October 2015

TEACHING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR NURSING & MIDWIFERY

Final Report

Contents

Project Participants

Institution

James Cook University

Project Team

Project Leader: John Smithson

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Project Member: Professor Lee Stewart

Project Officer: Camilla Burkot

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

In 2011, the Teaching Standards Framework (TSF) project (Sachs et al, 2011) sought to develop criteria that could be used by higher education institutions across Australia to ensure continual improvement of teaching and learning. The framework was designed to provide a common metric of performance at an institutional or individual organisational unit level against three broad themes: *teaching, learning environment* and *curriculum* and six associated standards. The TSF provided a common structure to facilitate benchmarking internally and externally. The intent of that project was to create a framework that could be applied and used in any tertiary institution program.

The Teaching Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery (TSFNM) Extension Project adapted the TSF specifically for use in nursing and midwifery disciplines in Australia. The TSFNM project used a Delphi-style research technique to adapt and obtain consensus on a quality improvement framework for Australian nursing and midwifery programs. The framework was developed as a functional tool that was subsequently modified, tested then trialled to audit the quality of teaching, learning environment and curriculum. This tool can form the basis of a structured action plan for the improvement of nursing and midwifery programs and assist in monitoring of program improvements over time. The framework also provides an additional evidence source for accreditation of programs by demonstrating continual program engagement with a quality improvement cycle.

1. Background

James Cook University (JCU) offers accredited and non-accredited courses of study in the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. The nursing and midwifery disciplines have very high enrolment numbers and, like nursing and midwifery disciplines more broadly, JCU faces upward pressure on enrolment numbers. It is acknowledged that rapid enrolment growth can outpace available resources, which can have a negative effect on the student experience. This issue of increased demand is evident, not only across the disciplines of nursing and midwifery, but across the university sector more broadly.

In the face of such pressures, quality improvement that is holistic and focused on student outcomes and experience is necessary to ensure changes to the physical and organisational infrastructure are planned for and subsequent implementation monitored. A number of frameworks and guidelines have been developed to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in higher education (see, for example, Baird & Gordon 2009; Chalmers 2007), but none have been developed specifically for use in nursing and midwifery education in Australia. These contexts require a special mix of resources, teaching methods, academic specialists and industry partnerships. For example, in programs that contain clinical training components, teaching responsibilities are distributed amongst a wide range of staff and learning takes place in a variety of settings that include external 'professional experience placements'. Additionally, programs offered in these disciplines must meet national accreditation requirements and students must demonstrate achievement of national competency standards. These disciplines often operate in tightly constrained fiscal environments and must deliver on university priorities, satisfy accreditation obligations and ensure (often) very large cohorts of graduates are adequately prepared for the practice environment. Academics and staff must find ways of meeting these numerous externally-dictated standards and requirements, provide high quality learning experiences all the while maintaining a high quality student experience.

In order to develop a suitable framework for assessing the quality of teaching and learning in nursing and midwifery programs, the TSFNM project sought to adapt the Teaching Standards Framework (TSF) developed in 2011. The original TSF described six standards across three themes:

Theme 1: Teaching Standards

Standard 1	The institution's teaching structures ensure quality learning outcomes.
Standard 2	The institution's teaching practices ensure a quality student learning experience.

Theme 2: Learning Environment Standards

Standard 3	The institution's services and resources enable quality learning

outcomes.

Standard 4	The institution's services and resources enable a quality student learning experience.

Theme 3: Curriculum Standards

Standard 5	The institution ensures that the curriculum is current, academically robust and rigorous.
Standard 6	The institution ensures that curriculum content and assessment practices produce quality learning outcomes.

The TSFNM expands upon the original TSF to identify key standards and reference documents, criteria and performance indicators that will allow schools/disciplines of nursing and midwifery to measure their existing program(s) against an indicative quality standard. The TSFNM adapted the themes, criteria and performance indicators from the original TSF (with reference to key external quality reference points – professional accreditation standards, Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) Higher Education Standards Framework) to meet the unique requirements and needs of nursing and midwifery disciplines and their programs. The intent of creating the TSFNM was to design an efficient-to-use resource with built-in planning capability. The TSFNM would thus provide nursing and midwifery program leaders with a flexible and user-friendly tool to assess, monitor and improve the quality of learning and teaching in the respective programs. Recommendations for how the TSFNM might be best implemented are discussed in brief in section 6 of this report.

