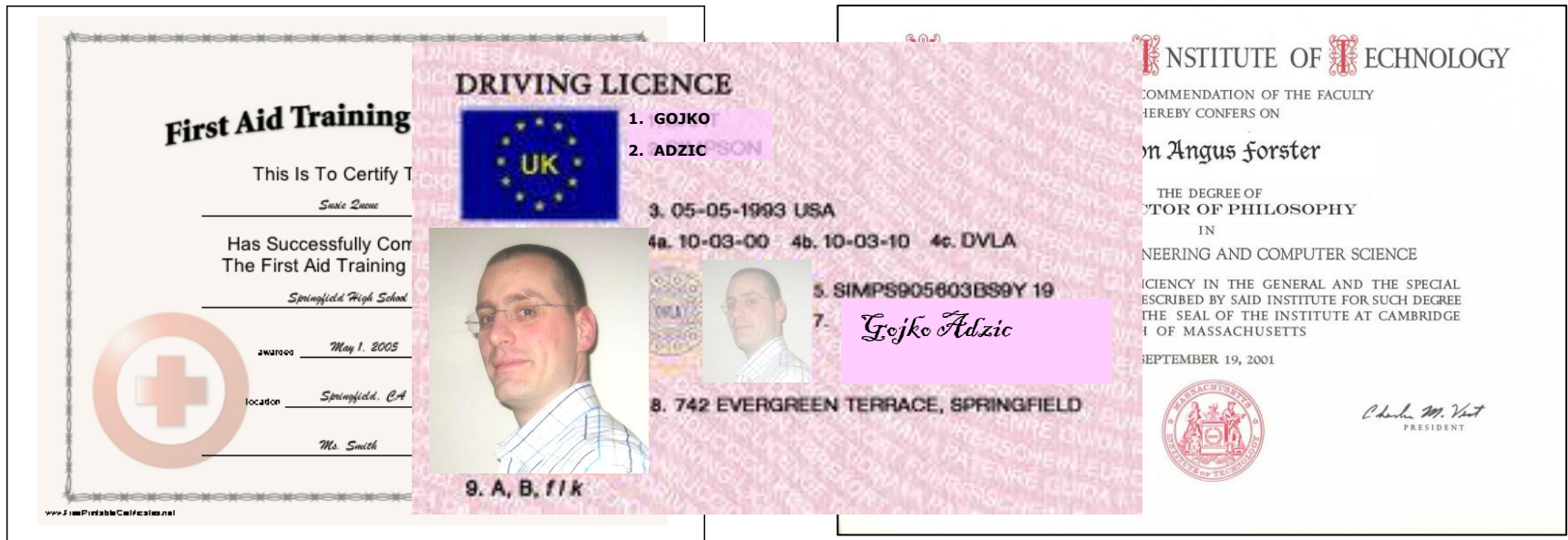


What is certification?

- Certification is the process through which an **organization** grants recognition to an **individual**, organization, process, service, or product that meets certain established criteria.
- For certification of individuals, the individuals usually have to **meet eligibility requirements** (such as education or years of experience), pass an **examination**, and pay a **fee**. There are also usually **ongoing requirements** that need to be met, such as retesting or participating in a minimum number of continuing education activities.
- Certification is **not 'licensure'**
 - WikiAnswers

Certification?

