



Mr Thomas Barge: Professional conduct panel outcome

**Panel decision and reasons on behalf of the
Secretary of State for Education**

September 2026

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Professional conduct panel decision and recommendations, and decision on behalf of the Secretary of State

Teacher: Mr Thomas Barge

Teacher ref number: 0547241

Teacher date of birth: 10 October 1982

TRA reference: 22436

Date of determination: 24 September 2026

Former employer: Ark Charter Academy, Portsmouth

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 14 to 24 September 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Thomas Barge.

The panel members were Mr Terry Hyde (former teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Debra Vaughan (lay panellist) and Miss Louisa Munton (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr James Corrish of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges, Consultant, Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Thomas Barge was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public virtually and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of hearing dated 5 February 2026.

It was alleged that Mr Barge was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst working as the Head of PE at Ark Charter:

1. In or around May 2023, in respect of the OCR Cambridge Nationals Sports Studies Non-Exam Assessment ("the NEA"), he changed the work of one or more pupils and/or used the work of one or more pupils to improve the work of other pupils, so that it purported to be their work when this was not the case;
2. On or around 17 May 2023, in relation to the NEA, he submitted work to the exam board within the moderation sample for approximately 10 pieces of work which purported to be pupils' work, when he knew this was not the case.
3. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, he asked Colleague A to create pupils' work to be included in the moderation sample and/or said "we will find some work" or words to that effect;
4. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, he asked one or more pupil(s) to sign declarations before moderation when their work was not present and/or the pupils did not see the work they were signing the declarations in relation to.
5. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, he altered grades on the tracker spreadsheet and/or noted that grades on the tracker spreadsheet had been altered and/or made up marks which was not based on the work of one or more pupils;
6. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, he did not follow OCR/JCQ protocol in relation to submitting missing work for students;
7. His conduct at paragraph(s) 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 and/or 4 and/or 5 and/or 6:
 - a. was dishonest; and/or
 - b. lacked integrity

Mr Barge admitted the facts of allegations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7(a) and 7(b), as set out in his response to the notice of hearing dated 3 March 2026 and in his more recent written responses to the allegations. He further admitted that his conduct amounted to

unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel nevertheless proceeded to fully consider the evidence before it.

Summary of evidence

Documents

In advance of the hearing, the panel received a bundle of documents which included:

Section 1: Chronology, list of key people and anonymised person list – pages 9 to 11

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 12 to 40

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 41 to 78

Section 4A: TRA documents – Colleague A – pages 79 to 344

Section 4B: TRA documents – Thomas Barge – pages 345 to 736

Section 5: Teachers' responses – pages 737 to 840

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing.

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2020, (the "Procedures").

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witnesses called by the presenting officer:

Witness A – [REDACTED] at Ark Charter ("the School"); and

Witness B – [REDACTED];

Witness C – [REDACTED] at the School;

Witness D – [REDACTED] at the School;

Witness E – [REDACTED] at the School.

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witnesses:

Witness F – [REDACTED]

Witness G – [REDACTED]

Witness H – [REDACTED] of Colleague A at the School

Witness I – [REDACTED] for whom Colleague A had been [REDACTED]

Witness J – [REDACTED] former colleague of Colleague A in [REDACTED]

Witness K – [REDACTED] for whom Colleague A had been [REDACTED]

The panel also heard evidence from [REDACTED] (Colleague A).

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered the case before it and reached a decision.

Mr Barge commenced employment as Head of PE at the School on 6 April 2022.

On 11 May 2023 scores for coursework for the OCR Cambridge Nationals Sports Studies Non-Exam Assessment (the “NEA”), specifically modules RO43 and RO46, were submitted to the OCR, the examinations body, by the School.

The OCR then proceeded to request a moderation sample of work and this was subsequently submitted. At or around this time concerns were raised internally at the School regarding coursework assessment practices within the PE department.

It was alleged that Mr Barge included 10 pieces of work within the moderation sample that were not the work of the named candidates whose work was requested.

It was further alleged that Mr Barge had asked a member of the PE department; Colleague A, to create work for pupils in the moderation sample where their work had been identified as missing and that he had instructed the team that other students’ work could be used as the work of the pupils whose work had been requested.

On 16 May 2023, 3 members of the PE team met with the School’s Head of Centre to raise concerns around alleged exam malpractice within the PE department.

The school conducted an investigation into Mr Barge’s conduct, and a disciplinary hearing was held on 22 June 2023.

