

## IRELAND

The **adversarial** system operates in the Irish judicial system. Ireland has a **jury** system, except for 'terrorist'-type offences.

In criminal cases, the **District Court** deals with minor offences and sits without a jury. The **Circuit Court** deals with more serious offences and sits with judge and jury. It also has appellate jurisdiction from the District Court summary cases, while the **Central Criminal Court** deals with more serious crimes like rape and murder, and sits with judge and jury.

The **Special Criminal Court** deals with terrorism and offences against the State. The **Court of Criminal Appeal** hears appeals from the Criminal Court. The **Supreme Court** is the court of final appeal for both criminal and civil cases.

There is, at present, a serious backlog in the Central Criminal Court, with cases taking up to three years to be heard. To date, the Central Criminal Court has never sat outside term time except for urgent sessions.

There are **four law terms**: Michaelmas begins on the first Monday in October and is followed by a **Christmas vacation** of approximately three weeks in duration. This is followed by a further three law terms, which conclude at the end of July. There is a **vacation of about two weeks at Easter** and of **another ten days at Whitsun**, and the **long vacation** occupies the whole of August and September.

This year, exceptionally, the Central Criminal Court was in session during the month of September in an attempt to clear some of the **backlog**.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Director of Public Prosecutions, Dublin.