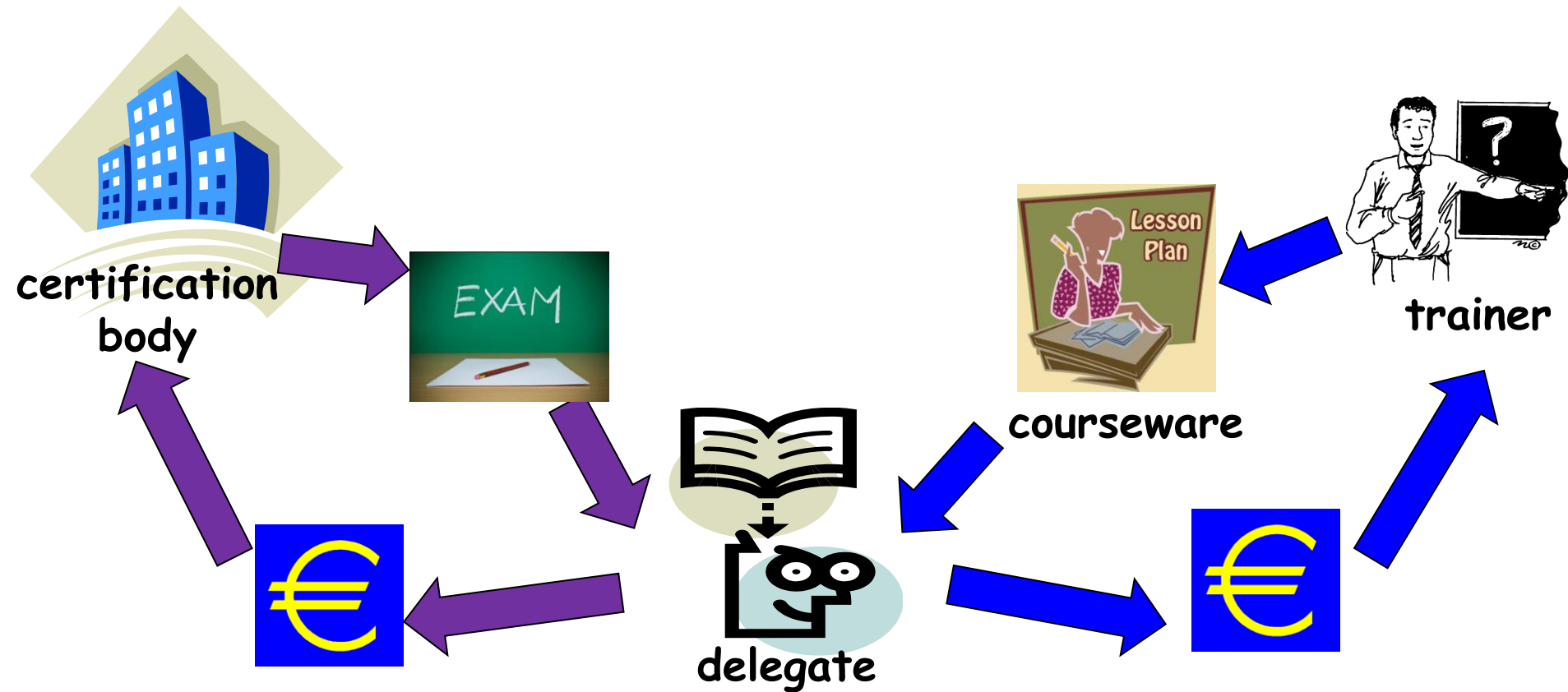
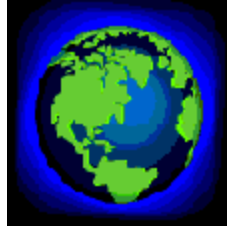
- Says something about the individual's ability
 - they were eligible to take the certification
 - they paid a fee
 - they passed some form of assessment
 - and it lasts for how long....?