On 25 August 2023 the matter was referred to TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel noted that it had before it detailed submissions from Mr Barge, of around 6 August 2026, provided in response to the notice of hearing. The panel noted that the content of these documents was hearsay. On balance the panel concluded that it was in the interests of justice, in Mr Barge's interests and the public interest that these documents be admitted, especially in the absence of Mr Barge. The panel determined to place significant weight on those documents as setting out Mr Barge's response to the allegations. The panel though did not place as much weight on these documents as it placed on the evidence of the witnesses who attended the hearing and provided live evidence.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you proved, for these reasons:

- 1. In or around May 2023, in respect of the OCR Cambridge Nationals Sports Studies Non-Exam Assessment ("the NEA"), you changed the work of one or more pupils and/or used the work of one or more pupils to improve the work of other pupils, so that it purported to be their work when this was not the case.**

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 1. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

For the purposes of its consideration of the allegations generally the panel noted that Mr Barge, the Head of PE, had signed a declaration confirming his understanding of the JCQ and exam board requirements and acknowledging that he was responsible for ensuring compliance. Mr Barge had also completed OCR training and held an OCR NEA guidance training certificate.

The panel noted that, within a statement of agreed facts signed by Mr Barge on 21 August 2024 (the "Statement of Agreed Facts") Mr Barge specifically admitted to the following:

- Amending or substituting Pupil P's work for moderation under Pupil A's name;
- Amending or substituting Pupil S's work for moderation under Pupil A's name;
- Amending or substituting Pupil U's work for moderation under Pupil B's name;
- Amending or substituting Pupil AG's work for moderation under Pupil C's name;
- Amending or substituting Pupil D's work for moderation under Pupil E's name;

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness E dated 26 July 2024. Witness E stated that Mr Barge had told him that the staff could use other pupil's work to fill in any gaps in the coursework moderation, provided it was of a similar standard. Witness E stated that Mr Barge had asked him to find NEA coursework for a particular pupil who was part of the OCR moderation sample. Witness E provided that with this instruction having come from a senior, more experienced, colleague, he did not think to question it.

The panel considered the data and documentation gathered as a result of the School's investigation. It noted that the investigation had sought to analyse the coursework initially held by the School on SharePoint (for uploading by the School to the OCR) against copies of the work completed by the individual pupils which had, at the Head of Centre's request, been sent to her directly for these purposes.

The panel noted that there were substantial differences between the work submitted to OCR and the work submitted directly to the Head of Centre.

The panel also noted that the examples of work submitted for moderation appeared to have been authored by different pupils and noted apparent instances of that work being modified by Mr Barge.

The panel noted screenshots from the School's Share Point site which appeared to show that work authored by Pupil P was in the folder of Pupil A and that Mr Barge had modified the document. The panel considered a further screenshot which appeared to show that Mr Barge had modified work in Pupil C's name and that work, authored by Pupil AG, had been included with Pupil C's work.

The panel noted the contents of an investigatory meeting of 18 May 2023 with Mr Barge. Within this meeting Mr Barge confirmed that his role within the NEA process was to lead that process and deal with the delivery and marking of the assessments. He confirmed he completed the training on 19 October. In this meeting Mr Barge was recorded as saying that it was acceptable to submit one student's work as another student's work in "special circumstances".

The panel noted a statement apparently signed by Pupil AB dated 12 June 2023 in which Pupil AB wrote "[Colleague A] is the teacher of my class. Mr Barge came into our lesson on Friday [...] when our coursework was due [...] it might have been 12 May. Mr Barge said to [Colleague A] that anyone's work that wasn't being sent off for moderation and was finished could be sent to someone who was being moderated so that they could include it as their work". The panel noted that Colleague A's evidence was broadly consistent with the statement of Pupil AB.

The panel considered Mr Barge's written response to the allegations dated 7 August 2026. Within this response Mr Barge accepted that he had used coursework for the NEA belonging to certain pupils, to complete or improve material presented as the work of

other pupils. Mr Barge admitted that at the time the course was substantially behind schedule, some pupils' work had not been submitted or could not be accessed and the moderation deadline was imminent. Mr Barge indicated that his first action had been to chase and try to locate the pupils' own work. However, when some work remained unavailable, he made the decision to substitute work belonging to other pupils.

Mr Barge submitted that the Task 2 work provided by Witness E was from the wrong unit therefore, Mr Barge stated, he had used Task 2 work belonging to other students to complete the material presented for Witness E's sample. Mr Barge admitted to having edited some of this coursework to enable it to meet necessary grading criteria. Mr Barge submitted that Colleague A notified him that a grade submitted for one student was too high, therefore Mr Barge stated that he substituted in its place the work of another student who had not been selected in the sample. Mr Barge stated that the same student's work was then used to fill other gaps where the selected students' work had not been submitted.

The panel reviewed Mr Barge's admissions alongside the evidence before it, including the screenshots of candidate work, candidate submissions, Share Point activity records, and the witness evidence of Mr Barge, Colleague A and Witness E. The panel noted that the evidence provided to them was consistent with Mr Barge's admissions.

