



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

GEMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA (GIA) – LONDON

(Company Registration Number – 04566140)

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Age Range 18+

Total number of students 21

Numbers by age and type 18+: 21

of study FE only: 21

Inspection dates **15 – 17 June 2021**

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through the points-based system for Student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges and, by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) was established in 1931 to provide professional education programmes in gemology. GIA England is a registered charity, governed by a board of trustees. GIA London opened in central London in 2002 and is one of seven campuses worldwide owned by GIA Inc. Day to day responsibilities are delegated to a campus director, who reports to the senior director for global education in the United States of America (USA). The aim of the group is to ensure 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.
- 1.2 GIA London delivers a range of specialised courses. These include long graduate courses of between seven and 28 weeks in length, in gemology, diamonds, coloured stones, and jewellery design. The institute also offers a computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) certificate course, and short practical laboratory (lab) courses in gem identification, and diamond, pearl, and coloured stone grading.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection, 21 students were enrolled, of whom 14 do not have English as their first language. All students are aged 18 or over. Most students are female. Students are from a range of countries including the United Kingdom (UK), the USA, China, India, Spain, and other European countries. Two students have been identified with language or learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 1.4 All courses are offered at various set dates throughout the calendar year. Student selection is based on successful completion of compulsory secondary education plus evidence of English language proficiency at level B2, or above, of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), for students with English as a second or other language. At the time of inspection, the practical lab courses, and the CAD / CAM certificate course, were not running.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Comprehensive enrolment procedures ensure students are recruited to courses which meet their educational goals and career aspirations. Course provision is excellent. A well designed and sequenced curriculum prepares students well for work in the gemology industry. Courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office Guidance. Students benefit from an engaging and challenging curriculum. Their academic and needs are very well supported by expert instructors who create engaging and well-paced lessons. Effective adjustments and support are put in place for students with additional learning needs. Instructors use a range of effective teaching approaches, strategies and resources to help students to develop their knowledge and understanding of different gemstones very well. Students develop their confidence and understanding of key concepts and techniques used in the industry, effectively linking theory to practice. Courses are very well resourced, and students are able to use a wide range of highly specialised equipment to practise and develop excellent practical gemology skills. Instructors assess students continuously, correcting errors and misconceptions quickly and effectively, to ensure they know how to improve. As a result, achievement rates are excellent and attendance levels are very high.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. The college provides a safe, clean and professional environment which supports students' studies very well. Detailed and effective health, safety and security policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the risks from fire and other hazards are minimised and controlled. Classrooms and social areas are equipped and maintained to a high standard. The premises are located in a listed building that is not accessible to wheelchair users. A small library is available featuring a number of specialist texts. However, its location in a staff workroom means it is underutilised by students. Student registration and attendance recording is excellent. The attendance policy is stringent and very well enforced. Absences are followed up quickly and managers are proactive in supporting students who do not meet the very high attendance and punctuality expectations to improve. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office, when required, are very effective. The quality of pastoral support is good. Students report that they feel welcome and well supported at the college which provides a respectful, professional and inclusive environment.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Leaders and managers set a clear vision and educational direction, supported by systematic policies and procedures. They provide very effective oversight and monitoring to ensure the high levels of health and safety, financial management, and excellent standard of education are maintained. Managers have established very effective processes for ongoing self-evaluation, including analysis of data and student feedback, to inform effective action planning for improvement and enhancement.