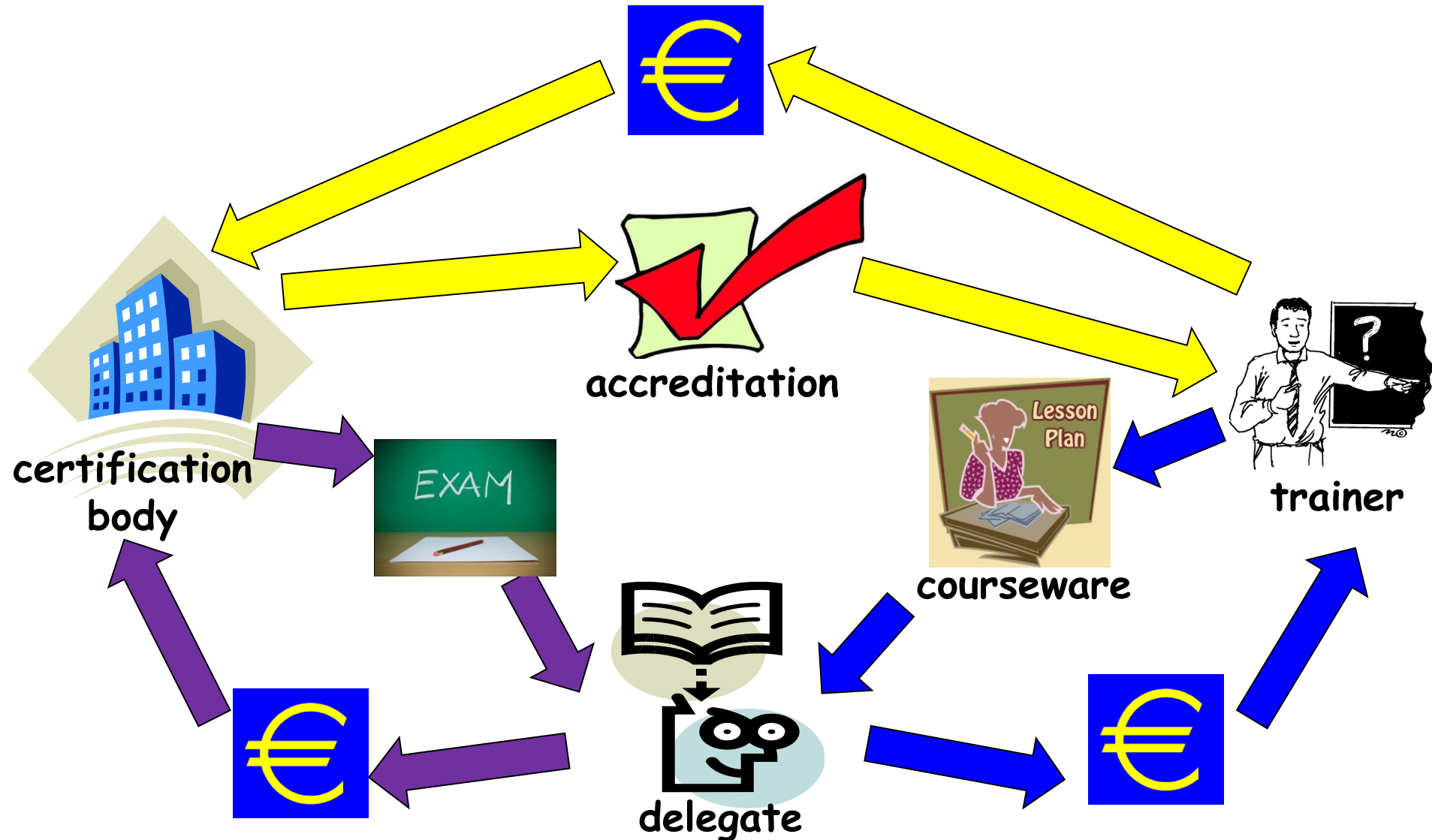
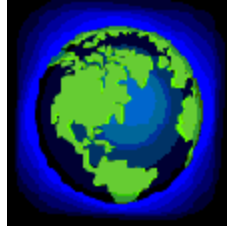
Scope

- Introduction to certification
 - what is it?
 - stakeholders and relationships
- Agile testing certification
 - supply & demand
 - rationale – or not
 - current agile & test certifications
- Options for agile testing certification
 - certification body
 - assessment
 - syllabus