2.   Project Aims

The objectives of the TSFNM, as outlined in the project proposal, were to:
- Adapt the TSF for use in nursing and midwifery education with input from key stakeholders in nursing and midwifery education across Australia
- Produce and disseminate the Teaching Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery (TSFNM) as a tool for use in benchmarking and continual improvement in teaching, curriculum development and the experience of students in the disciplines in nursing and midwifery
- Build capacity of the project lead as an early career researcher.

3.   Methods

The TSFNM project used a modified Delphi-style research method to adapt the content and format of the original TSF to suit the assessment of nursing and midwifery programs by Nursing and Midwifery disciplines. The development of the TSFNM occurred in three phases (refer to

Figure 1: Methods flowchart). The study protocol was approved by the JCU Human Research Ethics Committee prior to study commencement.
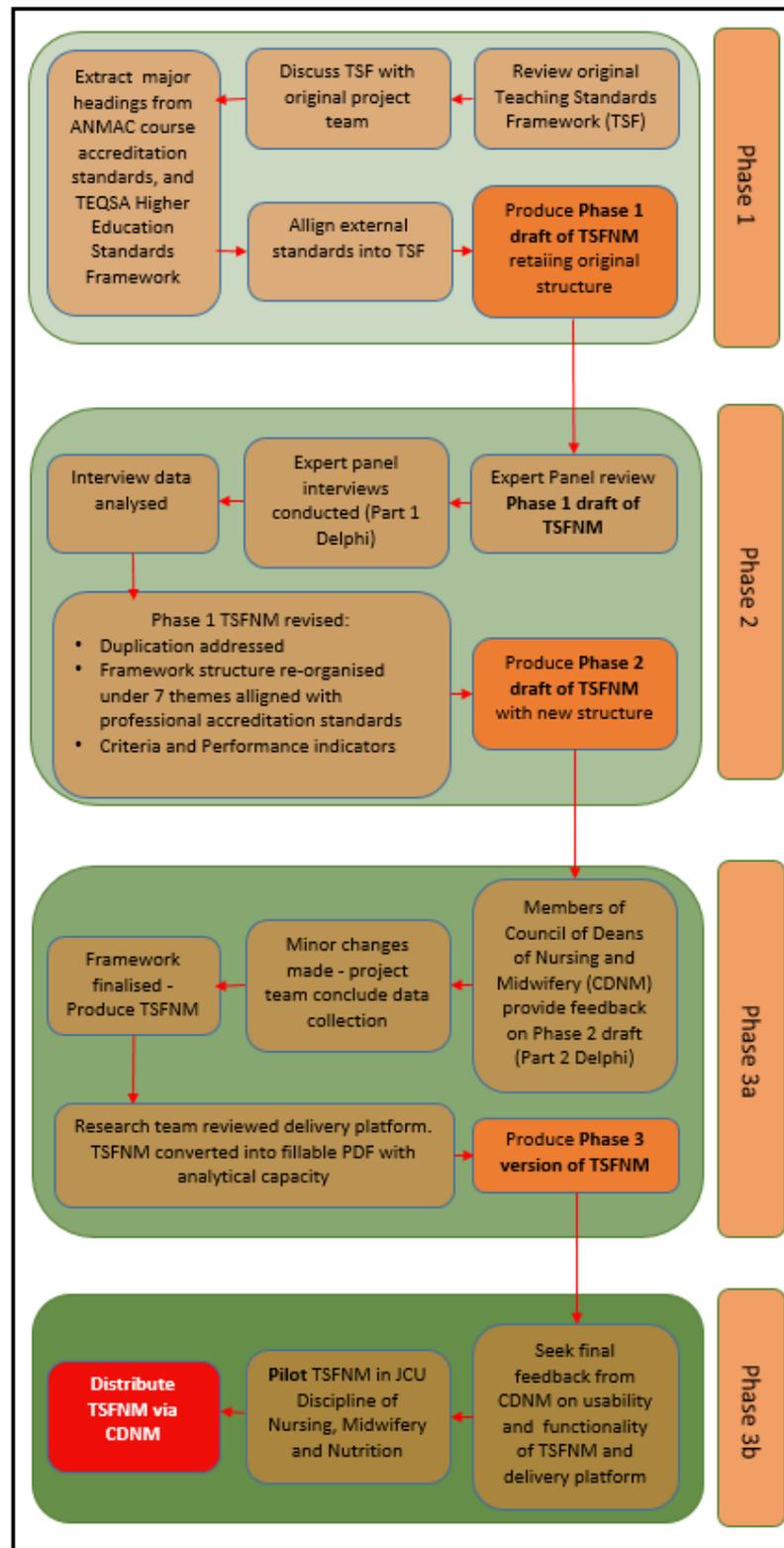

