

Certification Inspection Report

BRITISH COLUMBIA PROGRAM

at

GRAND CANADIAN ACADEMY (JIAXING)

TONGXIANG, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

NOVEMBER 17-18, 2020

INTRODUCTION

On November 17-18, 2020, an online certification inspection was completed on Grand Canadian Academy (Jiaxing) (GCA) in Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province, People's Republic of China, referred to as the School in this report. The purpose of this inspection was to determine whether the requirements for the British Columbia (BC) education program have been met, according to the *BC Global Education Program – Offshore Schools Certification Agreement*. The inspector, appointed by the Executive Director of Independent Schools and International Education, British Columbia Ministry of Education (MoE) in accordance with the *BC Global Education Program – Offshore Schools Certification Agreement* (the Agreement), consisted of Peter Drescher (the Inspector).

The School's BC program has an enrolment of 59 students, in grades 10, 11 and 12. The BC program is housed on two floors within Mao Dun High School, a twenty-year old Chinese public-school offering grades 10-12 to approximately 2800 students. Mao Dun High School is identified as an 'A level' school in Zhejiang Province. The campus is equipped with an observatory and is well endowed with sports and fine arts facilities, including a 1200seat theatre.

During their virtual visit to the School, the Inspector reviewed all standards required in the *BC Global Education Program – Offshore Schools Certification Agreement* and *Operating Manual* and met with the School's Owner/Operator, Offshore School Representative (OSR), BC principal, BC teachers, the International Director, a group of grade 12 students and the principal of Mao Dun High School.

The Owner/Operator, Grand Canadian Academy (Asia) Ltd, is responsible for the BC program.



They are headquartered in Hong Kong and maintain an office in Greater Vancouver. They assist the School in maintaining its website and in procuring resources.

The BC program's mission is *to offer first-rate educational options to Chinese high school students in order to help them prepare successfully to gain acceptance to and complete a post-secondary education.*

The School has had its challenges finding its way back to some degree of normalcy as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The Principal had not been at the School since January and had just arrived in late October following receipt of the appropriate visa and serving the necessary quarantine period. He had been administering the School and teaching full time virtually since the beginning of the school year. One BC-certified teacher has been on campus since the start of the year.

The Inspector would like to thank Grand Canadian Academy (Jiaxing) for its cooperation and preparedness for this virtual inspection.

The School has satisfactorily addressed requirements contained in the previous inspection report.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Not Met	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
<p>Comment:</p> <p>There were no requirements contained in the previous inspection report.</p> <p>There were a number of suggestions contained in the previous report. Challenges surrounding provision of an educational program during the pandemic and the Principal having to administer the School from February through October made it difficult to consider or address those suggestions. As a result, some have reappeared in this year's inspection report.</p>			

BUSINESS PLAN 1.0

The Owner/Operator has submitted a business plan to the BC Ministry of Education, confirming the sustainability of the program.		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Not Met
<p>Comment:</p> <p>The Inspector reviewed the business plan filed by the Owner/Operator. The Inspector noted the intake of thirteen grade 10 students into the BC program for 2019/20, which is a 50% decrease from the previous year. The steady enrolment decline from a high of 104 students</p>		



in 2016/17 to 59 this year is concerning. The pandemic added to the many challenges faced by the School in recruiting students. There are many English language international schools competing for students in the same region. Economic conditions faced by families, foreign relations, and personal security in Western countries are also cited as emerging issues. The School would ultimately like to have 2-3 classes at each grade level, bringing it closer to its estimated capacity of about 220 students but anticipates that due to the factors cited above, growing the enrolment could be a challenge for the foreseeable future. The Owner/Operator has conservatively forecast enrolment growth to 100 students over the next five years.

The International Director and school Principal visit all local middle schools (18) in order to recruit students. The School is attempting to expand its marketing and recruitment efforts by becoming a more visible and known entity in the local community.

The Inspector reviewed the School's approaches to communicating with parents. A variety of communications take place, including telephone, email, in-person parent meetings and WeChat, Chinese homeroom teachers provide assistance in overcoming language barriers.

The Inspector reviewed the School's website and noted that various sections are in need of updating. The Inspector suggests that the Owner/Operator review the website form and content and determine if it provides maximum promotional value in order to attract new students and parents to the School.