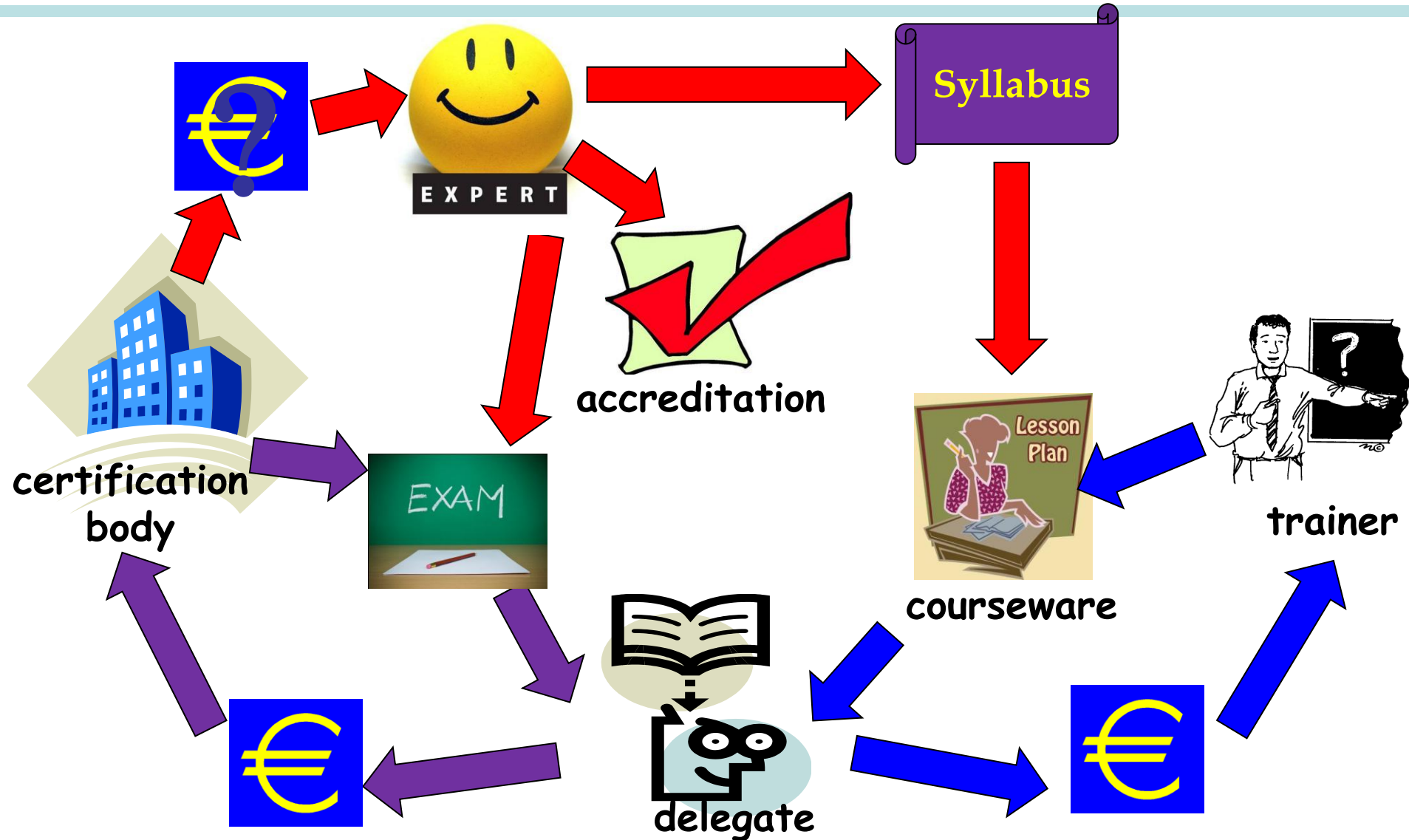
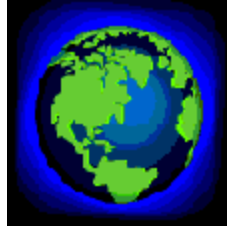
Money makes.....



Course quality costs...



Money, money, money....



Agile Testing Certification?

- Certification related to the testing on agile projects
- Says something about the individual's ability to test on an agile project

Is there a demand for it?

- Agile 'testers'
 - to gain skills – and so make their job more interesting
 - to make it easier to get a job/keep a job/earn more money
- Employers running agile projects
 - to improve the testing on their projects
 - as an 'interview guide'
 - to provide a career path (following a 'certification scheme')
- Employers selling agile 'testers'
 - as marketing
- Agile 'experts'
 - to improve on current schemes / training
 - to ensure consistent training by qualified trainers
- Not-for-profit Certification Bodies
 - to improve the industry / fulfil an industry demand

And the suppliers?

