

Lecture VII

The Structure of the Judicial System in Britain

As an essential pillar of the country's legal framework, the British judicial system plays a crucial role in upholding justice and the rule of law. Understanding the structure and hierarchy of the British judiciary is vital in comprehending how legal decisions are made and justice is served.

1. The Three Tiers of the British Judicial System:

a) The Supreme Court: At the apex of the British judicial system is the Supreme Court, established in 2009. It replaced the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords as the highest court in the land. The Supreme Court consists of twelve judges, known as Justices, who are appointed by an independent selection commission. This court primarily hears cases of national significance, constitutional matters, and appeals from lower courts.

b) Court of Appeal: Below the Supreme Court is the Court of Appeal, which primarily handles appeals from lower courts. It consists of two divisions: the Civil Division and the Criminal Division. The Court of Appeal is presided over by Lord Justices of Appeal, who are high-ranking judges appointed based on their expertise and experience. This court has the power to interpret the law and establish legal precedents.

c) High Court: The High Court is the third tier of the British judicial system. It handles a wide range of cases, including civil, criminal, and administrative matters. The High Court is divided into three divisions: the Queen's Bench Division, the Chancery Division, and the Family Division. Each division deals with specific areas of the law and is presided over by High Court judges.

2. Lower Courts:

Below the three tiers of the British judicial system are the lower courts, which handle less complex cases. These include:

a) Crown Court: The Crown Court deals with serious criminal cases, such as murder, robbery, and sexual offenses. It is presided over by a judge and a jury.

b) County Court: County Courts handle civil cases, including contract disputes, landlord-tenant disputes, and personal injury claims. They are presided over by circuit judges or district judges.

c) Magistrates' Courts: Magistrates' Courts are the lowest level of courts in the British judicial system. They handle minor criminal offenses, preliminary hearings for more serious cases, and some civil matters. Cases in Magistrates' Courts are usually presided over by a bench of lay magistrates or a District Judge.

3. Judicial Appointments:

The judges in the British judicial system are appointed based on their qualifications, experience, and expertise. Judicial appointments are made through an independent selection process, which ensures that judges are chosen based on merit and impartiality.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the structure of the British judicial system is designed to ensure the fair and effective administration of justice. The Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and High Court form the core of the system, handling cases of varying significance and complexity. The lower courts provide access to justice for less complex matters. independent judiciary in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding justice in the United Kingdom.