

# BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

## INTERIM AND SUPPLEMENTARY INSPECTION NEW / ADDITIONAL PREMISES (College)

**INSTITUTION:** GIA (Gemological Institute of America) – London

**ADDRESS:** 104 Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3LA

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Mr Mehdi Saadian

**ACCREDITATION STATUS:** Accredited

**DATE OF INSPECTION:** 23 May 2019

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued accreditation, 16 July 2019

## **PART A – INTRODUCTION**

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### **1. Background to the institution**

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Gemological Institute of America - London (GIA/the Institution) was established in 1931 to provide training, information, services and instruments to the jewellery industry. It is an American constituted Institution with a worldwide operation. The headquarters are in Carlsbad, California and other campuses are in New York, London, Mumbai, Hong Kong, Taipei and Bangkok. In addition to seven campus locations, GIA offers classes in Beijing, Birmingham, New Delhi, Dubai, Shanghai, Surat, Tokyo and other locales. There are also nine laboratories and four global research centres. British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation is for their London and Birmingham centres only.

GIA's mission is to ensure public trust in gems and jewellery by upholding the highest standards of integrity, academics, science and professionalism through education, research, laboratory services and instrument development.

GIA commenced teaching at the London campus in 2001 and was registered as a charity the following year. A board of trustees, which includes global governors together with the United Kingdom (UK) Director, oversee the operations in London. There is also a Director of the London campus and Birmingham location.

The Institution has developed a substantial body of research and documentation on Gemology. As a consequence, detailed training manuals on the grading of diamonds, identification of coloured stones, effective design and market awareness as well as professional business practices have been produced.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

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GIA's education division is made up of two academic departments, which are Gemology and Jewellery Manufacturing Arts. The courses have been developed by GIA headquarters in Carlsbad and all the programmes are accredited in the USA by either the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) or the the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). On the basis of these accreditations, the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) has evaluated and benchmarked the qualifications against the UK Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Two of the courses offered are at Level 5, three at Level 4 and one at Level 3.

GIA offers nine courses split into two delivery modes. These are on-campus courses, which run between seven and 28 weeks and laboratory classes, which are between one and five days in duration. The courses include the Graduate Gemologist Programme that covers topics such as diamonds and diamond grading, gem identification and markets and supply chains, the Jewellery Design and Technology Programme and a seven-week Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM) course for jewellery design.

All students are over 18 years of age. At the time of the inspection, there were 34 students enrolled and of these, ten were attending the Birmingham premises. The majority of the students are female.

### **3. Inspection process**

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The inspection was conducted by one inspector over one day at the new Birmingham premises. The Director, Head of Campus and the Admissions and Administration Manager were interviewed, as were an instructor and a group of students. Two classes were observed, which consisted of a practical session and a theory session. Ten students were interviewed. All relevant documentation was well presented and there was excellent co-operation throughout the inspection.

#### 4. **Background to the supplementary inspection**

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Following a successful pilot scheme last year relating to the running of a series of five-day face-to-face courses in Birmingham and an increase in demand for these courses, GIA has opened a new delivery centre in the jewellery quarter in Birmingham. This location has enabled students to feel part of a community of practice and immerse themselves in the world of jewellery and gemmology. GIA rents a training room and office and breakout spaces for its staff and students. The Institution has occupied these premises since July 2018 and, since then, has run two blocks of four courses each with each course running for a period of three weeks. Approximately ten students attend each course. Therefore around 80 students have attended training since the delivery in Birmingham began.

#### 5. **Inspection history**

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<b>Inspection Type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Full Accreditation	17– 18 March 2009
Interim	3 March 2010
Re-accreditation	4-5 March 2013
Interim	27 April 2015
Re-accreditation	21- 22 February 2017

## **PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

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*The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.*

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

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The Institution has introduced an annual Career Fair, which enables up to 200 delegates, drawn from current and previous students, to attend a one-day event that gives them the opportunity to meet a range of employers who are currently looking to take on new staff. Delegates have the opportunity to hear speakers from the jewellery industry including Bulgari and Sothebys and to receive career coaching from industry experts. The day is hosted at the Goldsmiths' Hall in central London.