- Commercial Certification Bodies
 - to make money from exams and accreditation
- Trainers
 - to make money from running/licensing courses
- Authors
 - to make money from books on the certification
- Agile 'experts'
 - to make money from exams, syllabi and/or accreditation
 - to see the world on a certification 'Gravy Train'

Why not do certification?

- It may create a 'closed shop' that stops uncertified people getting jobs
- Employers (and others) may not understand what the term 'certified' means
- The examinations may not assess the delegates' true ability
- Intangible agile values, such as people skills & trusting individuals, are hard to assess
- Agile testing may not be well-enough understood
 - so syllabi and training courses do not cover useful skills
 - agile testing may change so much between projects that there are too few common skills

Realistically.....



Some current agile/test certifications

Certified ScrumMaster
Certified Scrum Product Owner
Certified Scrum Developer



Certified Scrum Professional
Certified Scrum Trainer
Certified Scrum Coach

Professional Scrum Developer
Professional Scrum Master I – Fundamental
Professional Scrum Master II – Intermediate



Agile Tester
Global Agile
Qualifications Bd

DSDM Agile Foundation
DSDM Agile Project Leader Practitioner



Associate, Professional,
Expert, Instructor,
Fellow



CAST, CSTE,
CMST



Foundation, Advanced
& Expert



What are the options....?

**Certification
body?**

**Overall
Scheme?**

**Initial
Structure?**

Syllabus?

Assessment?

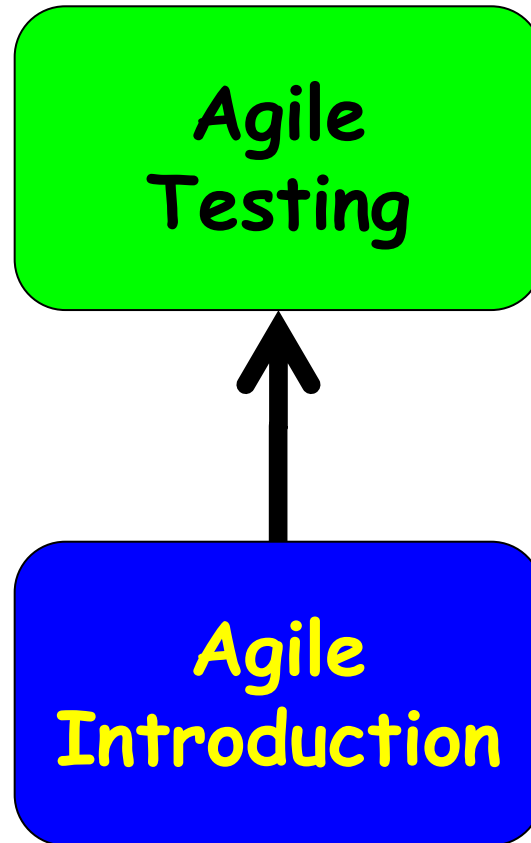
Options - Certification Body

1. Add to an existing agile scheme?
 - e.g. Scrum Alliance, Scrum.org, DSDM, ICAgile
2. Add to an existing testing scheme?
 - e.g. ISTQB, QAI
3. Create a new scheme
 - not constrained by existing schemes
 - use lessons learned
 - maybe just do the opposite of ISTQB
 - except for the marketing ;-)
 - not for profit (like Scrum Alliance) or commercial
 - but would it be 'recognized' by the community?

Who are the potential delegates?