Figure 1: Methods flowchart

PHASE 1

An initial draft TSFNM framework was developed by the research team with primary reference to the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) Registered Nurse course accreditation standards and the Registered Midwife course accreditation standards. These standards were used as they provide a comprehensive summary of the expectations of the profession in respect of educational activities in the disciplines.

As part of this first phase, the research team:

1. Extracted the major headings from the ANMAC Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife course accreditation standards (professional accreditation standards).
2. Aligned the focus areas, criteria and performance indicators from the original TSF with the aforementioned accreditation standards.
3. Aligned the relevant Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) Higher Education Standards Framework with the aforementioned professional accreditation standards.
4. Identified likely criteria and performance indicators (aka. Benchmarks).

The first draft of the TSFNM retained the original three themes and six standards to provide a clear link to the original framework. The criteria and performance indicators from the original TSF were reviewed, combined, modified or removed informed by the following factors:

- relevance to the specific requirements of nursing and midwifery programs and/or disciplines,
- identified priority areas in the TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework,
- Emergent themes from the nursing and midwifery professional accreditation standards.

This process of review and modification resulted in a draft framework organised according to the following structure:

1. Theme (retained from original TSF)
   1.1. Standards (retained from original TSF)
      1.1.1. Criterion (adaptation and consolidation from original TSF and ANMAC standards)
         1.1.1.1. Performance indicator(s) and/or benchmark(s) (adaptation and consolidation from the original TSF and ANMAC standards)

PHASE 2

In Phase 2, feedback on the Phase 1 draft TSFNM was sought from an external six-member expert panel. The panel consisted of three veteran nursing/midwifery academics and three experts in higher education. Each panel member was provided with a copy of the Phase 1 draft TSFNM framework and an indicative list of questions one week before the six phone interviews

were conducted. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The objective of the interviews was to critique the criteria presented in the draft TSFNM and obtain initial impressions of the format and usefulness of the TSFNM. During the interview, participants were asked to:

1. Confirm the relevance of the criteria included in the draft TSFNM framework and suggest any additional criteria not identified in the Phase 1 draft.
2. Identify criteria that may be used to assess quality improvement of the standards.
3. Identify potential performance indicators/benchmarks for these criteria.
4. Identify any additional resources of significance for nursing and midwifery education not already referenced in the first draft TSFNM.
5. Provide general commentary on:
   a. The relative importance of each of the three key themes – Teaching, Learning Environment, Curriculum – and the potential to improve outcomes in these areas
   b. How such a framework might be used in their institutions.

Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. Trustworthiness of the analysis was validated using an audit trail, transcription of interviews, a qualitative data analysis computer program (NVivo 10®) and peer analysis checking.

Overall, interviewees emphasised the interdependent nature of the three key themes for quality improvement in university programs, making it difficult to prioritise one over another. Interviewees highlighted a number of areas of the draft in need of clarification or expansion. Suggestions for improvement related to both practical and theoretical concerns (e.g. guidelines to set out which staff members would be best-included in an evaluation process using the TSFNM; professional development requirements; the use of digital learning and resources; and definitions of 'satisfaction', 'preparation', and 'quality'). Several interviewees raised questions about the types of resources and data that might be used to evaluate a given program's performance against the TSFNM criteria, resulting in more precise wording of criteria/performance indicators. The expert panel also referred the research team to a number of relevant higher education frameworks and guidance documents both from within Australia and abroad. Feedback from this phase resulted in significant modification of the framework and was particularly valuable.