Five of the School's 2020 graduating class are now enrolled in BC post-secondary institutions and one in Ontario. Eight are enrolled in the United Kingdom and three in Australia. Two are enrolled in China and one did not transition. There has been a trend toward increased post-secondary enrolment in the United Kingdom and Australia. Lower tuition costs, lower English language requirements, fewer years to degree completion and more favourable exchange rates were cited as factors in decision-making. The School has historically had a very high success rate in placing students in universities abroad as well as the students having a high success rate in completing their university degrees. The efforts of the International Director in placing students and tracking their progress over the years are particularly noteworthy.

The School has identified two goals for improving student achievement for this school year:

- 1) To increase students' English proficiency, focusing on speaking and vocabulary development of the graduate class. The goal is to increase by at least 1 point 80% of the graduate English proficiency level as measured by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scale.
- 2) To increase our positive connections with parents and wider local community. The goal is to increase the school's social exposure in its host city by doubling its current number of student-led community activities.



The IELTS scale referenced in goal #1 is a self-reported instrument that students pay for and undertake on their own out of school. It would be prudent for the School to establish its own internal benchmarks for tracking progress in developing English language proficiency. It is suggested that the annual goal setting or goal affirmation process include a data-based rationale for determining goals, identification of key measurable indicators of progress toward goal attainment as well as identifying desired results or preferred outcomes.

Commendation:

The School is commended for its high success rate in placing students in universities abroad as well as their high success rate in completing their university degrees. The efforts of the International Director in placing students and tracking their progress are particularly noteworthy.

INSPECTION CATALOGUE 2.0

2.02 The Owner/Operator meets all requirements as set forth in the BC Global Education Program Offshore Schools Certification Agreement (the Agreement).

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

The Owner/Operator, Grand Canadian Academy (Asia) Ltd meets all of the requirements specified in the BC Global Education Program Offshore Schools Agreement.

The Owner/Operator resides in the Greater Vancouver area. His company Grand Canadian Academy (Asia) Ltd, is responsible for the BC program. They are headquartered in Hong Kong and maintain an office in Greater Vancouver.

The Owner/Operator is in regular contact with the OSR and the Director of International Education and visits the school once or twice each year. He is very knowledgeable about the international school marketplace and heavily influences the School's marketing strategies.

2.03 The Owner/Operator has written approval from the appropriate government entity to operate the offshore school, as outlined in section 5.03 of the Agreement.

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

The Owner/Operator has written approval (administrative licence) to operate the BC program from the Zhejiang Provincial Education Department, expiring on December 31, 2023



and a business licence from the Zhejiang Municipal Education Bureau expiring on December 31, 2021.

The Team met with the principal of Mao Dun High School, who is new to the school this year. He declared his strong support for the program and his desire to do what he could to help it grow and flourish. It was apparent to the Team that the good working relationship the School has maintained with its host school over the years will continue.

Commendation:

The School is to be commended for developing and sustaining a positive and supportive working relationship with the administration of Mao Dun High School.

2.04-2.05 The School meets local building, safety and cafeteria codes and regulations. The facilities are deemed to be suitable to support the BC program.

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

As the BC program is housed within a larger school, Mao Dun High School has overall responsibility for the facilities. The Inspector reviewed the documents pertaining to municipal codes and safety requirements and found them to be in order. An evacuation plan is in place for the entire school, and emergency drills are conducted by the BC program three times per year. There is documentation which includes a protocol for unplanned temporary or permanent closure of the School which has been vetted by the OSR for accuracy and functionality. The School has a comprehensive GCA emergency response manual which supplements the Mao Dun High School Emergency Plan. The School has a pandemic response protocol which complements the Mao Dun plan which in turn was provided by municipal health authorities.

The campus facilities include conventional classrooms, laboratories, a large gymnasium, fine arts classrooms, a 1200-seat theatre, a second 200-seat theatre, playing fields and cafeteria, along with dormitory buildings, a campus store and a medical centre. The campus is also well endowed with ample green space and waterways.

The BC program occupies two floors and has its own library and computer lab. The BC program has access to shared space such as science labs, additional computer labs, and gymnasium with the host school. The Principal reports that the working relationship around the use of shared spaces is good.

The Inspector is satisfied that the facilities are in compliance and are suitable to support the BC program.



2.06 Offshore School Representative (OSR) - The Owner/Operator must appoint an individual to act as offshore school representative. This individual must be confirmed by the province and must meet all of the requirements set out in section 14 of the Agreement.

