

## PRIVY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

**The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council** originated as the highest court of civil and criminal appeal for the British Empire. It now fulfils the same purpose for many current and former Commonwealth countries that have chosen to retain it, as well as the United Kingdom's overseas territories, crown dependencies, and military sovereign base areas. The Judicial Committee also hears very occasional appeals from a number of ancient and ecclesiastical courts. These include the Church Commissioners, the Arches Court of Canterbury, the Chancery Court of York, prize courts and the Court of Admiralty of the Cinque Ports.

Five judges normally sit to hear Commonwealth appeals, and three for other matters. These judges are usually Justices of The Supreme Court, with which the JCPC shares a building, and many administrative functions.

**The Committee for the Affairs of Jersey and Guernsey** is the body which recommends approval of Channel Islands legislation. The Committee comprises, the Secretary of State for Justice, the Minister of State with policy responsibility for Channel Island matters at the Ministry of Justice and the President of the Council. Business is normally conducted in correspondence.

**The Scottish Universities Committee** regularly considers proposed amendments to the statutes of the four ancient Scottish universities. Its members are specified in the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889. The quorum is three and in practice consists of the First Minister for Scotland, the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Advocate. Business is conducted in correspondence.

The **Committee for the purposes of the Crown Office Act 1877** comprises the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Privy Seal and a Secretary of State. It is concerned with the design of wafer seals and their use. It last met in 1988.

The **Universities Committee**, which considers Petitions against statutes made by Oxford and Cambridge Universities and their colleges, was last activated in 1995. Its members are prescribed in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge Act 1877. The quorum is three, one of whom must be the Lord Chancellor or a member of the Judicial Committee.

The **Baronetage Committee** was established by Order in Council in 1910 to examine doubtful claims to be placed on the Roll of Baronets. There are several ex-officio members, including the President of the Council and the Home Secretary, plus members appointed in their own right. The Committee has not met since 1927.

In addition to the standing committees, ad hoc Committees are notionally set up to consider and report on Petitions for Royal Charters of Incorporation and also to approve changes to the Bye-laws of Chartered bodies. The normal quorum is two save when, in the case of statutory bodies, the relevant

legislation prescribes a quorum of three. This business is normally conducted in correspondence.

Finally, Committees of Privy Counsellors are occasionally established to examine specific issues. These Committees are entirely independent of the Privy Council Office and do not report to the Lord President. Examples include the Butler Committee (operation of the intelligence services in the run-up to military intervention in Iraq), the Chilcot Committee (use of intercept materials) and a committee of inquiry established in 2010 to consider whether British Intelligence Officers were complicit in torture of detainees. These ad hoc committees comprise members of the Privy Council as this permits them to be briefed on 'Privy Council Terms'; a recognised convention that allows parties to be briefed on confidential terms, on the understanding the information will remain confidential.