

Lutz Reide LL.M. '04

By Milton Kiang

A cross-border education



The UBC LL.M. program offers foreign law students a great way to experience Canadian academic life – while improving their market-ability in the legal job market

When Lutz Reide (LL.M. '04) first visited Vancouver to study English in 2000, he was so drawn to the city's West Coast lifestyle that he knew he'd return one day. Three years later, after earning his law diploma at Vienna University, the German native found himself back in Vancouver.

Although Reide wanted to jump right into private practice, he also wanted to bolster his academic credentials. "I always wanted to go into private practice eventually, but I also wanted to achieve a certain level of academic expertise," says Reide.

"In Austria it's quite common for practicing lawyers to have a masters and/or a doctorate degree. The competition almost makes it a must-have."

Reide says that Austrian employers value candidates who have an international law degree, since it shows that they have exposure to foreign legal systems, and – assuming they've studied in a common law jurisdiction – demonstrates their proficiency in English.

When Reide landed in Vancouver to start his LL.M. degree, his immediate challenge was to bring his English language skills up to a higher level. For those of us who have a second language, reading a magazine or having a casual conversation in that language is one thing; being able to comprehend complex legal texts, written in technical, legal language, is a different matter.

Reide had to familiarize himself with English legal terms but he quickly adapted. He was zealous in his approach to bring his English to a higher standard: "I made it my personal dogma to speak English only," says Reide. "I read only English newspapers. I tried not to consume German or Austrian media, and the only time I spoke German was on the phone with my parents."

While completing his LL.M. degree, Reide lived at Green College, located at the north end of the UBC campus next to Cecil Green Park House. Residing at the college was an important part of his academic experience at UBC Law. There, he got to meet students from all over the world, as well as Canadian students. "It was great to study there, great to live there, to hang out with these people and to learn more about so many things, culturally. I am still in touch with many of my fellow 'Greenies' and my memories of this place still make me happy," says Reide.

During the LL.M. program, Reide took courses on cyber law, EU law, and legal theory. He found the classes informal, yet challenging. "I had the impression that the teachers were genuinely interested in what the students had to say and it was deemed an important part

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for the students to develop their own points of view in the course of the program," says Reide.

When asked what he liked most about his UBC Law experience, Reide said that it was the academic freedom and the inspirational atmosphere of the graduate program. "From the start, we always had a sense that the teachers fully supported our ideas, even if they were still incoherent or incomplete. The small LL.M. group was also a great bunch of diverse characters."

When Reide completed his LL.M., he returned to Vienna for more education. In two years, the ambitious student completed a doctorate degree and a masters degree, both in law, at Vienna University. Reide did this while working 20 hours a week as a legal researcher at the university.

Reide now works as an intellectual property lawyer at international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, where he helps clients with software licensing, unfair competition litigation, and trademark disputes.

Looking back at his days at UBC, Reide says the experience helped him develop an international perspective in the practice of law.

"I work in an international firm and approximately fifty per cent of my assignments have some kind of cross-border aspect," says the 34-year-old IP law practitioner.

"Even if you have a vague idea about the differences in the legal systems, it helps to have this kind of understanding. I think it helps you identify the key issues and reassures the client he is in good hands, even where different jurisdictions are touched upon."

With more and more companies engaged in cross-border trade, it seems clear that lawyers with international working or academic experience will be valued by employers – be they Austrian or Canadian.

It's certainly true in Dr. Lutz Reide's case. ●