Very effective arrangements are in place to recruit and develop high quality, experienced staff that are suitable for their roles. Provision of information to students and prospective students is excellent.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 The assessment of students prior to arrival is good. Comprehensive enrolment procedures ensure that all students meet the published entry requirements for their course, including the necessary level of English language competency where required. Students are able to declare any specific or additional learning needs which may require support, allowing managers and instructors to put in place suitable adaptations as required.
- 3.2 On arrival, students complete a wide range of assessments early in the programme, which instructors use effectively to identify students' starting points and any individual needs. Instructors use this information effectively to plan lesson delivery and tailor their guidance and support as required.
- 3.3 Students benefit from accurate information, advice and guidance which helps them to make appropriate and informed decisions about their studies. The college website, and the comprehensive course catalogue, feature detailed guidance on each of the courses provided, ensuring students are clear about the curriculum content, intended learning outcomes, hours of study, and any materials and equipment requirements.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is excellent. Curriculum plans are set and standardised across all GIA campuses, in line with the institution's clear vision and statement of educational purpose. Course content is periodically reviewed and updated, informed by feedback from students, instructors and GIA's education advisory boards. This ensures that courses continue to meet the needs of employers and industry, as well as students' individual learning goals and career aspirations.
- 3.5 Detailed schemes of learning provide very clear details of the course content and specific learning objectives to be achieved. Course content is very well sequenced, building progressively to ensure the needs of all students are met and learning programmes are inclusive and accessible. The mix of graduate programmes, laboratory classes and design courses ensure that students have access to a range of options that meet their needs and interests at different levels. The number of student withdrawals is very low, with almost all students completing and achieving the courses they register for.
- 3.6 Courses on offer to students on Student visas meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office Guidance. Courses match the details found in course brochures and on the website.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.7 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are excellent. Students benefit from very well planned and delivered lessons from well qualified subject specialists. Instructors know their subject and their students very well. They are able to tailor the high quality learning resources, and their delivery style, to meet their students' needs and interests.
- 3.8 Instructors have high expectations for learning. They provide highly effective academic support to ensure students are well prepared to meet the demands of the challenging curriculum. Lessons are very well paced, and practical techniques are effectively modelled by instructors to help students develop their skills. In theory lessons, instructors are able to call on a range of high quality resources and effective learning strategies to make the content interesting and engaging. As a result, students develop their specialist knowledge, are able to make connections between theory and practice, and make rapid progress overall.
- 3.9 Students benefit from an excellent range of learning resources to support the development of new knowledge and skills. An online virtual learning environment (VLE) provides access to a rich selection of multimedia learning materials and online quizzes and assessments, which support students' independent learning skills very well. On campus, students benefit from access to an excellent range of highly specialised practical equipment and instruments to help them effectively identify a broad range of gemstones.
- 3.10 Students' additional learning needs are effectively identified, and a range of appropriate support and adjustments put in place where required. As a result, learners are able to access their learning, make progress and achieve. A robust and systematic academic progress monitoring system reviews student performance indicators at key times throughout their programme. Where achievement levels fall below expectations, instructors and managers take swift action to provide structured support and additional monitoring to ensure students know what to do to improve and to get students back on target quickly.
- 3.11 Instructors create an inclusive, tolerant and purposeful learning environment. They model professional behaviours, and foster a mutually respectful and focused learning environment where student contributions are valued. Instructors grasp naturally occurring opportunities for students to share their own opinions and interests.
- 3.12 Students undertake continual assessments which increase in complexity and challenge in preparation for their final, end-of-course practical examinations. Students benefit from very regular instructor feedback which carefully corrects any misunderstandings or inaccuracies. Students complete self-assessments, to help them check the accuracy of their own observations and testing results, when evaluating gemstone quality and grading diamonds. These approaches ensure students develop their confidence, independence and competence throughout their learning programme.

