SQA's Guide to Using Capital Letters

Over the years, the use of capital letters has decreased in all forms of writing and the growth of the internet has emphasised this trend even more. We've taken this into account when preparing this guidance.

SQA's rule for when to use capitals, and when not, is:

♦ if it is the title of a specific person or thing, it takes title case
♦ if it's a more general name, it doesn't

Title case means initial capitals on main words only — like the heading to this guidance; **sentence case** means an initial cap on the first word; and **lower case** means no capitals at all. Most of the time, we will use lower case.

As well as words that take capitals in everyday English (such as the names of people and places), things that always need capitals when we're writing for the SQA are:

♦ names of qualifications
♦ unit and course titles
♦ the name of the subject of an SQA qualification we're discussing; and
♦ publication titles (but not types of publication)

Note: There is no need to retrospectively change existing documents or web pages.

Detailed guidance and examples

We always capitalise the names of qualifications.

SQA has three families of qualifications:

♦ National Qualifications
♦ Higher National Qualifications
♦ Scottish Vocational Qualifications

In each family, qualifications are based on units. A unit is a qualification in its own right but units can also be combined to form courses or group awards.

January 2017

Items highlighted in green below are changed from the April 2016 version of this guide.

National Qualifications
SQA's portfolio of National Qualifications covers:

♦ National Units (eg Core Skills)
♦ National Courses (eg National 2 to National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher, Skills for Work)
♦ National Qualification Group Awards (Awards, National Certificates, National Progression Awards and Professional Development Awards)

Note: Unless they appear in a title, we will usually only cap 'Course' when using the term 'National Course' and only cap 'Unit' when using the term 'National Unit'.

Examples

'Chemistry in Society is the most popular National Unit' but 'Chemistry in Society is the most popular unit'.

'National 5 English is a unique National Course', but 'the National 5 English course is unique'.

Higher National Qualifications
SQA's portfolio of Higher National Qualifications covers:

♦ Higher National Units
♦ Higher National Group Awards (Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas and Professional Development Awards)

Note: Unless they appear in a title, we will usually only cap 'Unit' when using the term 'Higher National Unit' or 'HN Unit' and only cap 'Group Award' when using the term 'Higher National Group Award' or 'HN Group Award'.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications
SVQ Units are derived from National Occupational Standards (statements of the standards of performance individuals must achieve when carrying out functions in the workplace).

Note: Unless it appears in a title, we will usually only cap 'Unit' when using the term 'SVQ Unit'.

The titles of frameworks, programmes of work are set in title case.

Examples:

♦ Curriculum for Excellence
♦ Developing the Young Workforce
♦ Skills for Learning, Life and Work
♦ Understanding Standards

The names of SQA directorates and teams are capitalised.

Examples:

♦ Corporate Services Directorate
♦ Qualifications Directorate
♦ People and Services Team
♦ Human Resources and Organisation Development Team
♦ Customer Support Team
♦ Executive Management Team
♦ Qualifications Design Team

Unit and course titles are set in title case.

We only capitalise 'Course' and 'Unit' if they are part of a document title or part of the name of a qualification, but not when using 'unit' or 'course' in subsequent discussion.
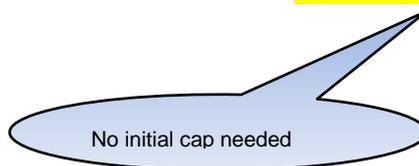
Examples

Full titles and shortened titles of qualifications (eg N5 Biology) get initial caps
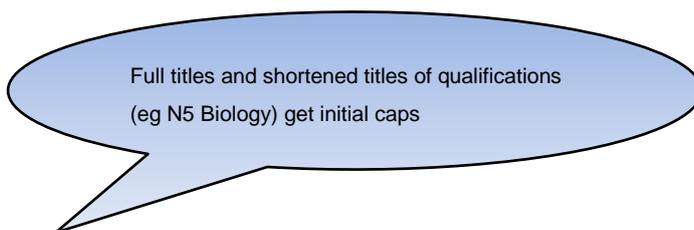
As stated in the National 5 Biology Course Specification, the aims of the course are to enable learners to…