Although the intention at the outset was to maintain the original structure used in the TSF (with the three themes of Teaching, Learning Environment, and Curriculum, and the same six standards), the expert panel perceived significant duplication of criteria under each of the three themes. Based on this feedback, the research team determined that a format more closely aligned with ANMAC accreditation standards would result in a more applicable, familiar and

user-friendly structure. The TSFNM structure was therefore revised such that the criteria and performance indicators were re-organised under seven key themes and 15 focus areas. These themes and focus areas are described in Table 1 and formed the foundation of the phase 2 draft of the TSFNM.

Table 1: Revised structure of TSFNM after Phase 2.
A. **Theme 1 <u>Program Governance</u>** A.1. **University oversight** A.2. **Student admissions** A.3. **Student rights and responsibilities**
B. **Theme 2 <u>Curriculum</u>** B.1. **Curriculum design** B.2. **Curriculum alignment** B.3. **Curriculum review**
C. **Theme 3 <u>Program Delivery</u>** C.1. **Teaching quality** C.2. **Learning environment** C.3. **Learning support** C.4. **Student experience**
D. **Theme 4 <u>Student assessment</u>** D.1. **Assessment design** D.2. **Assessment outcomes**
E. **Theme 5 <u>Professional experience placement</u>**
F. **Theme 6 <u>Graduate readiness</u>**
G. **Theme 7 <u>Staffing</u>** G.1. **Staff planning** G.2. **Staff recruitment and retention** G.3. **Staff professional development**

Phase 2 commenced in January 2015 and analysis of interview feedback was completed by mid-March 2015.

PHASE 3a and 3b

The Phase 2 draft TSFNM was then tested in a second Delphi-style round, this time using an online survey presented using Qualtrics software. Having evaluated the relevance of the criteria in the Phase 2 interviews, the primary objective of Delphi round was to achieve consensus on the criterion and performance indicators/benchmarks. The target reference group for this phase was Australian members of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) (CDNM). Participants were recruited by email sent from the Chair of the CDNM to participate in the study. The online survey presented participants with the draft criteria and performance indicators and asked participants to:

1. Confirm the relevance of each of the criteria and related performance indicator(s).
2. Provide feedback on the utility of the TSFNM to act as a quality improvement tool for nursing and midwifery courses in their institutions.

The survey was piloted among the members of the Phase 2 expert panel. Minor adjustments were made to the wording before it was released to the CDNM reference group. Seven members of the CDNM participated in the Delphi round (7/36 = 19%). Participants were also asked to provide identifying and demographic data to enable tracking across subsequent Delphi rounds. Participants were asked to rate each performance indicator for each criterion as either:

- 'suitable',
- 'suitable with modifications' or
- 'not suitable' for assessing the given criterion.

When participants indicated an item was 'suitable with modifications' or 'not suitable', they were given the opportunity to suggest modifications.

Feedback from the survey was compiled by the project officer. Performance indicators that achieved greater than 70% consensus were retained in their existing format. Revision and review of a performance indicator was triggered by one or more of the following:

- an indicator achieved less than 70% consensus;
- an indicator was designated 'not suitable' by at least one survey respondent;
- an indicator attracted suggested modifications.

The first round of the modified-Delphi process achieved a high consensus rate requiring minor modification to less than 30% of criteria. Given this, the research team advanced the project to develop the platform with which the final version of the TSFNM would be delivered.

The format chosen to present the TSFNM was a modifiable PDF. This format was selected for its flexibility and convenience (e.g., the PDF can be printed or filled out on a computer or mobile

device). While a fully-online, interactive version of the TSFNM was the preferred format, development of such a tool was beyond the scope of this project. The primary objective in this stage was to obtain feedback on the format and predicted use of the TSFNM in Australian nursing and midwifery programs. Members of the CDNM were contacted through the organisation by email and provided with a link to the TSFNM to download alongside a short survey which asked participants to:

1. Comment on the relevance of the themes included in the TSFNM to quality improvement in nursing and midwifery programs.