- 3.13 Assessment procedures are clear, systematic and robustly moderated and verified to ensure outcomes are fair, valid and reliable. Consequently, student achievements are accurate and highly respected by employers and the gemstone industry.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.14 Attainment and progress are excellent. Scrutiny of formal student assessment data, and observations of lessons, demonstrates that students make excellent progress in both their underpinning theoretical knowledge and in their practical skills. For example, in jewellery design, students make excellent progress in developing their technical skills to accurately draw and paint coloured and non-coloured gemstones. On the graduate programme, students make excellent progress in using a polariscope to test the optical properties of a range of gemstones.
- 3.15 Overall, students make excellent progress from their starting points, developing their confidence, skills and independence to successfully achieve their challenging and stringent formal assessments.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security of the premises are excellent. Managers are proactive in taking the necessary measures to reduce the risks from fire and other hazards. An excellent range of useful and clear health and safety policies and procedures are in place. Regular fire drills are conducted throughout the year, with weekly alarm tests. Health and safety signage throughout the building is very clear. All students receive an appropriate health and safety briefing as part of their orientation induction on arrival. These arrangements ensure that staff and students know what to do in an emergency and how to keep themselves and each other safe.
- 4.2 Relevant staff have been trained in health and safety management and risk assessment. They work well with the premises landlord to ensure that relevant hazards and risks are regularly assessed and controlled. Health and safety checks are regularly carried out and systematically monitored. Firefighting equipment and first aid kits are well maintained, clearly identified and regularly serviced. An appropriate number of staff have undertaken training in first aid and know how to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students who may become ill or injured. Electrical equipment is well maintained and regularly tested. The premises are very secure. As a result, the college premises provide a safe environment for staff and students, conforming to legal requirements. Students and staff report that they feel safe and welcome on the premises.
- 4.3 Classrooms are well equipped and furnished to a high standard. Students benefit from access to a light and spacious social and refreshment area, with access to free drinking water and personal storage lockers. The jewellery design classroom features an excellent range of computing and audio-visual resources to support computer-aided design programmes and observation of design techniques modelled by instructors. All areas of the premises are clean, well maintained and decorated. Washrooms are clean and sufficient in numbers. The premises are located in a listed building that is not accessible to wheelchair users. This is clearly communicated and publicised to all prospective students.
- 4.4 Students have access to a small library featuring a number of specialist texts to support their research and studies. However, the library is located in a staff workroom which reduces students' awareness and use of the facility. Managers recognise that the library is underutilised and the need to find a more suitable location.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.5 Student registration arrangements and attendance recording measures are excellent. Clear and systematic procedures are implemented for managing student admissions and enrolments. Student registration records are accurate and individual student

files are very well maintained, providing a clear record of checks on identification, previous educational achievements, and where relevant, official confirmation of English language competency, and student visas.

- 4.6 Highly effective arrangements for managing, monitoring, and recording student attendance and punctuality are in place and fully implemented. The attendance policy is stringent, clearly documented and communicated, and very well enforced. Registers are accurate and very well maintained and students who are absent are promptly contacted. Where very high attendance levels are not maintained, managers take swift action to issue advisory guidance and put actions in place to ensure students do not get behind in their studies. As a result, attendance levels are excellent.
- 4.7 Managers have a very clear understanding of Home Office requirements for attendance for those on Student visas. Clear processes are in place to make timely reports to the Home Office when required.
- 4.8 Students are provided with fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees and deposits.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.9 The quality of pastoral support is good. Students benefit from a clear orientation and induction process which introduces them to key college policies, working practices and expectations for behaviour, attendance and conduct. International students receive useful and timely information on living in London, including accommodation options, transportation details, how to access medical and dental care and guidance on wellbeing and staying safe. This helps overseas students to settle into their studies quickly.
- 4.10 Instructors, managers and administrative staff provide students with effective ongoing support and guidance which meets their needs. Students are able to approach any member of staff for advice and guidance and prompt action is taken to deal with any enquiries and pastoral and support needs. As a result, students report that they feel well supported in an inclusive and welcome environment.
- 4.11 Relationships between staff and students, and between students themselves, are respectful, inclusive and professional. The college had a wide range of appropriate policies and measures in place to promote a tolerant and respectful environment and to prevent and deal with any abusive behaviours, bullying or discrimination.
- 4.12 Students receive appropriate careers advice and guidance to support their next steps into related jobs in the gemology industry. An annual careers fair provides useful opportunities for students to meet industry professionals and explore the range of roles available to them, for example in retail, in design, as a buyer, appraiser or auction specialist. Students also benefit from a careers guidance service, and career progression resources to help them access and apply for relevant jobs.

