Characteristics of Effective Assignments -- An Assignment Design Checklist

Well-designed assignments are….

	Aligned
	Intentionally designed to align with *specific course or program level learning outcomes*.
	Scaffolded to *integrate with assignments that occur earlier or later*, either in a class or within a curriculum. The assignment is not an "island", but connected with other assignments, courses, and learning experiences that are part of the student's learning journey.
	Focused on a *limited number of learning outcomes*. They do not try to address too many course or program level learning outcomes all at once.
	Transparent
	Clear and transparent. They communicate the *learning purpose* of the assignment to students.
	Clear and transparent. They communicate *how the work will be evaluated*, which could include examples of satisfactory products and a grading rubric or specifications list.
	Clear and transparent. They communicate the *instructions and specific steps and details* for completing the assignment.
	Developmentally Appropriate and Substantive
	In the *zone of proximal development*, where with instructor guidance, students can grow in their knowledge and abilities.
	Challenging, with *performance expectations set at an appropriately high level*.
	Extensive enough to *require a significant investment of time and effort* by students over an extended period of time.
	Authentic and Engaging
	Opportunities for students to *discover relevance and connection* to real-world contexts.
	Engaging and motivating for students. They present students with a topic or task that engages student interest.
	Flexible enough to *allow for originality and creativity* by students in the product they create.
	Instruments that *facilitate student interactions with faculty and peers* about substantive matters.
	Inclusive
	Equitable. They respect that *each student brings different assets to the work* and so invites different ways of demonstrating learning.
	Unbiased in their criteria, conditions, or context based upon student background or circumstances.
	Opportunities for students to *experience diversity*. Students are exposed to and must work with people and circumstances that differ from those with which they are familiar.
	Reflective and Iterative
	Structured to include *frequent, timely, and constructive feedback* for students to use to improve their work.
	Structured to include *time and prompts for students to reflect* on and integrate their learning.
	Scaffolded with blocks of work that collectively comprise the whole assignment so that *small successes and partial credit are possible* within the larger assignment.
	Scaffolded with *multiple checkpoints or "gates"* so that students may not wait until the last minute to complete the assignment.