



## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**INSTITUTION:** The Gemmological Association of Great Britain

**ADDRESS:** 21 Ely Place, London EC1N 6TD

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Mr Nick Jones

**Accreditation status:** Accredited

**Date of inspection:** 9 December 2015

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** 28 January 2016

## **PART A - INTRODUCTION**

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

The Gemmological Association of Great Britain (Gem-A or the Institute) is a limited company and registered charity. Established in 1908 as a steering committee of the National Association of Goldsmiths, its teaching programme began in 1912. The Institute's objectives are to advance the art and science of gemmology, particularly through education and training. Gem-A has a worldwide presence and its place at the forefront of its field is underpinned by its current, close cooperation with the Foreign Office in the development of international ethical industry standards.

Gem-A is the longest established provider of gemmology education in the world. Its programme is tailored towards those working in, or intending to work in, the jewellery industry and also enthusiasts from the general public. About 50 per cent of its students are international. Graduates can apply for membership of Gem-A by becoming a Fellow of the Gemmology Association and over 50% of its graduates take up this option.

In 2013 Gem-A purchased the freehold of a prestigious six-storey building, 21 Ely Place, close to Hatton Garden. The building houses Gem-A's education department teaching and laboratory facilities, a library, the membership arm which arranges conferences and events, senior management, finance and Gem-A Instruments, a shop that provides gemmological instruments to students and the trade.

In summer 2015 the previous head of the Institute, who was also the CEO, resigned and an Interim CEO took up the post in October this year. Like his predecessor, his responsibilities include finance and quality assurance, representing Gem-A to the public, day-to-day administration of the charity, overseeing organisational development and ensuring awarding body compliance.

The Director of Education holds a part-time post, and has not only gemmology qualifications but an educational background which includes a Postgraduate Certificate in Online and Distance Education. She has worked at Gem-A since 1996 and has held senior posts in the company since 2005 with responsibilities for academic policy oversight. This includes oversight of the international network of Accredited Teaching Centres (ATC) which provide Open and Distance Learning (ODL). The IT component of ODL course delivery is managed by a specialist IT Manager. All tutors have both gemmology qualifications and a high level of industry experience. Tutors on on-site courses are supervised by a Teaching Manager whilst those on the ODL courses on site and within ATCs are monitored by a specialist ODL Tutor Manager. Gemmology qualifications are also held by 80% of the administrative staff, which ensures that continuous teaching cover can be provided in the event of a tutor's absence. Gem-A is headed by a Board of Directors whose 11 members are elected by Gem-A membership. There is a Board of Examiners now headed by a new Chair of Examiners, who is the point of contact between the Board and Gem-A and who, together with the Director of Education, monitors examinations and ensures their consistency from session to session.

Student numbers, which had increased considerably between the 2009 and 2013 inspections, have since then remained overall broadly the same, although there is a temporary fall in Diamond Diploma course participants. Numbers for that course are anticipated to increase when a new Diamond Diploma course is launched in 2016.

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

This consists of ODL and on-site courses, and specialist daytime and evening workshops. ODL courses, which are conducted mainly online but with practical lab classes, have seen a growth in popularity. Blended learning courses, which at the 2013 inspection had ten participants, have been discontinued. At the time of this interim inspection the courses running with participants were the 'level 6 Diploma in Gemmology', the 'level 5 Diploma in Gem Diamond', the 'level 4 Foundation Certificate' and the 'level 2 Award in Gem Basics'.

### **3. Inspection process**

This Interim Inspection took place on the afternoon of 9 December. The inspector had a meeting with the Director of Education, the Education Administration Co-ordinator and the ODL Tutor Manager. He discussed developments since the last inspection and the Institute's responses to the requirements and recommendations of that report. He looked at a number of documents including completion rates for 2014/15, student feedback forms and feedback analysis, a job description for the new ODL Support and Student Welfare Officer, and was shown over Gem-A's online learning platform by the ODL Tutor Manager. He was also given a tour of the premises and was introduced to the newly appointed Interim CEO, the Chair of Examiners, a group of six tutors, and saw a class of full-time students in progress.

### **4. Inspection history**

<b>First inspection:</b>	October 2009
<b>Interim inspection:</b>	December 2010
<b>Last inspection:</b>	November 2013

## **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 significant changes include the recent appointment of an Interim CEO, in October. He is a chartered accountant and was previously chief executive of another registered charity in the education field. In addition to his other responsibilities, he is currently reviewing the company with a view to restructuring.

As already mentioned, there has been a growth in ODL courses while blended learning courses have been discontinued. There is a new Chair of Examiners. Student feedback systems have been transferred from paper-based to online in 2014-15. The Institute's online learning platform has been further developed and improved, with an enlarged resource area for students in four languages, forums providing peer support, past examinations, and a tutors-only area with teaching resources, marking guides and a news and discussion area. The Institute has become aware that some of its students require more support than in previous years to complete their courses successfully and is advertising, and hopes to fill early in the new year, the newly created post of 'ODL Support and Student Welfare Officer'.

At the time of the 2013 inspection, students could progress to a one-year BSc (Hons) at Kingston University in Gemmology & Applied Minerology. Kingston has now discontinued the course but from September 2016 successful diploma students will be able to progress to a top-up BSc in Gemmology & Jewellery Studies at Birmingham City University.

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

The last report identified one medium priority action point:

*"7.4 The Institute should ensure that it develops a method for informing students of actions taken following student feedback."*

Started in 2015, the Institute has published a summary analysis of student feedback, which includes its recommended changes in response to the feedback. This innovation goes a good way to addressing the action point 7.4. To do so completely, the Institute should issue periodic reports on student feedback specifically directed to present, past and also potential students, explaining any action taken in response to feedback along the lines, 'You said, so we did'.

### 3. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

#### 3.1 Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> None				

#### 3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> None				

#### 3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> It is anticipated that the new post of ODL Support and Student Welfare Officer will further strengthen the provision. At the time of the 2013 inspection, the Institute’s programme of occasional evening lectures, museum visits etc. had been temporarily suspended. These have now been reintroduced, and in November 2015, Gem-A hosted a two-day conference for more than 200 members, delegates and students from around the world.				

#### 3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> None				

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

<p><b>Institution’s strengths</b>                  The strengths identified during the 2013 inspection in the areas of Management, staffing and administration, Teaching, learning and assessment, Student welfare, and Premises and facilities appeared at the time of this Interim Inspection to have been maintained, and in some instances to have been further developed.</p>
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Actions required	Priority H/M/L
The Institute has gone a good way to addressing the the action point 7.4 in the last report. To do so completely, the Institute must issue periodic reports on student feedback specifically directed to present, past and also potential students, explaining any action taken in response to feedback along the lines, ‘You said, so we did’.	<b>M</b>

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	<b>YES</b>
Further comments, if applicable None	