No initial cap needed
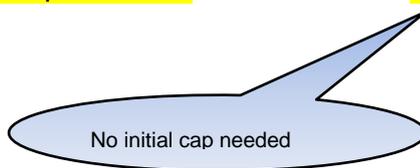
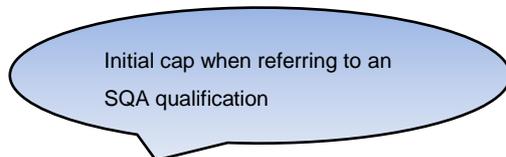The SVQ 4 Business and Administration at SCQF level 7 consists of three mandatory units.
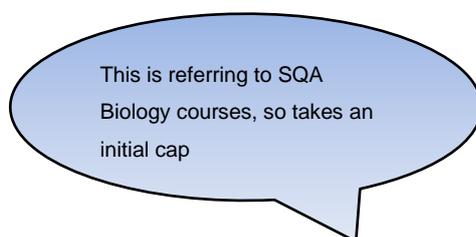
No initial cap needed

Always capitalise the name of a subject area of a qualification. Don't use capitals when referring to a subject area beyond the SQA qualification.
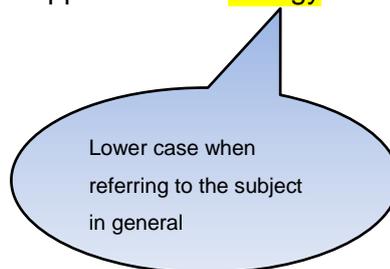
Examples

> Initial cap when referring to an SQA qualification

SQA's qualifications in <mark>Biology</mark> develop an understanding of applications of <mark>biology</mark>.

> This is referring to SQA Biology courses, so takes an initial cap

> Lower case when referring to the subject in general

This new guidance is for teachers of Biology.

Titles of publications, documents and forms are set in title case, but use lower case in text when every subject has a document with an identical title.

Examples

The <mark>Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals Toolkit</mark> is being updated and will be available again shortly.
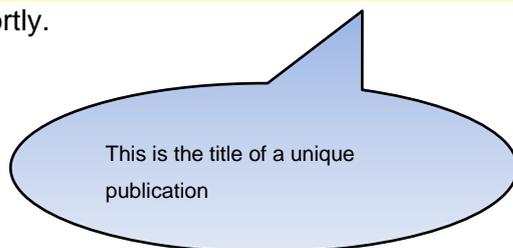
> This is the title of a unique publication

Any scripts that are selected for photocopying should be passed to Events Servicing staff at the meeting with a completed <mark>Photostats Script Selection Form</mark>.
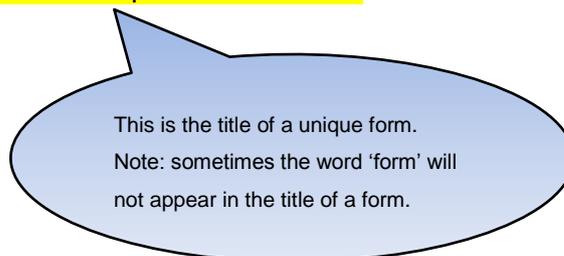
> This is the title of a unique form.
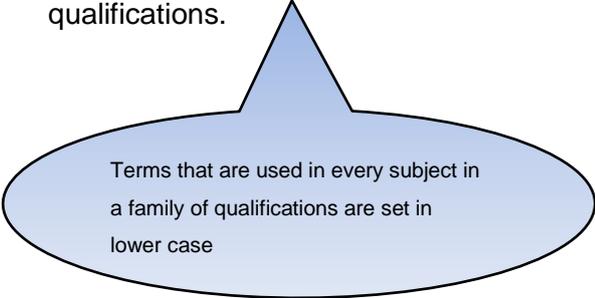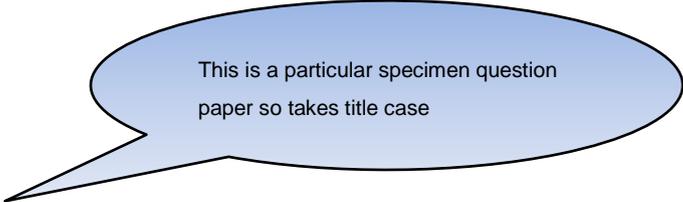> Note: sometimes the word 'form' will not appear in the title of a form.

But…

Clear instructions should be given on whether photostats are to be issued to markers…

and

Specimen question papers are available for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.

Terms that are used in every subject in a family of qualifications are set in lower case

This is a particular specimen question paper so takes title case

Part 1 of the English: Critical Reading Specimen Question Paper includes sample questions for all texts on the set Scottish text list.

Terminology associated with SQA qualifications, processes or events is set in lower case, unless part of a document title.

Examples

Centres are reminded that assessment standards 1.1 to 1.6 can be achieved independently.

There is no requirement for separate marker check or finalisation procedures after the central marking event.

The HN Chemistry Internal Assessment Report 2015 is a good exemplar of an internal assessment report.
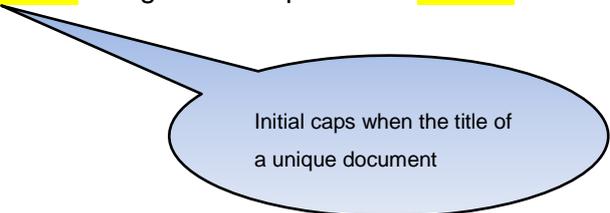
Initial caps when the title of a unique document

There are two parts to results services:

The exceptional circumstances consideration service
This service supports candidates who have been unable to attend an externally assessed timetabled examination...

Post-results services
Our post-results services can be used where a school or college has concerns about a candidate's certificated result…

Titles of web pages and menu items are set in sentence case.

Examples

Information for employers and training providers

and

Past papers and marking instructions

Positions or roles of SQA employees and appointees are set in title case when referring to individuals, but use lower case when referring to positions or roles in general.

Examples

Sam Smith, Qualifications Manager, was recently appointed to the…

but

SQA qualifications officers are responsible to a qualifications manager.

Overall, external verifiers found that the centres sampled had a clear understanding of the requirements for…

A nominee represents their school/college and local authority (where appropriate) in assisting SQA with the maintenance of national standards of the qualifications within their subject area.

More information

If you would like more information or advice about how we use capitals, SQA's editors in the Marketing department are on hand to provide guidance.

You can get in touch by e-mailing marketing@sqa.org.uk and asking for editorial support. Alternatively, read our Publishing and Writing Community on Connections for further hints and tips.

There are also more examples in the tables on the following pages.

More examples of what to set in capitals and what to set in lower case

Use title case for the titles of documents and publications
Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals
General Marking Instructions
Writing for SQA
SQA's Annual Report
Centre News
SQA Exam Timetable 2016
Your Exams
SQA's Customer Charter
Arrangements for HNC in Accounting
HN Chemistry Internal Assessment Report 2015

Use title case for titles of forms
Attendance Register
Carrier Report
C Grade Marker Form
Grade Boundary Decision Making Form
Marks Sheets
Review Lists
Script Delivery Notification Form
External Verification Report Form
Photostats: Centre Selection Form
Flyleaf
Verification Sample Form
Candidate Assessment Record

Use lower case for names of SQA events and processes
appeals process
assessment arrangements
awarding meeting
central marking
central verification
events servicing

exceptional circumstances
external assessment
external verification
grade boundary setting
internal assessment
internal verification
item analysis
marker briefing
marker check
markers' meetings
marking procedures
marking process
performance report
portfolio approach
post-results services
preparation meeting
prior verification
qualification approval and verification
results services
review request
SQA marking protocols
standardisation
visiting verification

Use lower case for terminology associated with SQA qualifications
accepted
adapted digital question papers
added value unit
arrangements document
assessable element
assessment exemplar
assessor
assignment
award of pass or fail
awarding body
centre
course
course assessment task
course grade descriptions
course specification
coursework
credits (value of a qualification)
curriculum areas
estimate
estimate report
evidence requirements
examiner
experiences and outcomes

external verifier
external verifier visit plan
grade boundary marks
grade related criteria
graded unit
group award
group award specification
in-service day
instrument of assessment
internal assessment report
internal verifier
key performance measures (KPM)
knowledge and understanding
knowledge and understanding requirements
level 8 descriptor
level descriptors for SCQF level 9
marker's report
marking guidelines
marking instructions
marking scheme
marking standard
multiple-choice question
national ratings
national standard
no award
nominee
not accepted
notional learning hours
open-book assessment
outcome
peer-assessment
performance criteria
performance criterion (a)
practical examination
principal assessor
principal assessor correspondence
project-based assessment
qualifications manager/officer
question paper
re-assessment
sector skills councils
self-assessment
self-evaluation
specialist award
specialist study unit
specific marking instructions
SQA co-ordinator
unit

unit specification
unit-by-unit approach
verification key messages

Other terms
further education
higher education
internet
sector skills council (unless part of an SSC's name)
standards-setting body