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

The Offshore School Representative, appointed by the Owner/Operator meets the suitability requirements for the position. This is his second year as the OSR, having previously served as the principal of the School for four years and vice principal for two. He has twenty-one years experience in education.

The OSR is in regular communication with the Principal and Owner/Operator, offering support as needed.

2.07 The Principal meets the requirements as outlined in section 2.07 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

The Principal is in his second year in this position having served as the vice principal at GCA for the previous four years. He has more than 30 years experience in education in British Columbia and internationally. He meets the requirements as outlined in section 2.06.

The Inspector reviewed the duties and responsibilities with the Principal. Although this is his second year at the School, the school lockdowns and border closures resulting from the pandemic have allowed him to be on campus for only 5 months since September of 2019. The Inspector found him to have an expressed desire to learn and a demonstrated commitment to exploring effective ways to improve student achievement. Due to the small size of the School, the Principal is also teaching full time, which provides a challenge for him to find time to attend to matters of school growth, change and improvement.

Commendation:

The Principal is commended for the long-term commitment he has given to the School, as a teacher, vice principal and now principal. His desire to learn and his demonstrated commitment to exploring effective ways to improve student achievement are also commendable.



2.08 The School meets the administrative support requirements as outlined in section 2.08 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The School meets the requirements for administrative support. An English-speaking Chinese administrative assistant has responsibility for maintaining student records, translation services, parent contact, Ministry data transfers and a range of other duties.

A school librarian provides student supervision, assisting students with book selection, cataloguing books, scheduling science labs, ordering learning resources and providing assistance to office staff when needed.

A team of Chinese homeroom teachers led by the International Director support English language acquisition and serve as liaisons with the BC program and parents. They played a key role in keeping classes functioning when they resumed following the pandemic lockdown last spring and continued to do so until all BC-certified staff returned to campus this fall.

An International Program Director acts as a liaison between the BC program and the main school, as well as playing a key role in marketing and recruitment. The Director also assists students in gaining admission to Canadian and other universities and arranges for universities to make campus presentations.

Instructional Technology support is provided by staff from the main school.

The Program is also supported by the Owner/Operator's office staff in Canada.

The School meets the requirements for internet connectivity as outlined in Section "F" of the certification agreement.

Commendation:

The Chinese support staff is to be commended for the high level of administrative support that is provided to professional staff and students. In particular, they are to be commended for providing some measure of stability during these challenging times caused by the pandemic.



2.09 The School meets the Student Record requirements as outlined in section 2.09 of the Inspection Catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Inspector reviewed a sampling of student records and determined that they met requirements.

The School implemented the TESS student information system just over a year ago. The full capacity and functionality of the system is still to be utilized, as PSR cards and student registrations are still completed by hand, and report cards appear to be generated by a separate system.

2.10-2.18 The School meets the teacher certification requirements as outlined in sections 2.10-2.18 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Inspector confirms that all authorized persons under the Agreement possess valid and current certification under the Ministry of Education. The Inspector verified that they also have the appropriate work visas.

At the time of the inspection there were only two BC-certified teachers, including the Principal on campus. A third, scheduled to start in the second semester had withdrawn. The OSR is attempting to recruit two teachers for the second semester, one to fill a vacancy and the other to relieve the Principal, who is currently teaching full time. Several challenges are cited in recruitment of teachers including but not limited to the location of the program, restrictions on the hiring of new teachers by the education authority, the political climate in China, the pandemic, and a teacher shortage in BC.

The Inspector verified that locally certified teachers of approved exempted courses have valid local certification and criminal records checks. Chinese support staff have criminal records checks.

Professional development during 2019/20 focussed on assessment strategies and the core competencies. This year staff continue to develop its teaching, assessment and reporting practices, and attend to the core competencies in each curriculum area.



Commendation

The Inspector commends staff for their dedication and commitment to helping all students experience success and preparing them for the next stage in their educational journey.

2.19 The School meets the requirements for curriculum implementation outlined in section 2.19 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

Implementation of the new curriculum is progressing but is not at the level that one could describe as “fully implemented”. There is evidence found in planning documents that the language of the new curriculum has been adopted (big ideas, curricular competencies, learning intentions) and there is evidence that the learning experiences that one would expect are an integral part of the new curriculum such as inquiry and project based learning, research and group assignments are being provided in some courses.

