



## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

### **INTERIM INSPECTION (College)**

<b>INSTITUTION:</b>	Gemological Institute of America, London
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	104 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3LA
<b>HEAD OF INSTITUTION:</b>	Mr Mehdi Saadian
<b>ACCREDITATION STATUS:</b>	Accredited
<b>DATE OF INSPECTION:</b>	15 May 2023
<b>ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:</b>	Continued accreditation, 21 July 2023

## **PART A – INTRODUCTION**

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

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The Gemological Institute of America (GIA/the Institution) is a private educational institution established in 1931 to provide training, information, services and instruments to the jewellery industry. It is an institute constituted under United States of America (USA) law, with a worldwide operation over seven campuses. GIA's headquarters are based in Carlsbad, California in the USA. Additional campuses are located in London, New York, Mumbai, Hong Kong, Taipei and Bangkok. There are also ten laboratories and three global research centres.

British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation is for the London campus only. All the campuses provide courses developed at GIA headquarters.

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

GIA commenced teaching at the London campus in 2001 and was incorporated and registered as a charity limited by guarantee on 17 October 2002. A Board of Trustees, which includes global governors from the USA together with the United Kingdom (UK) Director, oversee the London operation. The UK Director is supported by the Senior Manager of Instruction and Accreditation and Admissions Manager.

The Institution has developed a substantial body of research and documentation on gemmology. As a consequence, detailed training manuals on the grading of diamonds, the 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, Gemology and Jewelry Manufacturing Arts. GIA London offers 11 courses split into two delivery modes. These are on-campus courses of between seven and 28 weeks' duration and laboratory classes, which are between one and five days in duration.

Staff at the GIA's headquarters name the courses offered, resulting in three courses being named using the USA definition of graduate, which is the equivalent of an undergraduate in the UK.

The courses have been developed at 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 Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). On the basis of these accreditations, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) has reviewed and evaluated the courses and benchmarked the qualifications against the UK Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). As a result, two of the courses are at Level 5, three are at Level 4 and one is at Level 3.

All students are aged over 18 years. At the time of the inspection, there were 24 students enrolled. The majority of the students are female and come from a wide range of countries, including the UK, the USA, China, India, Spain and other European, Middle Eastern and South American countries. Enrolment is on a rolling basis, with start dates throughout the year. Entry requirements include evidence of a high school diploma or a higher level qualification, and proof of English fluency at International English Language Testing System level 6 if not a native English speaker.

### **3. Inspection process**

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The inspection was carried out on site over one day by one inspector. The inspector held discussions with the School Director, the Instruction Manager and the Admissions and Administration Manager. Meetings were held with a group of students and a group of staff, including teachers. Lessons were observed and a wide range of electronic documentation was scrutinised. A review of the premises was undertaken. The Institution was very well prepared for the inspection and fully co-operated with the inspector.

#### 4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
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
Interim and Supplementary	23 May 2019
Re-accreditation	19 & 21–22 April 2021

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

*The following judgements 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**

The Instruction Manager has been promoted to Senior Manager of Instruction and Accreditation and is responsible for all accreditation matters and management of the London centre's Jewelry Manufacturing Arts instructors.

A number of staff have been promoted to other key positions, including the posts of Admissions Manager, Supervisor of Instruction and Events, Student Welfare and Health and Safety Officer, and Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Officer.

The Institution's non-certified Quick Design course has been reintroduced and is offered once in each academic year.

The location of the library has moved from the instructor's office to reception to allow easier access for students.

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

There were no action points identified in the last inspection report.

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

*The Institution is recommended to put in place a mechanism to report to the whole student body what has been done in response to their feedback.*

Responses to student feedback and the actions taken are posted on the student information board in the student lounge. As a result, students are aware of the Institution's actions and responses to their feedback.

### **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**

GIA is managed very effectively, and the provision offered fulfils the aims of the Institution well. A clear and detailed governance and management structure, with well-defined and documented roles and responsibilities, effectively supports management.

The structure is appropriate for the size of the Institution, with detailed reporting structures that are fully understood by staff. Members of the Board of Trustees are highly effective in undertaking their monitoring duties and are fully involved in the work of the Institution. They are known to, and work closely with, the managers. As a result, the Institution is very well managed at all levels, and the quality of education and the welfare of students are high.

Well-qualified and highly experienced senior managers carry out their duties very effectively. They fully understand their responsibilities and provide clear educational direction. They have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the requirements of delivering specialist gemmology courses and use these effectively to ensure that courses and their delivery meet students' and employers' needs and that the student experience is of a very high quality.

Communication throughout the Institution is excellent and includes a wide range of effective methods. Regular meetings are held between managers and administrative staff and teachers so that staff are kept up to date with any operational changes, as well as being able to ask any questions or raise any concerns.

Administrative support is very effective, meets the day-to-day needs of the Institution well and supports management effectively. Administrators are well qualified, suitably experienced and understand their roles and responsibilities well. An appropriate number of administrators ensure that suitable policies, procedures and systems are maintained and effectively disseminated across the Institution.

The Institution is highly effective in recruiting, retaining and supporting well-qualified and experienced staff who have relevant experience in the gemmology industry. Highly secure procedures ensure that experience and qualifications are verified effectively before employment. There is an effective system for regularly reviewing staff performance that includes appraisals and, where appropriate, lesson observations. As a result, staff are aware of their strengths and areas for development.