- 4.13 A range of social events and activities are provided which support the student experience, for example visits to jewellery collections in local museums. Students can also connect with other GIA students globally using professional managed social media accounts.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are excellent. Governance of the London campus is provided by the board of trustees who are also senior executives for GIA Global located in the USA. Trustees meet regularly and ensure there is very effective oversight of educational standards, financial planning and investment. GIA Global has a very clear leadership structure and a broad range of systematic and well documented working practices, policies and procedures. Senior leaders set a clear mission and strategic direction which is well communicated and understood by all staff.
- 5.2 Senior executives and global education directors discharge key responsibilities effectively to the campus director, including financial management and health and safety. Directors meet and visit frequently and have access to online management information systems which facilitate the sharing of key data and information. This ensures senior leaders have a very good insight into the working of the London campus. They provide very effective ongoing monitoring, support and challenge to ensure legal permissions are in place, financial management is very effective, and the very high standard of education and student experience is maintained.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.3 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Clear educational direction is provided by the campus director, who ensures that the global GIA strategy is used to inform a clear and specific strategic plan for the London campus. The director is supported by an experienced senior management team which is appropriate for the size and scope of the college. Managers have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They ensure that the campus is safe and very well managed in line with the aims and mission of the organisation.
- 5.4 Managers have established a clear culture of ongoing self-review and evaluation to inform improvement and enhancement. Managers understand the strengths of the organisation and have established effective procedures to accurately identify priorities for improvement and to ensure they are actioned and monitored. As a result, the quality of students' education and achievements is excellent.
- 5.5 Managers are successful in securing and supporting high quality, experienced staff. The campus director benefits from the support of human resource (HR) specialists and advisors to help recruit and select new staff and to ensure that they are suitably trained and supported for their roles. Staff have a range of appropriate opportunities to engage in ongoing professional development activities to ensure their skills and competencies are current and enhanced.

- 5.6 New instructors are very well supported through a probationary period, shadowing more experienced practitioners to develop their own expertise and confidence further. Lessons are observed regularly by managers, especially for new staff, and instructors receive formal feedback to celebrate areas of excellent practice and to highlight and support areas for further development. A very comprehensive and systematic process of performance management and recognition is in place, which ensures the very high standards of education and care are maintained.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.7 Quality assurance arrangements are excellent. Leaders and managers set high expectations for the standard of provision and implement a range of rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure these standards are maintained. Course achievement data and student feedback are frequently collected and analysed to inform a process of ongoing and thorough self-evaluation and action planning. Managers use feedback systematically to identify and prioritise actions for improvement, making changes and enhancements where required.
- 5.8 A student representative is in place acting as a useful additional point of contact between students and managers, to collect feedback and make suggestions based on the views of the student body. Students' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, and the views of students taken from meetings, indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education.
- 5.9 An appropriate complaints policy providing clear procedures ensures that any formal complaints are accurately recorded, investigated, and responded to. The procedure is effectively communicated to students during orientation and through course literature and the website, as confirmed by students interviewed during the inspection.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.10 Arrangements to recruit staff and check their suitability are excellent. A very clear and systematic process of staff recruitment and selection is in place. An external provider completes comprehensive and robust checks on staff suitability and their right to work, including validation of their identification, qualifications, and the accuracy of information provided on application. Police background checks, and confirmation of previous employment details are also undertaken before staff are formally appointed.
- 5.11 A detailed record of all staff recruitment checks and processes are systematically maintained. The campus director, and HR managers, make excellent use of a secure online management system to share key personnel information and monitor the accuracy of detailed staff files. Policies and procedures for staff recruitment are clear and comprehensive.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.12 The provision of information is excellent. The clear and professional college website provides detailed and accurate information, which is helpful to students and prospective students, including campus facilities, course schedules, tuition details and fees.
- 5.13 The college made available to inspectors a broad range of well organised and accessible information.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the college should:

- Ensure students have greater access to the specialist library resources to support their research and independent study.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and attended registration sessions. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mr Steve Ingle	Lead Inspector
Mr Saul Hyman	Team Inspector