

DUAL DEGREE VS DUAL OBJECTIVE

Students at Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) may pursue a dual degree as part of a single objective. **Note:** Dual degree programs are no longer considered a dual objective.

IHL students may also pursue a dual objective that consists of a degree program and a non-college degree (NCD) certificate or diploma program. In limited instances a dual objective may also consist of two NCD programs.

Dual Degree Programs

A dual degree program is when a student is pursuing a program that includes two (or more) separately approved degrees at the same school or within the same school system.

- The student's transcript will reflect attainment of two separate degrees.
- The degrees do not have to be of the same technical or professional level.
- A dual degree program does not need specific SAA approval but if approved separately, both degrees must be listed in WEAMS.

Dual Objectives

Dual objective programs are only available for Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) and require specific SAA approval.

For VA purposes, a dual objective is when, at the same school or within the same school system, an IHL student is concurrently pursuing:

- A degree and a NCD certificate or diploma program, or
- Two NCD certificate or diploma programs

The student's transcript will reflect attainment of a degree and an NCD certificate/diploma or the two individual NCD certificates or diplomas. The NCD programs may be offered in credit or clock hours.

Approval of Two NCD certificates or diplomas

Approvability depends on the type of school:

At IHLS:

- The program can only be approved by the SAA if it is offered as a specific combination program in an IHL's catalog
- The combined program must be approved by the SAA and listed on the WEAMS 1998 report before it can be certified by the IHL.

At Stand-alone NCD Schools:

- The SAA cannot approve a dual objective program consisting of 2 individual NCD certificates or diplomas. Note: This does not preclude SAA

approval of an 'umbrella' program that consists of a series of NCD certificates that lead to an overarching certification or credential.

- The school cannot certify an unapproved dual objective consisting of two separately approved NCD programs.

Approval of a degree and a NCD certificate or diploma:

Dual objectives require specific SAA Approval. However, VA realizes that SCOs, SAAs and some VA staff were unaware that dual objectives involving concurrent pursuit of a degree and a NCD program needed specific approval.

Therefore, to allow time for schools to request program approval from their SAA, IHL students enrolled in "unofficial" dual objective programs that include a degree and an NCD certificate or diploma during terms that start **prior to January 1, 2026**, will be permitted to finish out their program without the combined program being specifically approved by the SAA.

- Both programs must be approved and listed on the WEAMS 1998 report.
- The degree program should be selected on the Programs Tab in EM and the Dual Degree remark selected when certifying to provide the name of the NCD program.

SCOs should review their common dual objective programs with active VA students and begin submitting approval requests to SAAs with their Fall 2024-2025 or 2025-2026 catalogs. Dual objective programs with enrolled students that will extend beyond January 1, 2026, should be given priority.

For terms beginning on or after January 1, 2026, all programs involving dual objectives must be specifically approved as a **combined program** by the SAA, listed on the WEAMS 1998 report and available in Enrollment Manager as a combined program before the dual objective program can be certified to VA.

- If a dual objective program that consists of a degree and an NCD is not specifically listed as a combination program in school's catalog, the request for approval submitted to the SAA must be due to enrollment of an actual VA student in that specific dual objective program.
- Once approved by the SAA, the combined dual objective program will be added to WEAMS and selected in EM. The Dual Degree remark should no longer be used.
- A dual objective program that consists of two NCD certificate or diploma programs will continue to only be approvable by the SAA and able to be certified by an IHL if it is offered as a specific combination program in the IHL's catalog.