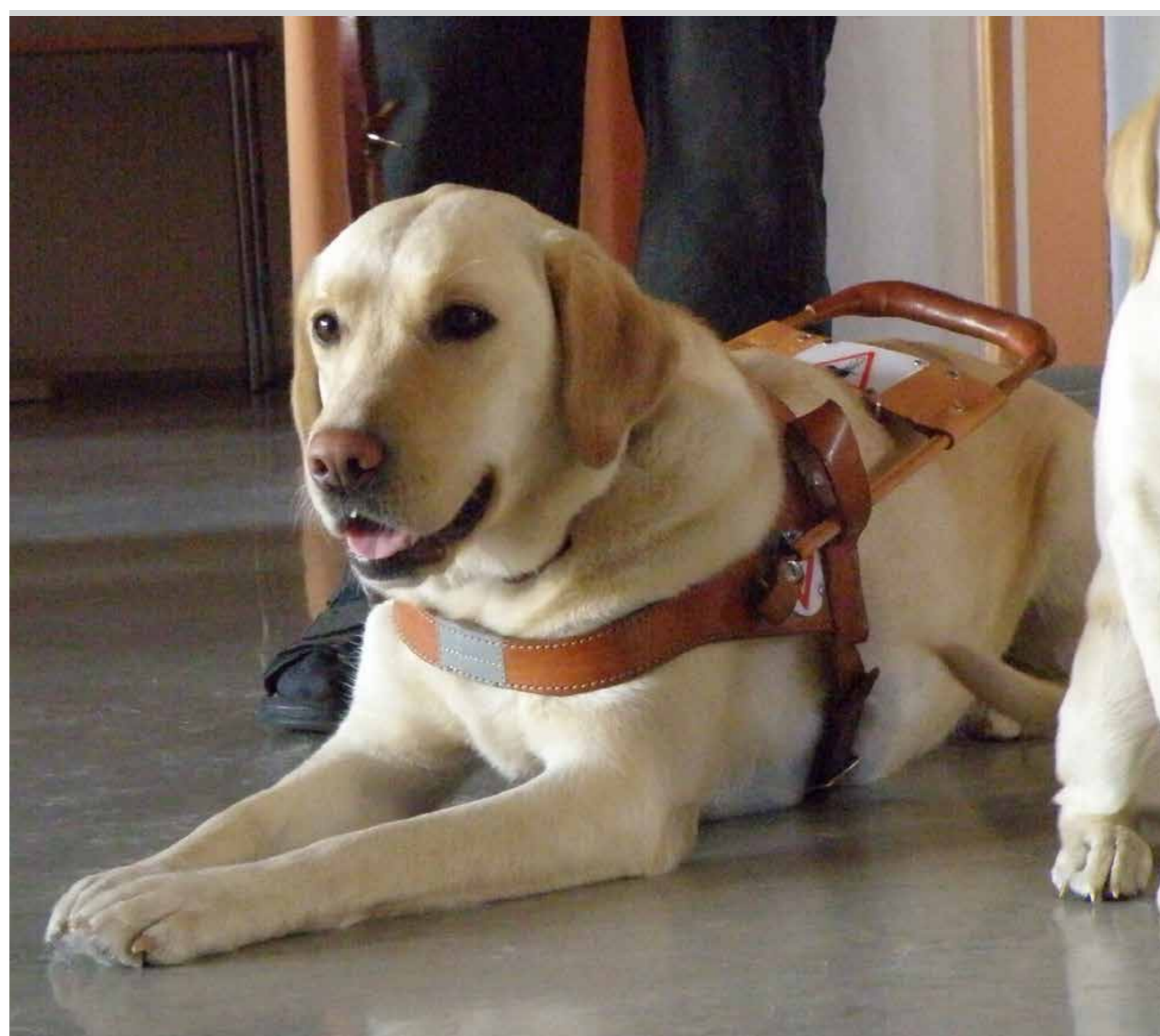


## A guide dog to students with visual impairments

Open distance universities might be better suited to students with visual impairments.

**Tonny Matjila** is a research training and development officer in student support and open distance learning at UNISA.

<http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/26296>.



*Students with visual impairments can be guided safely through university.*

Students with visual impairments need support to create a better future for themselves. There are many challenges for these students, such as transport and accessing the curriculum and books in alternative

formats. Open distance learning may offer a light at the end of the tunnel for these students.

“Studying at an open distance university eliminates some of the daily challenges they may face, like

transport to the campus, changing classes during the day and not having an assistant to assist with daily activities,” says Tonny Matjila.

Students can study at home with a computer that has special programmes installed to assist them with accessing study material electronically. Once a student registers, they are linked with the centre for students with disabilities, where someone will assist them with registration and orientation. They are also connected with the career counselling department to equip them with study skills, guidance in time management and academic writing, as well as advice for handling stress.

By giving them the correct information in the format they prefer - whether Braille or electronic copy - universities can make sure that they have every chance at succeeding in university.

“Lecturers need to be aware of the technological challenges they face and allow them extra time to submit assignments and write exams.”



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