The panel was satisfied that it was evidenced to the standard of the balance of probabilities that in or around May 2023, in respect of the NEA, Mr Barge had changed the work of one or more pupils and/or used the work of one or more pupils to improve the work of other pupils, so that it purported to be their work when this was not the case.

The panel therefore found allegation 1 proved.

2. On or around 17 May 2023, in relation to the NEA, you submitted work to the exam board within the moderation sample for approximately 10 pieces of work which purported to be pupils' work, when you knew this was not the case.

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 2. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

The panel noted that within the Statement of Agreed Facts Mr Barge had admitted that on or around 17 May 2023 he submitted work to the exam board within the moderation sample for 10 pieces of pupil work purporting this to be their work when he knew that this was not the case. Also, within the Statement of Agreed Facts Mr Barge agreed that on or around 15 May 2023 he told Witness D that he had found 10 pieces of pupils' coursework for use within the moderation sample.

The panel again noted on the face of the documents considered as part of the School's investigation that some coursework submitted for moderation had been authored by

pupils other than those in whose names it was submitted, and that some pieces of work had been modified by Mr Barge prior to submission for moderation.

The panel noted, in particular, evidence that work attributed to Pupil A had been drafted by Pupil P and work attributed to Pupil B had been modified by Mr Barge. The panel noted that there were a significant number of examples of this amongst the work produced.

The panel considered the minutes of an investigation meeting with Mr Barge of 18 May 2023. The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted in that meeting that 10 pieces of student work for 10 different students had been completely changed so that it led to it matching the grade that was submitted. Mr Barge also appeared to have confirmed then that he had included the coursework of Pupil D in the moderation sample under the name of Pupil E.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness D. Witness D stated that on 15 May 2023 Mr Barge mentioned that he could not find copies of the work that needed to be moderated. Witness D submitted that, the next day, Mr Barge told him he had found 10 pieces of work overnight. Witness D reported having found Mr Barge's jovial manner when communicating this to be unusual, as misplacing work would not be something that teachers normally joked about.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness E who stated that he recalled Mr Barge asking him to find NEA coursework for a particular pupil as part of an OCR moderation sample and telling him that they could use another pupil's work to fill in any gaps in the coursework moderation provided it was of a similar standard.

The panel also had sight of a typewritten statement of Mr Barge dated 25 May in which he stated the moderation samples requested on 12 May 2023 were submitted on 16 May and that he collated all the work on the photocopier to put all the work on one PDF document and then uploaded these on the OCR interchange at 8pm.

The panel considered Mr Barge's written response to the allegations dated 7 August 2026. In this Mr Barge accepted that he collated and uploaded work through OCR's secure exchange system which he knew did not belong to the pupils under whose names it was submitted. Mr Barge stated that his recollection was that approximately 10 Task 2 pieces belonging to other pupils were used when it became apparent that the work initially provided by Witness E related to the wrong unit. Mr Barge stated that further substitutions were also made where selected pupils work was unavailable and that he accepted the substance of the allegation. Mr Barge said that he knew the work being submitted did not belong to the named pupils but was focused on resolving the immediate difficulties in completing the moderation sample and "avoiding adverse consequences for the pupils".

The panel considered Mr Barge's admissions to be consistent with the evidence provided to it and considered it proven that on or around 17 May 2023, in relation to the NEA, Mr

Barge submitted work to the exam board within the moderation sample for approximately 10 pieces of work which purported to be pupils' work, when he knew this was not the case.

The panel found allegation 2 proved.

3. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, you asked Colleague A to create pupils' work to be included in the moderation sample and/or said "we will find some work" or words to that effect;

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 3. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

The panel noted that in the Statement of Agreed Facts Mr Barge acknowledged that he said "we will find some work" or words to that effect but stated that he did not ask Colleague A to create pupils' work.

The panel again considered the notes of the Investigatory meeting with Mr Barge of 18 May 2023. When asked what he meant by saying "we will find work", which he acknowledged saying, he answered, "I was going to get other students work to be added".

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness C. Witness C stated that, whilst in the PE office on Tuesday 16 May 2023, she heard a conversation between Mr Barge and Colleague A. During the conversation Witness C heard Mr Barge say to Colleague A, in response to a question from Colleague A as to where he was going to get the work that "we will find some work". Witness C stated she then questioned Mr Barge as to whether he had lost some coursework, and Mr Barge repeated "we will find work".

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Colleague A who stated that Mr Barge came to the department one afternoon and informed him and Witness E in the PE office that "we would "have to find missing work"".

The panel also had sight of a typewritten statement of Mr Barge dated 25 May in which when being asked about the context of the phrase "we'll just need to find some work" in his discussion with Colleague A, Mr Barge was recorded as stating that he was suggesting that they would need to chase all students to ensure they had all the work.