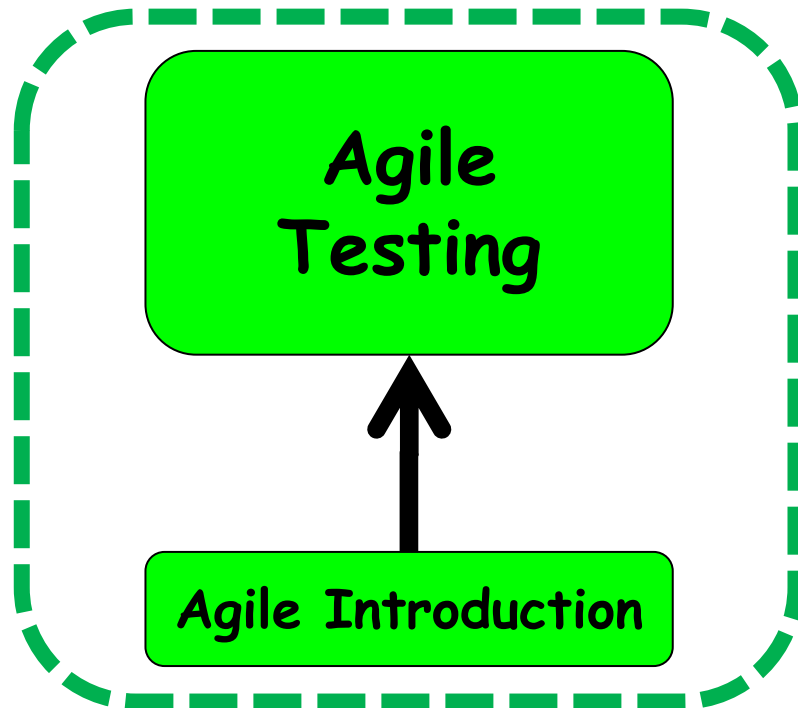
- Agile developers who want to learn testing?
 - then simply take a testing course
- Testers who want to move to agile projects?
 - is simply taking an agile course enough?
 - probably not
 - intro level agile courses will not go far enough
 - next level agile courses will assume developer skills !!!!!

Agile testing course scope - option 1



But this makes the new agile testing course dependent on a specific agile introductory course.

Agile testing course scope - option 2



Incorporating the introductory agile material removes the dependency, and allows a single coherent course (and provides an economy of scale), BUT it makes the agile testing course longer.

Agile Alliance Board – Position Statement – April 2010

- ... employers should have confidence only in certifications that are skill-based and difficult to achieve...
- ..for the interrelated and interpersonal skills required of Agile software development, much of the learning has to take place on real projects. It is that learning that a certification should vouch for...
- ...Vouching for someone else's skill requires close observation or questioning by someone already possessing it. For anything other than uninterestingly simple skills, that's a lot of work—which means it's expensive...

Assessment options

least



most

- multiple choice
- experience synopsis
- essay exam
- oral exam
- practical exercises
- observation

Quality of courses

- Agile Alliance Board – Position Statement
 - ..Certifications such as Certified Scrum Master and DSDM Foundation are knowledge-based and easy to achieve. We believe the courses that lead to them are good ones....But while the certifications may be evidence of good faith, useful knowledge, and a desire to learn, they are not in themselves evidence of skill.
- So, for these 'low-level' courses
 - accreditation of courses and trainers is paramount
 - and certification is often misunderstood