GIA's website is well developed and provides comprehensive information on the content of the available courses. Text and images used in publicity material are accurate and provide a fair reflection of the Institution's location, premises and facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered. Information is regularly updated to ensure accuracy and is very effective in supporting students to make informed decisions about their courses.

The Institution takes great care in enrolling students who are suitable for its courses.

Student attendance, retention, completion and progression are excellent. Systems for monitoring and reviewing the Institution's performance are highly effective. A comprehensive process of self-evaluation ensures that leaders and managers are aware of the Institution's strengths and areas for improvement.

Data is collected and analysed to identify action points for improvements. An annual report is compiled that includes data analysis. Student feedback is used well to improve the student experience, and students are well informed of the actions taken as a result of their feedback.

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

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**The standards are judged to be:**

☒ Met ☐ Partially Met ☐ Not Met

#### Comments

Programme management and course development are excellent. The Senior Instruction Manager is very well qualified and experienced and provides clear and highly effective oversight of the delivery and development of the curriculum. As a result, the content and delivery of courses are well planned and regularly reviewed to ensure that the course content and materials are up to date and meet the needs of the students and the gemmology industry.

A well-developed system is in place to ensure that classes are timetabled and appropriate rooms and teachers are allocated for the nature and requirements of each of the gemmology courses. This ensures a consistent learning experience for students.

Teachers are very well qualified, highly experienced and have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of their subject and the gemmology industry, which they bring to their classes. Lessons are well planned and delivered in ways that support students for their future assessments. Students actively participate in classes and are able to develop their knowledge and skills very well. The Institution is very well resourced and provides excellent facilities and materials for the teachers and students to fulfil the requirements of the courses.

A comprehensive schedule of assessments for each course is made available to students and teachers in writing well in advance of the assessment date. Outcomes from each assessment are carefully monitored and used

very effectively to identify students who are not making the expected progress. Each student is made aware of their progress against prior agreed targeted levels of achievement, with the Institution providing prompt additional support where appropriate. Teachers make themselves available outside class time to answer questions and clarify points to ensure good understanding. Students commented on how helpful this is and how much they appreciate this support. Inspection findings confirm this view.

#### 4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

☒ Met ☐ Partially Met ☐ Not Met

##### Comments

Students receive excellent pastoral support. Staff members responsible for student welfare are well qualified and experienced and effectively supported by teachers on academic matters. Named staff members who are responsible for student welfare are made known to students during induction and also in student documentation. Staff providing student support are appropriately trained and accessible to all students to provide advice and counselling.

On arrival, students receive a comprehensive induction. As a result, they fully understand the requirements of their chosen course, key policies and procedures, and the Institution's expectations for attendance and punctuality. Students are made aware of the support available in case of emergency. They report that they are highly satisfied with the information provided by the Institution and support given by staff. Inspection findings confirm this view.

International students are provided with detailed advice and practical information before travelling to the UK, which helps them to settle into their studies quickly. Further advice and support are available throughout their course of study.

Arrangements to protect students from the risks of radicalisation and extremism are appropriate. There is a clear policy relating to preventing radicalisation and extremism and all staff have been appropriately trained. A detailed risk assessment has been carried out.

The application form makes clear the Institution's fair and transparent terms and conditions. An appropriate complaints procedure is included in the student arrival pack and discussed during induction. Reference is made to BAC's complaints procedure. As a result, students are well informed about what to do if they have a complaint.

#### 4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

☒ Met ☐ Partially Met ☐ Not Met

##### Comments

GIA is located in central London, with buildings and facilities that provide an excellent and safe environment for students to learn and staff to work. The Institution leases its premises from Florida State University and has secure tenure.

The provision for health and safety and security is excellent. The premises are very secure, well maintained and in an excellent state of repair, decoration and cleanliness. Access to the premises is restricted, and a security system ensures out-of-hours security.

Comprehensive procedures ensure the safety of students and staff. General health and safety guidance is provided to students and staff during their induction and to visitors on arrival at the premises. Comprehensive signage throughout the premises ensures that staff and students know where to go in the case of an emergency evacuation. Classrooms have evacuation routes and procedures are clearly signed.

Classrooms and laboratories are very well equipped, with industry-standard microscopes and ultraviolet diagnostic cabinets. Each student has access to their own instruments. As a result, classrooms are equipped to a level to allow for the effective delivery and assessment of each of the Institution's courses.

Students have good access to space and suitable facilities for private study, with an appropriate library and good Information Technology (IT) resources. Teachers have a suitable space in which to prepare lessons, mark work or relax. A well-appointed lounge provides students and staff with space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink. Students and staff have appropriate access to storage for personal possessions.

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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

Highly effective leadership successfully guides the Institution and supports the continuous improvement of the provision.

The excellent teaching is highly effective in enabling students to make progress and prepare for their assessments.

The Institution has been successful in recruiting very well-qualified teachers with appropriate experience in the gemmology industry.

A comprehensive pastoral system supports students effectively during their time at the Institution.

Well-equipped premises and facilities provide a safe and comfortable environment that supports learning effectively.

### ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

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

None

### COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE