H.S.C. COMPOSITION
Hints for a successful composition.
These are based on an evaluation of compositions from the H.S.C.

These are the 3 main factors in determining a composition’s merits.
- Creative use of original ideas
- Musical development of Motives
- Unity and Contrast

Other factors come into play such as:
- Idiomatic Writing
- Correct notation
- Score layout and presentation Unfinished scores - Words but no melody
- Incorrect notation (rhythm and melody) – does NOT match what is heard on the tape
- Improvised solos – must be written out in full
- Too much repetition (especially techno and minimalism)
- Material lacking direction
- Linking of sections (e.g. bridge)
- Over extension of original ideas

After Style, Instruments and Voices, composition type is decided, then:

- Have a definite plan and time limit for each section
- Start with original ideas - keep them short and simple (as points are earned for creative use of ideas). Don’t over - extend. The best compositions develop simple musical ideas
- For unity, use a fragment from original ideas for introduction, bridge, and coda.
- Climax - work toward about 3/4 the way through the piece
- Don’t repeat the same idea /motif /fragment more than 3 times. On the 3rd repeat change is necessary to create forward direction
- Each sound should be convincingly ‘going somewhere’.
- Be economical (some really good compositions fail as they contain too many ideas and too much contrast). Balance is the key. Remember the time limit is really quite short. Don’t be over ambitious
- Don’t attempt a minimal or techno style if you don’t really understand the process. Many fail due to too much repetition.
- Accompaniment patterns - don’t just use semibreves for chords
- There is more to a bass part than just the root. Rhythmic movement is really important
- Computer generated scores.
  - Drum parts have to be the actual notation not midi generated notation. Use an orchestration book to check notation.
  - Check range of instruments.
UNITY

in musical compositions

Unity can be achieved in musical composition through the use of any of the following compositional techniques:

- Using the same basic motifs or themes throughout the piece but changing them to a greater or lesser degree.
  e.g. Using inversion; using different instruments; changing certain intervals; using ornaments; changing between major and minor, augmenting or diminishing the note values; development of only a part of the motif; using sequences; using imitation; using repetition; using an ostinato pattern.
- Using the same or similar rhythmic patterns and note values.
- Using a particular style of harmony.
- Using a particular dynamic structure, such as the gradual crescendo in Ravel’s Bolero.
- Using certain key structures and tonalities to give a sense of unity.
- Using consistency of texture to achieve unity.
- Using the development of particular rhythmic motifs.

Variety

Variety can be achieved in musical composition through the use of any of the following compositional techniques:

- Using changes in key signature by modulation or change of tonality
- Using changes in time signature
- Using different instruments or tone colours
- Using different dynamics in contrasting sections
- Using new material, either motifs or sections
- Presenting the same material in a different way e.g. developing a motif
- Changing texture e.g. thick / thin or homophonic / polyphonic
- Using different rhythmic patterns
- Using different chord progressions and / or harmonic styles