The panel also had sight of a typewritten statement of Colleague A dated 26 May 2023 in which he stated that his understanding of Mr Barge's phrase "we'll just have to find work" was that the Head of PE was going to use work from students who were not being moderated to fill in for missing work as per the statement made to him by Mr Barge specifying that they were allowed to do this.

The panel considered Mr Barge's written response to the allegations. Mr Barge stated that he did not recall asking Colleague A or any other colleague to create pupils' work for inclusion in the moderation sample. He stated it was not his intention to instruct anyone to fabricate work and that he does not accept that this is what he asked Colleague A to do. He stated that he does recall saying words to the effect of "we will find some work" and that at the time of saying this he had not formed a plan to substitute or fabricate evidence and he had meant that they should continue searching for the pupils' existing work. He stated that his recollection was that these were initially words of reassurance and referred to locating work, not asking a colleague to create work that did not exist.

The panel reviewed the evidence before it. The panel did not find it proven to the required standard that Mr Barge asked Colleague A to create pupils' work to be included in the moderation sample.

The panel did though find it proven that in or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, Mr Barge said "we will find some work" or words to that effect. The panel considered that in doing so it was more likely than not that Mr Barge was suggesting that work would be found to improperly substitute for the work which the department was missing noting that this is what it had found subsequently transpired.

The panel found allegation 3 proved.

4. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, you asked one or more pupil(s) to sign declarations before moderation when their work was not present and/or the pupils did not see the work they were signing the declarations in relation to.

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 4. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

The panel noted that in the Statement of Agreed Facts Mr Barge admitted that in or around May 2023 he asked pupils to sign declarations for their work when it was not due to be submitted until a later date and the pupils did not see the work they were signing the declarations in relation to.

The panel considered the minutes of an investigation meeting with Mr Barge of 18 May 2023 in which he was recorded as saying that pupils had signed the declaration forms for the NEA in class, around two weeks before the moderation sample was submitted and the pupils did not see their work first.

The panel considered Mr Barge's written statement of 7 August 2026. Mr Barge stated that he accepted he had arranged for pupils in the relevant groups to sign declarations before moderation. Mr Barge stated that he accepted that in some cases the relevant work was not present when the declarations were signed, and the pupils did not see the material to which the declaration related.

The panel considered the oral and written witness evidence of Colleague A who admitted that, as per Mr Barge's instructions, he asked students to sign declarations two weeks before moderation and that the reason for this was that students during this time of the academic year could be absent from School and so this was carried out to ensure that all relevant paperwork was obtained prior to submission deadlines. He stated that on previous courses under the remit of the previous head of department he had followed the same procedure and understood this was a common standard practice.

The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that on or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, Mr Barge asked one or more pupil(s) to sign declarations before moderation when their work was not present and/or the pupils did not see the work they were signing the declarations in relation to.

The panel found allegation 4 proved.

5. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, you altered grades on the tracker spreadsheet and/or noted that grades on the tracker spreadsheet had been altered and/or made up marks which was not based on the work of one or more pupils;

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 5. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness C. Witness C stated that Colleague A relayed to her that Mr Barge had asked Colleague A and Witness E to input grades into a spreadsheet. Witness C submitted that Colleague A told her he had assumed these would not be the final grades as he had not marked the work himself. Witness C submitted Colleague A told her he had needed to look through the work, not marking with annotations, to establish a rough mark he would give. Witness C stated that she believed Mr Barge to have then submitted these grades to OCR without Colleague A's or Witness E's knowledge.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Colleague A. Colleague A said that in preparation for the submission of overall coursework marks Mr Barge asked him to spend a Friday afternoon in May reviewing students' work on their computers and that his task was to review the work, give it an approximate grade and highlight missing work. He stated he went around the class asking each student to show him what work they had completed so far on their coursework. He stated that due to time constraints he was unable to complete the task fully. He stated there was a spreadsheet provided for entering approximate grades, and that where work was missing or he had not had time to get a student to review their work he entered zeros to indicate this to Mr Barge, and verbally explained the situation to him.

Colleague A said that after he gave Mr Barge these approximate grades he was unaware of what the plan was in relation to who was going to prepare the final grades and assumed that the team would come together to discuss final grades but this did not

happen. He stated that the following week, when he was reviewing the spreadsheet again, he noticed the spreadsheet containing the marks he had entered had been altered and the students' marks were different from those he had initially entered. He stated that from what he could recall zeros had been changed to other numbers and he assumed these changes had been made by Mr Barge. He stated he did not speak to Mr Barge at the time but recalls mentioning it to Witness C.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who stated that Mr Barge had made up marks that were not based on the work that pupils had done and told Individual N to submit the NEA marks to the OCR and then tried to make the marks match that which he had submitted.

