

# WBS (Work Breakdown Structure)

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## What is WBS and what is its purpose

Each project is complex: it consists of many gradual steps and its objective is achieved by means of a number of outputs delivered by the project team. The WBS tool is used to decompose the whole into smaller parts that will be easier for the team to plan and manage. WBS stands for Work Breakdown Structure, i.e. project work breakdown structure, where the word "work" means finished and completed performed work, i.e. the result at the end of the process, not the process itself. The resultant WBS includes the **results of all work which needs to be done on the project** in order to achieve its objective. Hence it covers 100% of the project subject extent. The project team delivers (or as the case may be arranges delivery of) everything which forms WBS contents – nothing more, nothing less.

## When is the document prepared

**The project team prepares the WBS as the first step of the planning process** as soon as a SMART objective is determined and the requirements of the party commissioning the project and expectations of the project client (or other important stakeholders) are known.

## Who participates in the preparation process

It is best if the document is prepared by the **project management team** and then subject to examination by a group consisting of the expected main stakeholders.

## When is the document used

The document is the main basis for all partial project plans and hence it is used after its preparation at the beginning of planning until project completion.

## Process of preparing the document

In most cases, the WBS is prepared according to the "top-down" method, i.e. from larger complex wholes (e.g. specific outputs from logical framework) to more elaborate details (gradually, individual levels one by one). An alternative is the initial breakdown method according to the created product life cycle with subsequent breakdown to individual outputs. The following points allow you to check whether you prepared the WBS correctly:

- At the lowest level the WBS includes physically deliverable outputs (products) – outcomes of work.
- These work packages can be evaluated (work necessary to create them, costs, time).
- At the same time the project team provides reasonable detail, not being too detailed or too general.
- Their degree of completion (to what extent they are physically completed) and progress of works through which the outputs will be produced are measurable.
- Responsibility can be definitely assigned to them.

## Notes

The WBS method allows you to get a clear idea of what results you need to deliver during the project. **At the same time, a quality prepared WBS forms a fixed basis for preparation of the time schedule, budget as well as responsibility assignment.** In addition to the basic WBS created by a mere breakdown of the outputs, individual

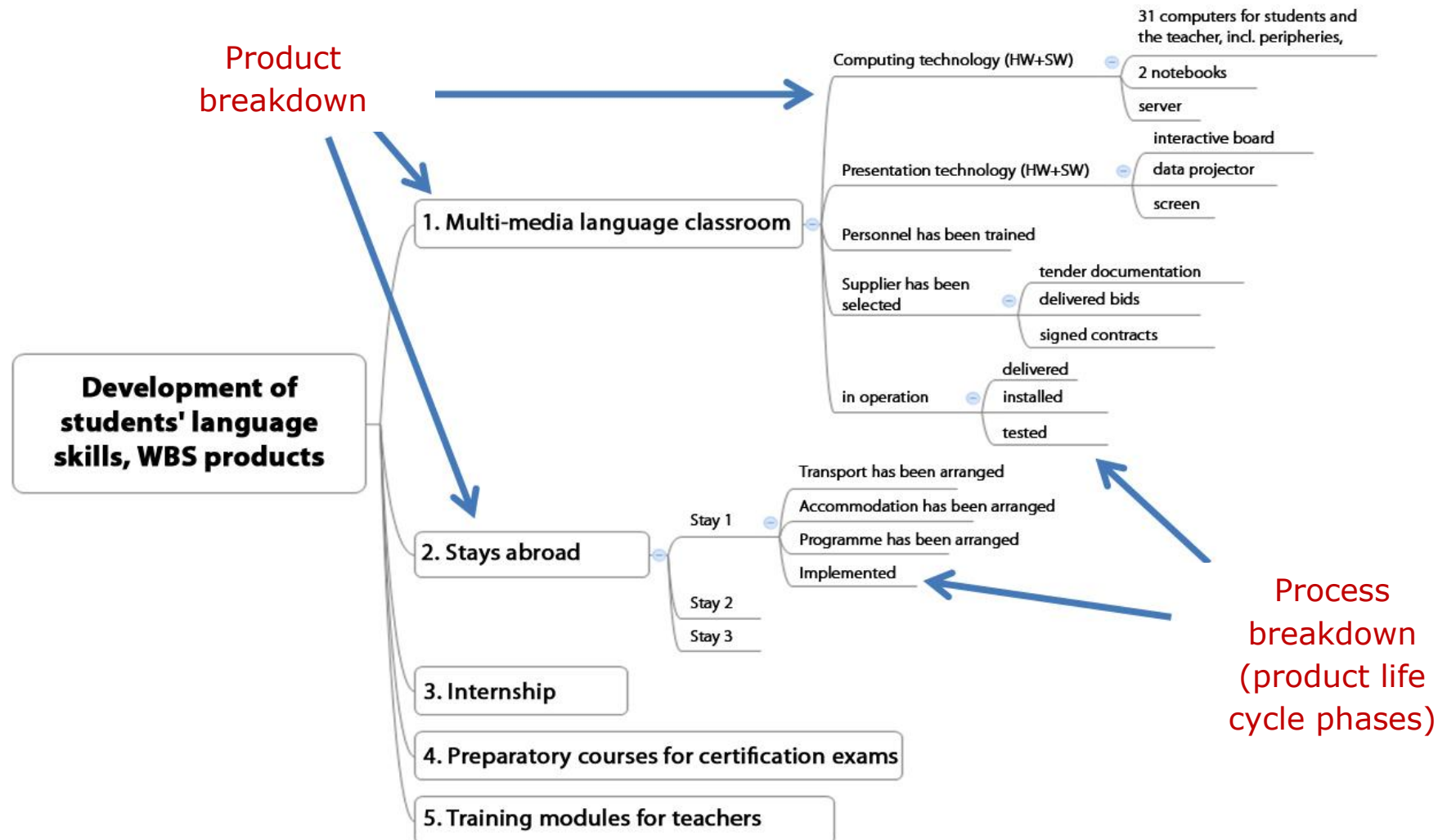
work packages can be described in more detail. Two basic methods of WBS structuring are specified below, but there are others too. **The Xmind program can be used to prepare WBS. It is available to download for free at: <http://www.xmind.net/>.** The WBS demo was also prepared in this program.

