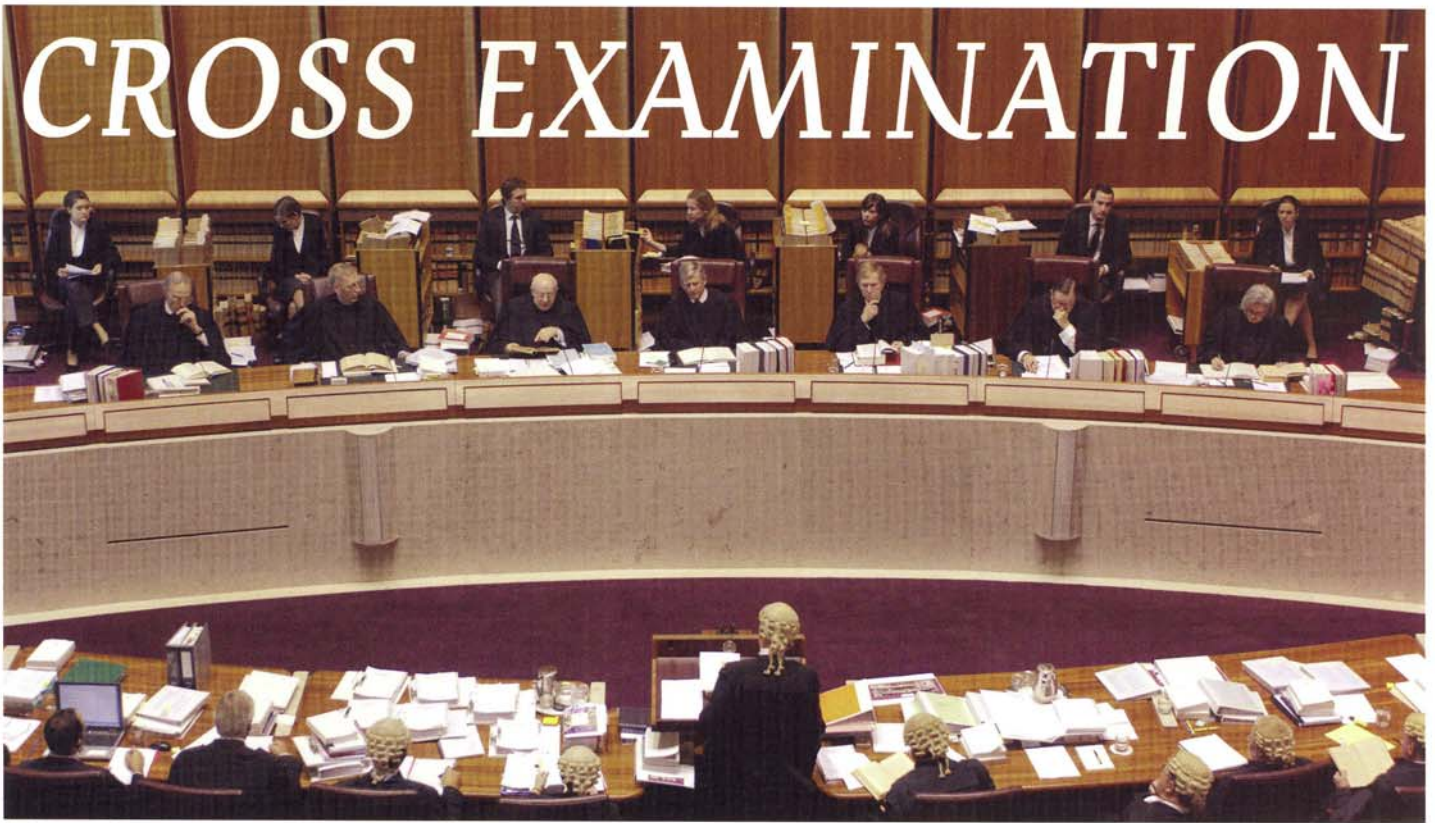


CROSS EXAMINATION



Alexandra Meagher speaks with Dr. Ben Saul, Director of the Sydney Centre for International and Global Law, about the thrills – and spills – of life as an international lawyer.

What would you advise students wanting a career in international law?

A Masters degree from a reputable university makes you more competitive and is essential at the international level, as is demonstrated experience, such as through internships and voluntary work, whether in Australia or abroad. Those experiences can also sometimes lead to offers of employment. In Australia, there are excellent opportunities in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the federal Attorney-General's Department and AusAID. Internationally there is a wide range of NGO positions which can lead into specialised international organisations and UN bodies. Commercial arbitration at major international law firms is another common route, as is practising at the bar (particularly in the UK or US). Of course, academia is the best of all worlds: researching cutting edge issues and influencing policy; advising on cases; consulting to governments; teaching fiendishly clever students; law reform; and so on.

What's your worst conference speaking experience?

Nothing unspeakable, but some forgettable performances: stepping off the plane after a 24 hour flight to Vienna and immediately giving a jet-lagged seminar to a room of Austrian foreign ministry experts; at a conference at the Sorbonne, being on a panel of six speakers before an audience of three; in Delhi, being designated as the 'representative of Australia' and having to give an impromptu speech to

300 people on Indo-Australian friendship; and in Berlin, accusing UN Ambassadors from many European countries of misusing international law to oppress legitimate political resistance.

What's the funniest thing you've seen in an exam script?

Marking exams is never funny. Painful is a better description.

Finish these sentences:

I wish I had more... frequent flyer points and business class air tickets.

If I were king of the world for one day I'd... abdicate and declare a republic.

At University I wish I'd studied... at all in my year editing *Honi Soit*.

If I wrote an autobiography it would be called... The Life of an International Lawyer Who Was Really A Repressed Poet And Who Wrote Bad Poetry While Marking Exams.

When I was growing up I wanted to be... a citizen of the Soviet Union. At eight years old I wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Canberra offering myself to them, but they said no. Perhaps they suspected I'd become a dissident, but more likely I was already considered capitalist scum. But they did kindly send me a huge poster charting the political organs of the Soviet Union. I still have it. The British Embassy sent me

nothing.

It's not fashionable but... I like wearing corduroy, and brown suits, and preferably both.

I probably shouldn't but I always laugh when... I see 'poll' and 'Brendan Nelson' in the same sentence. Also when I read Umberto Eco's latest confection: this month, his suggestion that the relationship between lecturer and student is intellectually 'erotic'. Perhaps universities in Italy are different. Here the by-laws wouldn't allow it. And there is also the small problem of professional ethics...

Alexandra Meagher is in her fifth year of a combined degree in Arts and Law, majoring in French.