2. Comment on the format of the TSFNM (in terms of usability and functionality, layout, and clarity of instructions).

3. Comment on how and when the TSFNM might be used by their School/Discipline.

Minor changes to document instructions were made in response to this phase. The TSFNM was then trailed during an internal audit of the James Cook University Discipline of Nursing, Midwifery and Nutrition. The aim of the trial was to test the TSFNM and to audit teaching, learning environment, and curriculum against the newly modified standards. The utility of the trial and subsequent action plan was evaluated. The results from the trial audit will be used as the basis of a quality improvement cycle for 2016. Table 2 provides a consolidated timeline for the project.

Table 2: Consolidated project timeline	
Phase 1	Commenced November 2014 Revise TSF and incorporate other relevant standards Outcome - first draft of TSFNM Concluded December 2014
Phase 2	Commenced January 2015 Test first draft of TSFNM with expert panel Outcome – Significant revision of TSFNM Concluded March 2015
Phase 3	Commenced July 2015 Modified Delphi research method to revise draft TSFNM Second draft TSFNM developed August 2015 Feedback on modifiable PDF version of TSFNM in September and October 2015 Pilot of TSFNM conducted in October 2015 Project concluded November 2015

4.   Results

The primary outcome and major deliverable of this project is the Teaching Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery (TSFNM), attached to this report as Appendix 1. As described in the Methods section above and on the first page of Appendix 1, the framework is structured around seven key themes and 15 focus areas. Multiple criteria and performance indicators are listed under each focus area. Three major development themes emerged during the development of the TSFNM:

Organisation of framework to align with existing reporting requirements: Interviews and surveys confirmed the research teams' first impression of the structure of the original TSF. The original TSF was detailed and extensive, serving as an audit tool for multiple university organisational levels. The TSF was intended to be a general framework; that is, one that could be applied to a range of courses and universities. This general applicability make it less useful for use as a quality improvement tool in the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. As a result, the TSFNM is significantly different in structure. The modified structure reduced duplication and improved clarity while still providing a clear focus on the original three important overarching concepts of teaching, learning environment, and curriculum. Most importantly, the seven TSFNM themes align with the ANMAC professional accreditation standards. The resulting TSFNM provided a direct link with the accreditation standards for nursing and midwifery, creating a relevant QI tool that can feed directly into preparation for accreditation.

Function of framework: The general format and presentation of the TSFNM remains largely true to the original TSF. A tick box is provided for users to assess the program's achievement of each indicator (response choices: Yes; Yes but; No; N/A). Under each focus area, the framework provides space for participants to summarise 'Areas of Excellence' (areas where the School/Discipline is outstanding), 'Areas for Development' (where future planning is required or interventions are underway to address deficiencies), and 'Report' (where users are expected to detail the context and specific evidence used to evaluate the criteria). As in the TSF, scope remains to add institution-specific criteria and performance indicators to each focus area to reflect the unique needs of a program. A fillable PDF format with capacity for basic count-based analysis was employed to improve utility and provide a very basic level of analysis.

QI at program level: The intention of the original TSF was that it could be applied across a range of institutional levels (from whole universities to individual course programs). Interview analysis suggested program leaders felt they had little influence on broader university processes and appointments, and they questioned the requirement to report on such high level organisational parameters. In response to this, the TSFNM is specifically designed for

use at the school/discipline/program level. Acknowledging programs do not operate in isolation from the broader university, it makes reference to alignment with university-level policies and programs, but remains sufficiently flexible and focused so as to be applicable at the school/sub-school/discipline (program) level. Feedback from participants suggest the TSFNM is suitable for use as a promoter of continued quality improvement, for internal and external benchmarking and curricular design. A response from one participant was:

> *[P1]: "This is clearly a valuable tool for internal program review and external benchmarking. The generation of an action plan would facilitate and support quality enhancement efforts and ensure teaching, learning and the student experience were continually improved."*

5.   Outcomes and dissemination

Outcome 1: Teaching Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery.
The TSFNM in its final PDF format has been developed with reference to the original TSF, TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework and the ANMAC professional accreditation standards. This framework has been disseminated to the members of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery as well as project participants.