The panel considered Mr Barge's response document dated 7 August 2026. Mr Barge admitted within this that he had altered grades or marks recorded on the internal tracker spreadsheet. Mr Barge stated that before the submission he told the teaching staff that the tracker needed to be completed and, when he reviewed it, he found numerous gaps. He stated that he spoke to the members of staff about the marks or grades to be entered and updated the tracker with them. He said that he also accepts that some entries were made before the moderation where there was insufficient or unavailable work to support them and that he accepted that, to that extent, entries were recorded which should not have been entered and which were not adequately evidenced by pupils' work. Mr Barge stated that the tracker was an internal document and these changes did not alter the pupil's overall grades already submitted to OCR but that he accepted the internal tracker should have been accurate and that entering unsupported marks was wrong and created a misleading record of the assessment position.

The panel noted an e-mail from Mr Barge of 24 May 2023 in which Mr Barge said that when he updated the tracker to fill in the gaps it meant some students having grades inputted before the moderation that should not have had grades added.

The panel reviewed the admissions alongside the evidence before it. The panel considered the admissions to be consistent with that evidence.

The panel considered it proven that in or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, Mr Barge altered grades on the tracker spreadsheet and/or noted that grades on the tracker spreadsheet had been altered and/or made-up marks which was not based on the work of one or more pupils;

Therefore, the panel found allegation 5 proved.

6. In or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, you did not follow OCR/JCQ protocol in relation to submitting missing work for students;

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 6. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available.

The panel had sight of an e-mail from the OCR to Individual N, the exams officer at the School which e-mail she then forwarded, on 12 May 2023, to Mr Barge. This was the e-mail in which the work for the candidates which was required for moderation was requested. In this e-mail it stated “if the work for a candidate requested is lost/missing you must substitute an equivalent candidate's work on, or as near as possible to, the same mark point. Remember where candidate work has been lost/is missing, is damaged or is incomplete, you must make an online special consideration application and provide me with a copy of that application”.

The panel again noted that Mr Barge had signed a declaration confirming his understanding of the JCQ and exam board requirements and acknowledging that he was responsible for ensuring compliance. Mr Barge had also completed OCR training and held an OCR NEA guidance training certificate and had received the above e-mail.

The panel considered the investigation meeting minutes of Mr Barge of 18 May 2023. The panel noted that it was recorded that Mr Barge acknowledged that he did not follow the ‘special circumstances’ guidelines in relation to missing work but that he asserted that it was acceptable to submit one student's work as another student's work in special circumstances.

The panel considered the written response of Mr Barge dated 7 August 2026. Mr Barge accepted that he did not follow the required OCR/JCQ procedure when work was missing, incomplete or inaccessible. He stated he initially attempted to locate pupils' own work but made “a series of increasingly poor decisions”. He stated the required internal verification process should be completed properly and within sufficient time before submission but his decision to give pupils extra time left insufficient time to complete the internal verification properly and to address missing or incorrect evidence. He stated he should have prioritised compliance with the assessment rules and reported any missing work and requested guidance rather than attempting to “rectify the position informally”.

The panel considered the evidence and noted that its previous findings, including in relation to allegations 1 and 2, appeared, of themselves, to demonstrate a breach of the protocol as described within OCR's e-mail.

The panel found it proven on the balance of probabilities that in or around May 2023, in relation to the NEA, Mr Barge did not follow OCR/JCQ protocol in relation to submitting missing work for students.

The panel found allegation 6 proved.

7. Your conduct at paragraph(s) 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 and/or 4 and/or 5 and/or 6:

a. was dishonest; and/or

b. lacked integrity

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted allegation 7. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel first considered whether Mr Barge had acted dishonestly and, in doing so, had regard to the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockford*.

The panel firstly sought to ascertain the actual state of Mr Barge's knowledge or belief as to the facts.

The panel considered the written response of Mr Barge dated 7 August 2026. Mr Barge stated that he was motivated by a desire to help the pupils obtain the best outcomes and protect them from the consequences of missing work and support colleagues who were struggling. He stated that he knowingly submitted material that did not belong to named pupils. He stated that he accepted that this was dishonest and that his wider conduct lacked integrity. He stated that his actions undermined the reliability and fairness of the assessment process.

The panel noted that it had found that Mr Barge had intentionally passed off students' work as their own when it was not and altered grades on the internal tracker spreadsheet which grades he knew were not accurate. It had found that he deliberately did not follow the OCR/JCQ protocol on missing work and had, by his own admission, taken "a series of increasingly poor and improper decisions".

Noting his admissions the panel had no doubt that Mr Barge knew that his conduct, in relation to each proven allegation, save for allegation 4, was dishonest at the time in which he was engaging in it.

The panel then went on to consider whether Mr Barge's conduct was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.

