

MATTHEW SHELDON AMES, PhD

Senior Instructional Designer | Learning Experience Architect | Digital Learning Systems

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Senior instructional designer and digital learning systems architect with 20+ years designing scalable, technology-enabled learning experiences across higher education, medical education, and global health contexts. Combines deep expertise in curriculum architecture, LMS ecosystem design, and faculty partnership with hands-on experience building and leading instructional design functions from scratch in resource-constrained international environments. Extensive work integrating AI-enabled learning tools into professional and health workforce training programs across East Africa and the Gulf. Brings both practitioner experience and institutional leadership to instructional design — able to design a course and build the system that delivers it.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Instructional Design & Learning Experience

- Backward design & curriculum mapping
- Assessment & rubric design
- Learner analytics & evaluation
- ADDIE / Agile / SAM models
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Blended & online course development

Learning Technologies

- Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle
- AI-assisted content & learning tools
- Articulate Storyline & Rise
- LMS architecture & implementation

Program & Systems Design

- Online & blended program launch
- Academic quality assurance
- Cross-cultural instructional design (U.S., East Africa, Gulf, Georgia)
- Faculty development & training
- Accreditation & compliance support

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Built the instructional design and e-learning function at a medical university in Kigali from inception — LMS architecture, faculty development systems, course design standards, and a five-year institutional digital strategy.
- Designed and delivered blended Digital Health curricula for medical students and health professionals across East Africa, integrating instructional design best practices with health systems context.
- Led AI-enabled learning design for health program manager capacity-building across Sub-Saharan Africa — one of the earliest applied uses of AI in global health workforce training.

- Supervised and developed a 30-member instructional team at AURAK, standardizing design practices across English, Math, and Science learning centers serving 800+ students.
- Published instructional design research in Scopus-indexed journals (TechTrends Q1; JMIR Human Factors Q2); contributed chapters to AECT at 100 (Brill, 2023).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent Instructional Design Consultant & Researcher

Project-Based | Tbilisi, Georgia | Jan 2026 – Present

- Developing the Meaning Machine — a place-based digital learning platform integrating geolocation, AI synthesis, and participatory narrative. Designing the full learning experience architecture including content layers, user contribution flows, and AI-assisted interpretation.
- Writing applied research and practitioner frameworks on AI integration in instructional design, assessment redesign for AI-rich environments, and the future of learning experience design.
- Available for instructional design consulting with universities and education organizations internationally.

Director, Center for Learning Support Services & e-Learning Programs / Assistant Professor

American University of Ras Al Khaimah | UAE | Jul 2024 – Jan 2026

- Led instructional design strategy across English, Math, and Science learning centers supporting 800+ undergraduates, aligning course design and LMS systems with accreditation priorities.
- Designed and delivered graduate-level coursework in Educational Leadership using blended and technology-enhanced formats, applying evidence-based instructional design throughout.
- Partnered with faculty to redesign courses using backward design, authentic assessment, and UDL principles.
- Supervised and developed 30+ tutors and teaching assistants, standardizing instructional practices and learning support workflows across the center.
- Managed operating budget and aligned learning technologies with institutional priorities and accreditation requirements.

Head of e-Learning & Assistant Professor

University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) | Kigali & Butaro, Rwanda | Nov 2019 – Jul 2024

- Founded the university's instructional design and e-learning function — establishing design standards, LMS infrastructure, faculty development systems, and quality assurance processes from scratch.

- Designed and implemented a five-year institutional e-learning strategy supporting medical education, Digital Health, and professional training programs.
- Led instructional design for blended and online courses serving medical students and health professionals, integrating health systems context with learner-centered design principles.
- Built faculty capacity in online pedagogy, assessment design, backward design, and technology-enhanced teaching across interdisciplinary health professions teams.
- Integrated AI-enabled learning tools into large-scale capacity-building programs for health program managers across East Africa.
- Led LMS course architecture for the Digital Health Applied Leadership Program (DHALP).
- Supported grant-funded digital learning initiatives and Communities of Practice across Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Active contributor to Erasmus+-funded RADIC project on digital rehabilitation education with partners in Finland, Rwanda, and Zanzibar.

Assistant Professor, Department of Education (Remote)

New York Institute of Technology | USA | Aug 2017 – Oct 2019

- Designed and delivered undergraduate online coursework in instructional theory and learning technologies, applying instructional design best practices to fully asynchronous delivery.
- Mentored students in research, course design, and professional development in virtual environments.

Instructional Designer & Educational Technology Advisor

Vinnell Arabia | Riyadh, Saudi Arabia | Nov 2015 – Jan 2018

- Designed instructional technology strategy for a newly established graduate college; consulted with academic leadership on LMS selection and learning system architecture.
- Designed and taught courses in instructional design, message design, and educational technology.
- Translated institutional requirements into scalable instructional systems.

Instructor & Course Developer

CITSIE, Virginia Tech | Blacksburg, VA | Jun 2013 – Oct 2015

- Designed and delivered fully online courses in message design, digital media, graphic design, and instructional technology.
- Developed multimedia learning assets for remote teacher education programs.
- Applied instructional design best practices to large-scale online delivery initiatives.

Early Career (2002–2013): Virginia Tech | Valencia College

Instructional design and curriculum development across multi-campus institutions serving 40,000+ students; early large-scale LMS integration, simulation-based training, and digital media production.

SELECTED LEARNING DESIGN PROJECTS

- Institutional LMS design, architecture, and rollout — University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda
- Blended Digital Health curriculum for first-year medical students — UGHE
- AI-enabled learning design for health workforce capacity-building — Sub-Saharan Africa
- Faculty development frameworks for online and hybrid teaching — UGHE & AURAK
- Digital Health Applied Leadership Program (DHALP) — online course architecture
- The Meaning Machine — place-based AI learning experience platform (in development)

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

- Cyuzuzo et al. (2025). Challenges to rehabilitation services in Sub-Saharan Africa. *JMIR Human Factors*. (Scopus Q2)
- Clark-Stallkamp, R., & Ames, M. S. (2023). The AECT Archives: Elusive primary sources and where to find them. *TechTrends*. (Scopus Q1)
- Ames, M., et al. (2023). Assessment of the SAMR model in online courses at UGHE. *International Journal of Online and Distance Learning*.
- Ames, M. S. (2023). Chapters in *AECT at 100: A Century of Innovation*. Brill Academic Publishers.

Conference Presentations:

- Advancing Medical Education Conference, Kigali (2025) · e-Learning Africa, Dakar (2023) · TUFH Africa Regional Conference (2023) · AECT International Convention (multiple years)

EDUCATION

PhD, Instructional Design & Technology — Virginia Tech, USA, 2015

MA, Instructional Technology — Virginia Tech, USA, 1999

BA, Philosophy — Ferrum College, USA, 1993