There was limited evidence of the core competencies being incorporated as an intentional and ongoing part of the student’s educational program. There was also limited evidence of BC First Peoples Principles of Learning being intentionally included in the educational program.

Assuming that enrolment will begin to grow in the coming years, and given the reality of staff turnover experienced by all offshore schools, it is important to identify ways to ensure that momentum and continuity of curriculum implementation can carry on in subsequent years, even with the arrival of new staff.

2.20 The School meets the requirements for English language assessment and acquisition as outlined in section 2.20 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Principal provides oversight of an English language assessment to all candidates for admission to the program and has final approval. The assessment includes listening, grammar, reading comprehension and writing components as well as an interview. For this year, the pandemic limited the School’s access to potential grade 10 students, resulting in admission being based on an oral interview only. Students whose English language proficiency may be a significant challenge in navigating the BC curriculum are receiving substantial support.



Grade 10 and 11 students are scheduled with eight English Languages Arts credits each year. The English-speaking Chinese homeroom teachers support English language acquisition by running an IELTS listening and responding activity for 20 minutes each morning and work with students on vocabulary improvement. Chinese teachers provide additional ESL instruction outside of school hours throughout the year. Additional English language development activities include but are not limited to an annual Spelling Bee competition, grade and school-wide speech competitions, a school-wide student-initiated speak English-only program, and various sports/cultural clubs as well as several student-council sponsored Canadian cultural events where English is the language of instruction and conversation.

Commendation:

The Inspector commends the School for its multi-faceted approach to English language acquisition and for fully engaging the support of the Chinese homeroom teachers in that effort.

2.21(a-e) The School meets the course credit requirements (equivalency, challenge, exemptions and BAA courses) as outlined in section 2.21 (a-e) of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

Two Ministry approved BAA courses are offered – Chinese Culture and Geography 10 and Chinese History 11. They are taught by locally certified teachers. Mandarin 10, 11 and 12 are offered and taught by locally certified teachers. Planning documents in English for all five courses were made available to the Inspector.

2.21(f-g) The School meets the course overview/course planning requirements as outlined in Schedule B Part I, 2. (e) of the Agreement; namely, that all BC program courses offered in the School meet or exceed the ministry learning outcomes/learning standards identified in the educational program guides for each course.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Inspector reviewed course planning documents and interviewed teachers. The School partially meets the course overview and planning requirements. BC's curriculum framework is addressed in course overviews which include big ideas, curricular competencies teaching strategies, assessment methods, and learning activities. The unit plans reviewed included curricular competencies, learning activities and forms of assessment. References to the core competencies were not readily apparent. Although it appears that the core competencies



are being addressed implicitly through a variety of learning activities, more explicit teaching of the core competencies should take place. Planning documents should reflect the explicit ways in which the core competencies are addressed.

2.22 The School meets the instructional time allotment requirements as outlined in section 4.5 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools, including the requirements set out in sections 1.1 to 6, with the exception of s. 4(5)(b), 4 (6), 5 (8)(a) and (d) and s. 5.3 of Ministerial Order 41/91, the Educational Standards Order, enacted under the Independent School Act.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

At 181 days and 1206 hours the School exceeds the minimum required number of 850 instructional hours in the school year.

2.23 The School meets the assessment methods requirements as outlined in section 2.23 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

Staff use a variety of assessments as student demonstrate their learning in different ways. That said, the Inspector found that in several courses, assessments used to determine letter grades and percentages were heavily skewed toward quizzes, tests, and examinations. The development and use of rubrics appeared to be limited. The extent of involvement of students in developing rubrics and engaging in self-assessment appears to be in its formative stages. It is suggested that a set of “exemplars” of student work be collected that can be used to help future teachers that come to the School.

There were no results available for 2019/20 literacy and numeracy assessments The results reported from the previous years’ numeracy assessments (2017/18 and 2018/19) has prompted this Inspector to emphasize that given the language intensive nature of the numeracy assessment, low language proficiency would factor significantly in producing low results. The structure of both the literacy and numeracy assessments is designed to assess those skills as they are applied to a variety of cross-curricular competencies. It would be in the students’ best interests to ensure that both applied numeracy and literacy skills receive attention in all curriculum areas. They are not intended to fall under the sole domain of Mathematics and English teachers.