The panel was satisfied that intentionally falsifying or improperly altering assessment outcomes would plainly be regarded as dishonest by ordinary decent people. The panel considered that each of the actions found as proven under allegations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 were actions which, a member of the public, fully informed as to the circumstances, would consider were dishonest.

The panel then went on to consider whether Mr Barge had failed to act with integrity. The panel considered the case of *Wingate & Anor v The Solicitors Regulation Authority*.

The panel was satisfied that Mr Barge would and should have had a clear understanding of the standards expected of him as a teacher and as Head of the PE Department and that he had had the appropriate training on this coursework.

The panel was satisfied, and noted that it was acknowledged by Mr Barge, that in respect of each of allegations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, he acted wrongfully. The panel had found his actions in each respect to be dishonest. In respect of allegation 4 whilst the panel had not

found Mr Barge's actions to be dishonest it noted that, as the person in charge of the assessment process who was required to be compliant with that process, and as the individual familiar with and trained in the requirements of that process his failing to properly implement those rules was a failure of integrity.

The panel further noted that Mr Barge sought to involve colleagues in perpetuating the dishonest conduct in which he was engaged. The panel was mindful that professionals are not expected to be 'paragons of virtue' however the proven course of dishonest conduct is very clearly in breach of the professional standards of behaviour expected of teachers. The panel was satisfied that Mr Barge's conduct as found proven in paragraphs 1,2, 3, 5 and 6 was dishonest and lacked integrity and that his conduct, as found proven in paragraph, 4 lacked integrity.

The panel found allegation 7 (a) and (b) proved.

Findings as to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute

Having found all of the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

In doing so, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: The prohibition of teachers, which is referred to as "the Advice".

The panel first considered whether the conduct of Mr Barge in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel noted that within Part 1 of the teaching standards on page 10 it stated that "teachers act with honesty and integrity" and considered that Mr Barge was clearly in breach of this requirement.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Barge was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach [...]

- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Barge, in relation to the facts found proved, involved a breach of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE").

The panel considered that Mr Barge was in breach of the requirement that "All practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child". The panel considered that it was very clear that Mr Barge had failed to do this in the various actions it had found proven.

The panel also considered whether Mr Barge's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel found that the behaviour type of fraud and/or serious dishonesty was relevant. In reaching this view, the panel noted that Mr Barge knowingly submitted inaccurate grades and submitted the work of other pupils passed off as the requested moderation work, to meet those grades after the event. The panel noted that he had involved others including colleagues and students in his actions and that his actions had been dishonest on several fronts.

The panel again considered the actions which it had found proven. The panel considered that Mr Barge would have been aware of the importance of upholding the highest standards in relation to the integrity of the process of assessed coursework. The panel had found that Mr Barge had deliberately submitted false scores for the children completing that coursework within his department and that he had required those children to make false declarations in relation to work they did not see. The panel had also found that within the vital process of moderation, so necessary to assess whether centres meet the required standards for their marking, Mr Barge had changed the work of pupils and put forward as theirs work which was not their own. The panel found that he had sought to involve his colleagues in the various and repeated incidents of dishonest behaviour which had occurred over a period of time both in relation to the submission of the scores for students and the subsequent moderation process.

The panel found that Mr Barge had had multiple opportunities to seek assistance and to act in a different way but had nevertheless proceeded with his dishonest conduct which had only been identified by the actions of third parties.

The panel considered Mr Barge's actions to be knowing and very serious and the panel was satisfied that his conduct amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Barge was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Barge's actions amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, the panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. It considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Barge's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offence types in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice.

As set out above in the panel's findings as to whether Mr Barge was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that the behaviours associated with fraud and/or serious dishonesty were relevant.

The panel noted that Mr Barge admitted that his conduct as found proven constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher.

The panel considered that the public would consider it vital in teachers' involvement and engagement with public qualifications and coursework that teachers maintained the highest standards of honesty and integrity in order to ensure a level playing field and that appropriate assessments were conducted. The panel was satisfied that the public would consider that Mr Barge's dishonest actions fundamentally undermined the integrity of that assessment process and that they were a gross breach of his professional responsibilities as a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Barge's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so. Prohibition

orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely; the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Barge which involved serious malpractice in the progression of, and assessment of, public coursework, which conduct the panel had found to be dishonest and to lack integrity, there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Barge was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Barge was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Barge in the profession.

Whilst the panel noted Mr Barge's long service as a teacher and the fact that it had no evidence of previous complaints having been made concerning him, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Barge in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times.