GIA has introduced an outreach programme in order to increase its capacity to reach students from a wider catchment. The Institution now runs a stand at Skills London, which is an annual event in the Excel Centre in east London and at the annual National Careers Guidance Show at Olympia in west London.

The Institution started using an online platform providing a range of study resources in 2017 and has now increased its use to include access by on-campus and distance students. It also now provides instant examination results for students.

GIA has also expanded its use of the Workday software, which enables easy payment tracking as well as producing reports on international work patterns and helping to inform peer review and appraisal.

### **2. Response to actions points in last report**

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There were no action points in the last report.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

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*GIA London is recommended to incorporate the many staff policy documents into a formal staff handbook with an index.*

There is now a comprehensive and easy-reference staff handbook that is well-used by the staff.

*It is suggested that reference to the staff handbook be incorporated into the contract letter to ensure that all matters relating to staff issues are read, once staff are employed.*

The staff handbook is incorporated into the contract letter and this ensures that all new staff have adequate access to all policies pertaining to their new employment.

*GIA should consider extending and expanding the CAD/CAM course. The course could be extended in order to give students more time to undertake their design work and expanded to give them more help as to how to take forward developing their own business.*

The course content and curriculum have been modified to price students with more in depth knowledge of the subject and more time to undertake their design work. Furthermore, the new career fairs provide all course students with help to take forward their own businesses.

*On the longer courses there is a case for a student representative to speak for the student group. It is suggested they could be voted in with a student personnel change at the mid-point of the course.*

Student representatives are now elected on each long course and they gather feedback from their peers. This is then acted on by management to ensure continuous improvement.

*The white boards in the classroom are set too low and should be repositioned at a more appropriate height.*

The whiteboards have not been moved but teachers now ensure that all students can see the whiteboard on the few occasions that a static whiteboard is used.

#### **4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements**

##### **4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)**

**The standards are judged to be:**

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

##### **Comments**

The Institution is very well managed. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and they benefit from extensive personalised continuing professional development. The newly introduced human capital strategy provides staff with an individualised career strategy supported by a professional development plan.

Management systems are used well to ensure the smooth running of the organisation.

A comprehensive staff handbook is well-used and provides clear guidance on expectations and a useful reference point for all the Institution's policies.

The Institution does have effective arrangements to evaluate its own performance. However, managers' evaluation of data relating to individual tutor performance does not currently enable the setting of precise targets for further improvement. For example, the data does not include students' achievement rates, including first-time pass rates evaluated by tutors, in order to fully evaluate tutor impact on students' achievement. Therefore, it is unknown which teachers are the most, and least, effective in promoting students' achievement.

##### **4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)**

**The standards are judged to be:**

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

##### **Comments**

The Institution ensures that students benefit from very high-quality resources. Students use comprehensive, detailed and well-illustrated training manuals. Specialist technical equipment, such as binocular microscopes, provides students with the skills in using the equipment that they will need when working in the industry.

Teachers receive good, focused continuing professional development that helps them develop their knowledge of relevant educational concerns such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) as well as developing their pedagogical skills by pursuing teaching qualifications.

The Institution has a successful focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and uses its internal subject matter experts effectively to ensure that academic learning materials are continually updated and improved.

Robust and well-organised assessment arrangements are clearly explained to students who feel confident about what is expected from them in testing their knowledge gained on the programmes. As a result of these and other strategies, students make very good progress in the development of appropriate knowledge and skills pertaining to gemology.

Appropriate lesson observations are carried out although the resulting documentation does not adequately capture the extent to which students are actively involved in their own learning or demonstrate their learning through, for example, in-session assessments such as question and answer sessions. There is insufficient opportunity for teachers to share their best practice or hone their teaching skills by participating in in-house training to learn from each other.