Outcome 2: Trial of TSFNM in the JCU Bachelor of Nursing Science program.
A successful trial of the TSFNM was conducted in October 2015. Subsequently, the 2016 program quality improvement plan is under development and will be presented to program academic and administrative staff in February 2016.

Outcome 3. Publications and project dissemination.
Manuscripts. Two manuscripts are planned for submission to relevant peer-reviewed journals. The first will present the TSFNM and discusses in detail the merits of the framework and its potential use by schools and disciplines of nursing and midwifery in Australia. The second manuscript focuses on the methodology used to develop the TSFNM. Work on these manuscripts is currently underway.

Conference dissemination. The TSFNM and the experience of its use at James Cook University will be presented at an academic conference, in order to promote the use of the TSFNM amongst the national nursing scholarly and practice communities. The target conference for this presentation is the Australian College of Nursing – National Nursing Forum, 2016.

6.   Recommendations for implementation

The following recommendations have emerged from this project:

1. The TSFNM be considered for use by nursing and midwifery disciplines as a QI tool, to be used annually.

2. The audit produced by the TSFNM form the basis of a quality improvement cycle each year.

3. The TSFNM form part of the reporting documentation provided by programs during accreditation.

4. Accreditation process and documentation requirements be aligned with the TSFNM framework to encourage integration of accreditation processes and regular improvement over the life of the accreditation cycle.

7.   Summary

The TSFNM was designed to be a flexible framework that could be used yearly (or more or less frequently, as desired) as an internal quality tracking and improvement tool within Australian Schools/Disciplines of nursing and midwifery. Repeated use of the TSFNM over several quality improvement cycles would assist programs to systematically track their progress. It would also assist schools/disciplines of nursing and midwifery to develop a specific evidence base and a record of activities and program development over time. The TSFNM's deliberate alignment with ANMAC and TEQSA standards means it can also be used to prepare for and assist with completing accreditation requirements. The criteria and performance indicators presented within the TSFNM aim to encourage excellence, rather than simply meet minimum mandated requirements, and to recognise the specific needs of teachers and learners within nursing and midwifery programs.

References

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Appendix 1: Imbedded e-version of TSFNM

Teaching Standards
Framework - Master

(Double-click icon to activate)

Appendix 2: Budget reconciliation

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE PERIOD 21 JULY 2014 TO 30 NOVEMBER 2015

Granting Body:	Department of Education
Project Title:	Teaching Standards Framework
Our Reference:	2124.92437.2319
Principal Investigator:	John Smithson

	Budget	21 Jul 2014 to 30 Nov 2015 $	Variance $
INCOME			
Department of Education	25,800.00	25,800.00	0.00
Total Income	25,800.00	25,800.00	0.00
EXPENDITURE			
Personnel	21,400.00	20,141.92	1,258.08
Printing & Photocopying	500.00	500.00	-
Travel	3,900.00	-	3,900.00
Operating	-		-
Total Expenditure	25,800.00	20,641.92	5,158.08
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) AT REPORTING DATE	0.00	5,158.08	(5,158.08)

NOTES

1. This report has been prepared on an accrual basis of accounting.

2. James Cook University administers a 13 period financial reporting cycle. Financial Statements for periods which do not coincide with the four weekly reporting dates are prepared as at the reporting date closest to the requested date. This statement has been prepared as at 27 November 2015.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the income and expenditure shown in this financial statement has been recorded and reported in accordance with James Cook University financial practices and that this project account is included in the University's accounts that are reviewed as part of a risk based audit conducted or contracted by the Queensland Audit Office under the supervision of the Auditor-General.

Digitally signed by Trudi Raptis
DN: cn=Trudi Raptis, o=James Cook University, ou=Finance and Business Services Division, email=trudi.raptis@jcu.edu.au, c=AU
Date: 2015.11.27 14:21:08 +10'00'

Trudi Raptis
Senior Finance Officer - Grants
Financial and Business Services
James Cook University
November 2015

PDF
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Signed Financial Sta... *(Double-click icon to activate)*