In view of the clear public interest considerations that were present, the panel considered carefully whether or not it would be proportionate to impose a prohibition order, taking into account the effect that this would have on Mr Barge.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;

- misconduct seriously affecting the education [...] and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- dishonesty or a lack of integrity, including the deliberate concealment of their actions or purposeful destruction of evidence, especially where these behaviours have been repeated or had serious consequences, or involved the coercion of another person to act in a way contrary to their own interests; and
- deliberate action in serious contravention of requirements for the conduct of an examination or assessment leading to an externally awarded qualification or national assessment (or deliberate collusion in or deliberate concealment of such action) particularly where the action had, or realistically had the potential to have, a significant impact on the outcome of the examination assessment.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

The panel found that Mr Barge's actions were clearly deliberate and that there was no evidence to suggest that Mr Barge was acting under extreme duress, e.g. a physical threat or significant intimidation.

Again, whilst noting his long service, the panel was not presented with any evidence which demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct on the part of Mr Barge, or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector.

The panel noted that no witness statements had been provided by any colleagues to attest to Mr Barge's character or abilities as a teacher. The panel did though note the positive employment references concerning Mr Barge which it had had sight of.

The panel considered Mr Barge's written response statement dated 7 August 2026, in which he sought to provide an account of the significant professional and personal pressures he was experiencing at the time of his misconduct. Mr Barge submitted that the sports science course was significantly behind schedule when he assumed responsibility for it. Mr Barge submitted that it was extremely challenging to bring the students up to date and also set out his stresses [REDACTED].

Mr Barge stated he felt pressure from a line management meeting after the January exam results were published. Mr Barge submitted that he was told the results were "diabolical" and that they needed to improve substantially, and that unless they improved, he could receive a management letter. Mr Barge submitted these poor exam results,

combined with the warning he received, and the extent of outstanding coursework caused him to feel that the students' outcomes and his own professional position depended heavily on achieving strong results and he asserted that this had a significant effect on his state of mind and contributed to his poor judgement.

The panel considered whether Mr Barge had demonstrated insight and remorse in relation to his conduct.

The panel again considered Mr Barge's written response statement dated 7 August 2026. He submitted there that he fully accepted it was wrong to have substituted one student's work for another, to have used work from students who had not been selected, and to have submitted evidence that did not accurately correspond with the named students. Mr Barge submitted that he regretted his actions profoundly and the panel noted his reflections on his actions. Mr Barge had stated that his actions did not reflect the educator or person he had been throughout the previous 17 years of his career.

Whilst the panel considered that Mr Barge had, to some degree, expressed regret for his actions and noted his apologies to students, their families, his colleagues and the School, it did not consider that he had demonstrated, to any meaningful degree, that he had developed insight into the consequences, and potential consequences, of his actions for students, for the School, for his colleagues or for the teaching profession as a whole. The panel noted the legal advice received that insight was a necessary precondition of remorse and did not find that they could conclude that Mr Barge had demonstrated genuine remorse. The panel noted in this regard that it was unfortunate that Mr Barge had not attended the hearing to give it an opportunity to assess such matters in person and to enable him to seek to demonstrate any insight he had developed.

The panel first considered whether it would be proportionate to conclude this case with no recommendation of prohibition, considering whether the publication of the findings made by the panel would be sufficient.

The panel again reflected on what it has found proven, specifically that Mr Barge had been dishonest on multiple levels over a period of time, had submitted false, manufactured coursework, had sought to inveigle colleagues in his dishonesty (including by lying to them about the appropriate steps to take) and had failed at any material time to seek advice or guidance from those he was clearly well aware he could, indeed the panel was aware he had sought advice previously.

Mr Barge's actions, carried out seemingly solely with the end game of improving marks regardless of any manner of objective or proper assessment of coursework, fundamentally undermined the public assessment process. The panel rejected the idea that his actions were in the interests of the children as he asserted, to the contrary and as also submitted by Mr Barge to some degree in his mitigation, these were principally fundamentally ill-judged and dishonest actions taken to protect his own career. In fact,

wholly contrary to his assertions these ethically and morally wrong actions had the potential to seriously damage the education and careers of the children in his care.

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings would be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Barge of prohibition.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Barge. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate for it to decide to recommend a review period of the order. The panel was mindful that the Advice states that a prohibition order applies for life, but there may be circumstances, in any given case, that may make it appropriate to allow a teacher to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a specified period of time that may not be less than 2 years.

The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period. None of the listed characteristics were engaged by the panel's findings.

The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate, one of these being fraud and/or serious dishonesty, which the panel found applied here.

The panel again reminded itself that it had not seen any meaningful demonstration of insight or remorse on Mr Barge's part. Though taking into account Mr Barge's evidence with regard to the stresses and pressures he was under the panel was not of the view that this provided any meaningful defence in relation to the actions which he knowingly took.