#### 4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

##### Comments

Students' welfare is paramount at the Institution and students state that they feel well-provided for and safe whilst studying.

Students benefit from the opportunity to develop their career prospects by attending a high-profile annual careers' fair at the prestigious Goldsmith's Hall in London. This event is attended by a capacity crowd of students who receive up-to-date industry knowledge from a very good range of industry experts.

The Institution carries out effective outreach work by attending the National Careers Guidance Show and Skills London. These events help GIA gain a larger audience for its programmes.

The Institution offers 12 scholarships per year and these enable talented jewellery enthusiasts to achieve graduate-level qualifications to enter or advance in the industry. These scholarships are funded by GIA.

#### 4.4 Premises and Facilities (supplementary inspection)

*The numbers below refer to the standards as presented in the college scheme document and main full inspection report*

#### 24. The institution has secure possession of and access to its premises

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|------|---|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 24.1 | The institution has secure tenure on its premises.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| 24.2 | Where required, the institution has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |

This standard is judged to be:  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

##### Comments

The Institution rents the accommodation at the Birmingham site each year and this arrangement is renewable whenever required.

#### 25. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for students and staff

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|------|--|---|---|
| 25.1 | Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                             |
| 25.2 | The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                             |
| 25.3 | There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to students, staff and visitors. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| 25.4 | General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                             |
| 25.5 | There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                             |

25.6	There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
25.7	There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
25.8	There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**This standard is judged to be:**  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

Security arrangements are extensive and well-developed. The building includes the storage of precious gemstones, including diamonds and, as a result, security is thorough.

Students receive a good quality induction and are provided with lanyards to enable them to gain entry to the building. Health and safety guidance is provided during induction and students understand their responsibilities under these arrangements very well.

**26. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered**

26.1	Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
26.2	Classrooms and/or any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
26.3	There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**This standard is judged to be:**  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

The quality of the teaching room is very good. Industry-standard microscopes and infra-red diagnostic cabinets are provided so that students develop good, professional skills in their use and in analysing the qualities and appraising the value of precious gemstones, such as diamonds.

Assessment arrangements are carried out according to appropriate guidelines and conducted under examination conditions. As a result of these good quality arrangements, students' achievement rates are very high.

**27. There are appropriate additional facilities for students and staff**

27.1	Students have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
27.2	Teaching staff have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
27.3	Students and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
27.4	Students and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
27.5	There are individual offices or rooms in which academic staff and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
27.6	Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the institution.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**This standard is judged to be:**  Met  Partially Met  Not Met

**Comments**

Breakout spaces for additional study or socialising are comfortable and the host organisation provides tea, coffee and water for the students each day, free of charge.

Teachers benefit from a space in which to prepare materials, mark work or relax.

The building is fully accessible and provides lockers for the safe keeping of students' belongings.

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#### 4.5 Compliance Declaration

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**Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.**

Yes     No

**PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS**

**STRENGTHS**

Excellent management that makes use of comprehensive quality assurance systems to maintain high standards of education and training.

Teachers benefit from excellent professional development that enables them to further hone their teaching skills and develop a broader awareness of education.

Very good resources for learning ensure that students develop their gemology skills and knowledge very well.

High-quality careers guidance provided for students at a very well-attended careers fair in London. This enables students to enhance and further their career prospects.

**ACTIONS REQUIRED**

None.

High     Medium     Low

**RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)***

It is recommended that the Institution considers using more refined methods of evaluating the impact of its teaching, learning and assessment, for example, by comparing the achievement rates, including first-time pass rates, of its teachers.

The Institution should consider extending its focus on learning by updating its lesson observation systems so that they include a specific evaluation of students' participation and evaluate more fully the use of formative assessment to check students' learning prior to the examination.

The institution should consider how it can better encourage the sharing of best practice so that all teachers improve their teaching by learning from their peers.

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE**

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