With the end of formal English 12 exams and the informative but infrequent and time-delayed results of BC literacy and numeracy assessments, the School is encouraged to identify one or two key performance indicators of student achievement to track progress over time and inform instruction. Progress in English language skills acquisition would be one obvious area to consider.

2.24 The School meets the learning resources requirements as outlined in section 2.24 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement
Met

Requirement
Partially Met

Requirement
Not Met

Comment:

The School is well supplied with textbooks and other print resources and a regular budget ensures that annual needs are met.

The library has a collection of more than 3300 non-fiction and levelled fiction titles as well as newspapers and magazines. Five new computer workstations and a printer were added to the library this year. A librarian manages the collection and provides other support services such as textbook management, photocopying and scheduling science labs. The library is well positioned to support students with research assignments and project-based learning.

The School has access to science labs housed in the Mao Dun main campus. Teaching loads and the current timetable configuration make regular use of these labs by the BC program impractical. The teacher has improvised by doing virtual labs or experiments in a regular classroom with non-hazardous materials.

The School has a dedicated computer lab with 30 stations and has access to two 50 station labs in the same building. One third of the stations in the dedicated lab were replaced last year. Each classroom is Wi-Fi enabled and has one computer that teachers have access to. Student use of laptops and personal devices in classrooms is limited. This is unusual for schools offering a BC curriculum focused on inquiry-based and project-based learning. Convenient and reliable access to technology is of paramount importance in effectively delivering the curriculum.



2.25 The School meets the student progress report requirements as outlined in section 2.25 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The School meets requirements. Students and parents receive an interim report, and two formal report cards each semester. Parent/student/teacher conferences are held following the first formal report card. Chinese homeroom teachers are the main point of contact with parents where there are issues pertaining to student progress, utilizing email, WeChat, and text messages to keep parents informed.

The following comment is an excerpt from the previous inspection report:

A sampling of report card comments was reviewed, and the Team found the information provided to be minimal. The value of formal student reporting could be further enhanced by providing anecdotal comments that are more meaningful, more prescriptive, and have more specificity in terms of what a student is able to do and in what areas they need to improve.

The School had intended to address this issue last year, but the pandemic had derailed plans to do so. The School intends to pilot a new report card format in April of 2021 (the first formal report of semester 2).

2.26 The School meets the parent/student handbook requirements as outlined in section 2.26 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The Inspector confirmed that the parent/student handbook meets the requirements as outlined in the Inspection Catalogue. The handbook is also updated annually and has been translated into Mandarin for the benefit of parents.

2.27 The School meets the teacher handbook requirements as outlined in section 2.27 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

Requirement Met

Requirement Partially Met

Requirement Not Met

Comment:

The teacher handbook has been updated for the 2020/21 school year and the Inspector confirms that it meets requirements.



Policies for the evaluation of teachers and administrators are in place. Criteria for teacher evaluation are provided in the form of a checklist, with room for appropriate commentary.

2.28 The School meets the distributed learning requirements as outlined in section 18 of the Agreement and section 2.28 of the inspection catalogue for offshore schools.

<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Requirement Not Met	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
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Comment:

No distributed learning courses are being offered at this time.

CONCLUSION

Commendations

The Inspection Team wishes to recognize the Owner/Operator, Principal, staff and Offshore School Representative of Grand Canadian Academy (Jiaxing) for:

- the School's high success rate in placing students in universities abroad as well as the students' high success rate in completing their university degrees. The efforts of the International Director in placing students and tracking their post-secondary progress are particularly noteworthy.
- developing and sustaining a positive and supportive working relationship with the administration of Mao Dun High School.
- the long-term commitment the Principal has given to the School, as a teacher, vice principal and now principal. His desire to learn and his demonstrated commitment to exploring effective ways to improve student achievement is also commendable.
- the high level of administrative support that is provided by the Chinese support staff to BC teachers and students. They are to be commended in particular for providing some measure of stability during these challenging times created by the pandemic.
- the dedication and commitment of the teaching staff to helping all students experience success and preparing them for the next stage in their educational journey.
- the School's multi-faceted approach to English language acquisition and for fully engaging the support of the Chinese homeroom teachers in that effort.



SUMMATIVE RECOMMENDATION

The Offshore Inspection Team recommends to the Executive Director of Independent Schools and International Education that the British Columbia education program offered at Grand Canadian Academy (Jiaxing) continues to be recognized as a British Columbia-certified school.

