



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: GIA (Gemological Institute of America) - London

ADDRESS: 104 Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3LA

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Edward Johnson

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 27 April 2015

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 9 July 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

GIA (Gemological Institute of America) was established in 1931 as a non-profit organisation. It aims to ensure the public trust in gems and jewellery through education, research, laboratory services and instrument development. It has established ethical operational guidelines and works to ensure compliance, by both employees and students, with those guidelines.

The worldwide operation has 11 campus locations (Carlsbad (the headquarters) and New York in the USA, London, Moscow, Mumbai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo, Osaka, Taipei and Bangkok). There are also nine laboratories and four global research centres. The London campus is the subject of this inspection.

GIA began teaching in 2001 and was registered as a charity in 2002. A Board of Governors, which includes global business leaders and educationalists, oversees GIA's activities globally. A Board of Trustees also has a governing role over the operations in London.

GIA has developed a substantial body of research and documentation on gemmology. As a result, detailed training manuals on the grading of diamonds, the identification of coloured stones, effective design and market awareness and professional business practice have been produced.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The London campus delivers a number of diploma and certificate programmes and short practical laboratory classes. Curricula, programme structures and class plans are drawn up using standard operating procedures (SOPs) developed by the headquarters in Carlsbad. All the diplomas and certificates issued by GIA are for programmes approved by either the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) or the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Accreditation Council (DEAC), both of which accredit GIA in the USA. On the basis of these accreditations, the qualifications issued in the UK are benchmarked by UK NARIC.

A wide range of laboratory classes, intensive programmes and open days and evenings is available in London. Courses, delivered on the campus, range in duration from one day to 26 weeks. The Graduate Gemologist Diploma consists of seven weeks' full-time study of diamonds and 19 weeks' full-time study of coloured stones. It can also be gained through a mixture of e-learning and short practical laboratory classes. This diploma has been benchmarked by UK NARIC, which reports alignment with level 5 in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The programmes on diamonds and coloured stones can be studied separately and lead to their own graduate diplomas.

A further diploma programme is called the Accredited Jewellery Professional (AJP). This can only be studied in class and lasts for five days. GIA in London also offers a certificate programme in jewellery design. The practical laboratory classes, which include diamond grading and gem identification, can also be taken as standalone classes and provide credit towards the diploma courses, if students wish to go on to study at that level. In addition to its campus-based programmes and other courses, GIA in London presents seminars at the annual trade exhibition, International Jewellery London, and other trade and public events.

At the time of the inspection, there were 39 students enrolled on on-campus programmes. 87% were female and all were over the age of 18. Of those students, 18% were British, 31% were from the rest of Europe and the remaining 51% were from Canada, Russia, China, South Africa, the Middle East and countries of South East Asia.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted by one inspector in half a day. Meetings took place with the Director, Education, the Manager, London Instruction and the Campus Manager. Teaching was observed and appropriate supporting documentation was scrutinised. Co-operation in the provision of information and documentation was good throughout the inspection process.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection:	17 and 18 March 2009
Interim inspection:	3 March 2010
Reaccreditation inspection:	4 and 5 March 2013

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the composition of the Board of Trustees has changed. The Board is now made up of the key members of the executive team from the USA, including the GIA President and CEO, who was appointed in November 2013. The three UK members have resigned as their role, to help with the establishment of the London campus, is judged to have been completed. This change is expected to improve the support provided, from the headquarters, to the London campus, for example with regard to information technology, and to lead to greater consistency in the delivery of the organisation's 2015 strategy. In addition, three new instructors, a new human resources consultant and a new campus manager have been appointed.

Changes have been made to the website with the establishment of an integrated website containing information on each campus, including London. This is part of a move to standardise the organisation's global branding. A new performance management system has been established for all staff in November 2014. This includes appropriate performance measures and the setting of future performance goals. Some improvements have been made to the premises, which include a change of layout to the reception area where the library is now located.

2. Response to action points in last report

It is recommended that consideration should be given to the timeliness and potential benefits of a move to an electronic management information system.

An electronic management information system (MIS) is now used to maintain records of students' enrolments and personal details as well as their progress through their programme of study. This is backed up by paper records. It is planned to extend the use of the MIS in the future.

It is recommended that GIA-L should continue to encourage and support the work of the London Alumni Association.

The London chapter of the alumni association is still run by volunteers. The full-time staff are also actively involved in the association's events. They attend them in order to provide support and have trained volunteers in the use of software to enable them to make contact with the alumni more efficiently, by e-mail. Other networking and educational events have been organised centrally. A series of talks, known as gemstone gatherings, have been well attended, as have the three alumni association events, which were organised by volunteers, in 2014. The establishment of chapters in Germany, Switzerland and Portugal is also being encouraged.

Some of the terminology in the Student Handbook (e.g. 'tardies', Make-Up Policy') might be initially confusing to UK students and should be amended.

This terminology has not been amended in the Student Handbook. This is because these terms are used throughout the organisation globally. For students in the UK, they are explained in the prospectus and at induction and during class time so that their meaning is made clear.

It is recommended that, in establishing a regional advisory board, the College should consider a role for local and independent members in local conflict resolution (e.g. complaints and appeals).

A fair and clear complaints procedure for the London campus is set out in the Student Handbook. In the event that a student does not feel the complaint has been adequately addressed, the procedure provides for an appeal to be made to an adjudicator, who has not so far been involved in investigating the complaint. A regional

advisory board has not been established as this has not been judged necessary, given the robust governance structures in place.

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	✓			
Comments The staff demonstrate a very good level of commitment to the on-going success of the organisation and to ensuring the continuance of the high standards of quality of the provision.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Instructors are highly knowledgeable about the subject matter they teach. Classes are well managed and include a range of activities to engage the students and enable them to progress. Achievement data for the academic year 2013/2014 shows very high pass rates, with the majority of programmes achieving a 100 per cent pass rate.				

3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments None				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Classrooms are light and airy and very well equipped.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths

The organisation is very well managed and has a robust governance structure, including from the staff at the headquarters in the USA.

A good range of policies and systems ensure the on-going high quality of the provision.

Knowledgeable and engaging instructors ensure that students make good progress and achieve their objectives well.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
None	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	