## Example of a completed form

### Example 1: Product-focused WBS

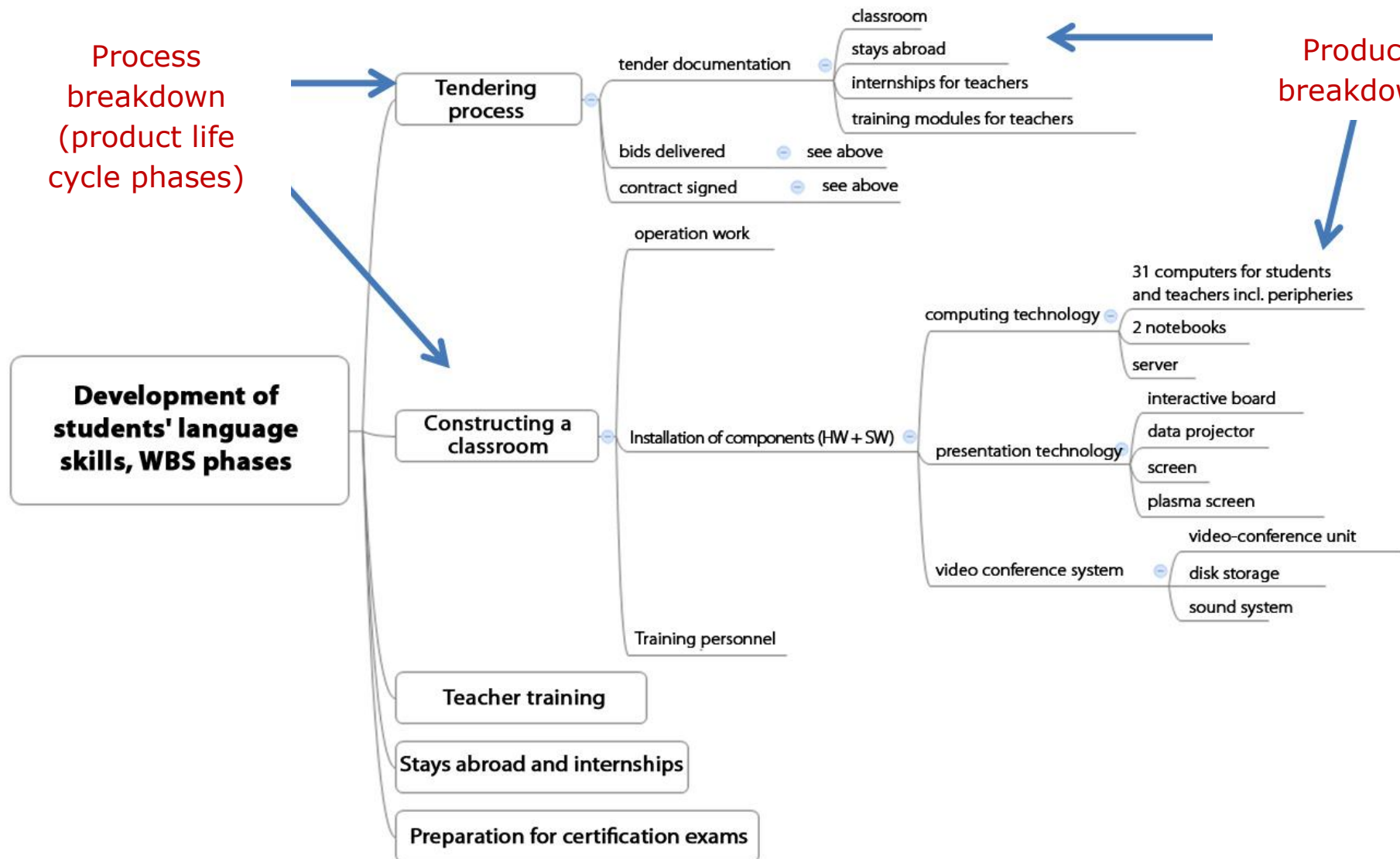
At first it identifies the main products (physical outputs) to be delivered during the project.

Deconstruct this first level into greater detail; the number of WBS levels (degree of detail) is not limited. The key criterion is your ability to evaluate, plan and implement work packages at the last breakdown level. At the lowest breakdown level, we usually get to a certain version of the delivered output/product life cycle phase. In the example below, not all outputs are subject to breakdown; a complete WBS will naturally include an analogical breakdown of all main outputs.



## Example 2: Phase-focused WBS

Identify required outputs chronologically according to the phases (stages) which need to be passed during the project. Then identify the outputs you will deliver during individual phases in order to achieve the project objective.



**It is clear that both methods lead to virtually identical results. In other words: Regardless of the selected method, the resultant extent in the concerned project will be identical. The WBS is not complete in this case either, and it is necessary to perform a similar breakdown in relation to all delivered outputs.**