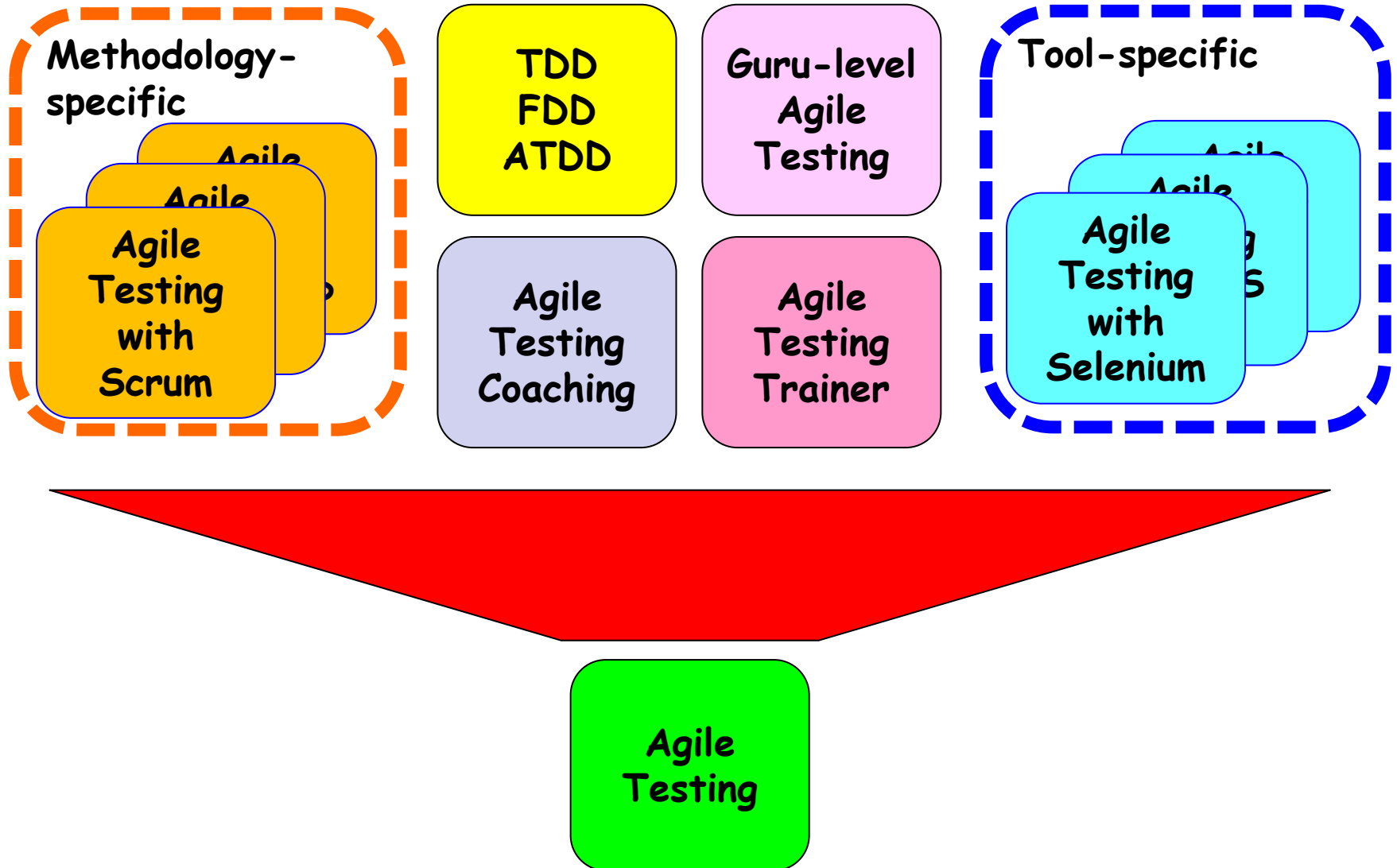
Syllabus content

- Is there an agile testing body of knowledge (BOK)?
 - I don't think so
- What about the Agile Skills Project?
 - I can't see the testing.....
- Does the new ISO standard on agile cover testing?
 - not really
- How about using an Agile Testing book?
 - which one?
- Why not open up the syllabus creation (and its use) to everyone?
 - Industry consensus
 - agile project employers
 - testers (and developers)
 - creative commons license
 - but reaching consensus is a nightmare

Syllabus structure

- Don't create a syllabus as long as a book (or have it written by a committee)
 - lesson learned from ISTQB & ISEB & ISO
- Higher education (in UK) uses Learning Outcomes and Learning Objectives as a basis for the training/education and corresponding assessment (worked for >900 years)
 - is this the way to go?
- How closely will certification courses have to follow the syllabus?
 - can courses be agile and respond to delegates?

Scheme structure?



Conclusions

- The 'certification genie' is already out of the bottle
- Is there a current certification scheme that has worked for all the stakeholders?
 - if so, can we join it (or copy it)?
- Are we likely to get the best scheme for the industry with a commercial or not-for-profit approach?
 - should there be an open source option?
- Should we stick our heads in the sand and hope a good scheme comes along?
 - ...and then when it doesn't, simply say 'I told you so'