Mr Barge is a very experienced teacher, highly trained and well aware of the rules of the assessment of which he was in charge. He chose to completely disregard those rules and pursue a course of dishonest conduct which demonstrated a wholly inappropriate, and completely unjustifiable, attitude towards that most vital aspect of children's education – the probity of public assessments and qualifications. The panel was highly concerned, from the actions of Mr Barge which it had found proven, and the facts surrounding them, that this came from a troubling underlying attitude on Mr Barge's part which would require extensive reflection, insight and training were he to ever meaningfully move past it and return to teaching. As it stood the panel was highly concerned that such actions could be repeated were Mr Barge to find himself in a similar situation and noted he had made no effort to identify the triggers which had led to this

behaviour, let alone identify and apply methodologies to ensure he did not take such actions again.

Mr Barge's actions were very serious and had been found to be dishonest. Though it was the panel's view that a review period was appropriate, the panel considered that, given the public interest considerations, and its analysis of the level of insight required to be developed by Mr Barge, and noting the Advice regarding findings of serious dishonesty, it was also appropriate that the review period be longer.

The panel then decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a 4 year review period.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

I have given very careful consideration to this case and to the recommendation of the panel in respect of both sanction and review period.

In considering this case, I have also given very careful attention to the Advice that the Secretary of State has published concerning the prohibition of teachers.

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Thomas Barge should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of four years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Barge is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach [...]
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Barge, involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Barge fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a finding of dishonesty on the part of a senior teacher in circumstances where he involved more junior colleagues in repeated incidents of dishonest behaviour.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Barge, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would safeguard pupils. Whilst the panel does not record direct harm, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils is engaged in this case as the findings "...involved serious malpractice in the progression of, and assessment of, public coursework..." which in my view may have an impact on pupils. A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, "He submitted there that he fully accepted it was wrong to have substituted one student's work for another, to have used work from students who had not been selected, and to have submitted evidence that did not accurately correspond with the named students. Mr Barge submitted that he regretted his actions profoundly and the panel noted his reflections on his actions."

The panel has also commented that "...Mr Barge had, to some degree, expressed regret for his actions and noted his apologies to students, their families, his colleagues and the School, it did not consider that he had demonstrated, to any meaningful degree, that he had developed insight into the consequences, and potential consequences, of his actions for students, for the School, for his colleagues or for the teaching profession as a whole."

In my judgement, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, "...that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Barge was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession."

I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to consider the matter from the point of view of an "ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen."

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Barge himself. The panel comment,

"...whilst noting his long service, the panel was not presented with any evidence which demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct on the part of Mr Barge, or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector.

The panel noted that no witness statements had been provided by any colleagues to attest to Mr Barge's character or abilities as a teacher. The panel did though note the positive employment references concerning Mr Barge which it had had sight of."

I have also considered the wider circumstances as advanced by Mr Barge, including the need to improve results in the course and his personal circumstances.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Barge from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of his contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel's comments concerning the seriousness of the conduct. The panel has said, "...Mr Barge had been dishonest on multiple levels over a period of time, had submitted false, manufactured coursework, had sought to inveigle colleagues in his dishonesty (including by lying to them about the appropriate steps to take) and had failed at any material time to seek advice or guidance from those he was clearly well aware he could, indeed the panel was aware he had sought advice previously."

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Barge has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full remorse or insight, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest in order to achieve the intended aims of a prohibition order.

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a four-year review period.

The panel has identified that this case involves fraud and/or serious dishonesty where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate.

I have considered the panel's comments

"Mr Barge is a very experienced teacher, highly trained and well aware of the rules of the assessment of which he was in charge. He chose to completely disregard those rules and pursue a course of dishonest conduct which demonstrated a wholly inappropriate, and completely unjustifiable, attitude towards that most vital aspect of children's education – the probity of public assessments and qualifications. The panel was highly concerned, from the actions of Mr Barge which it had found proven, and the facts surrounding them, that this came from a troubling underlying attitude on Mr Barge's part which would require extensive reflection, insight and training were he to ever meaningfully move past it and return to teaching. As it stood the panel was highly concerned that such actions could be repeated were Mr Barge to find himself in a similar situation and noted he had made no effort to identify the triggers which had led to this behaviour, let alone identify and apply methodologies to ensure he did not take such actions again."

The panel has also said that "...given the public interest considerations, and its analysis of the level of insight required to be developed by Mr Barge, and noting the Advice regarding findings of serious dishonesty, it was also appropriate that the review period be

longer.” The panel has said that a four-year review period would be proportionate in this case.

I have considered whether a four-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing for a shorter review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the dishonesty found, the lack of full insight or remorse, and engaging other junior members of staff in the dishonest acts.

I consider therefore that a four-year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

This means that Mr Thomas Barge is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 9 October 2030, four years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Barge remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

This order takes effect from the date on which it is served on the teacher.

Mr Barge has a right of appeal to the High Court within 28 days from the date he is given notice of this order.



Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield

Date: 2 October 2026

This decision is taken by the decision maker named above on behalf of the Secretary of State.