

BLIND AND LOW VISION TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS



Published by

Department of Education and Training

Melbourne

June 2019

© June 2019 State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training)

The copyright in this document is owned by the State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), or in the case of some materials, by third parties (third party materials). No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, the National Education Access License for Schools (NEALS) (see below) or with permission.

An educational institution situated in Australia which is not conducted for profit, or a body responsible for administering such an institution may copy and communicate the materials, other than third party materials, for the educational purposes of the institution.

Authorised by the Department of Education and Training

2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre's Vision Technology Library supports students who are **blind or partially sighted** to fully access and participate in **school-based learning**.

CONTENTS

Overview.....	4
Vision Technology Library	4
Inclusive education policy and practice	5
What is provided.....	6
Eligibility criteria.....	7
How to request an item	7
Equipment for staff training	8
Assessment process	8
Assessment priorities	8
Application outcomes	10
Additional considerations	10
Delivery of equipment	10
Transferring items to another school	10
Maintenance and repair	10
Replacing equipment	11
Recording and tracking assets.....	11
Appropriate use of equipment (taking items home).....	11
Misuse, wilful damage or loss of equipment	11
Legal obligations	11
Training and professional learning.....	12
Annual Library Stocktake	12
Returning equipment	12
Further support and guidance	13

OVERVIEW

The Department provides specialised equipment and technology to support eligible students who are blind or partially sighted to fully access and participate in school-based learning. Technology is lent to Victorian government schools through the Statewide Vision Resource Centre's (SVRC's) Vision Technology Library.

This guidance supports Victorian government schools to understand the purpose of this library and how they can apply for equipment.

VISION TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY

Blindness and vision impairment are low-incidence disabilities that affect a small number of students currently attending Victorian schools. The impact of vision impairment can be profound, but with high-quality teaching and reasonable adjustments, including the provision of appropriate technology, students who are blind or have low vision can achieve learning outcomes on-par with their sighted peers.

The Department's Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) provides supports, including the provision of a range of technology options, for students who are blind or have low vision through its Vision Technology Library. SVRC procures items to be part of this library, based on the identified demand from schools.

The Vision Technology Library consists of over two thousand items, most of which are in use in schools across Victoria. Items have been funded primarily through the Department of Education and Training's (the Department's) *2018 Equipment Boost for Schools initiative* and the *2012/13 More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership program*. The library is maintained by the Department, through SVRC.

Through the Vision Technology Library, the Department is:

- investing in equipment and technology that will support students who are blind or partially sighted to fully access and participate in school-based learning
- giving schools the opportunity to apply to access equipment which will address an identified need and will have a profound impact on student participation, learning and achievement
- providing teachers and allied professionals with a short term loan of specialised equipment for the purposes of training and student support.

The services provided by SVRC align with the four essential elements of the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) by building Professional Leadership and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, as well as promoting Community Engagement in Learning and Positive Climates for Learning.

STATEWIDE VISION RESOURCE CENTRE (SVRC)

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) is a service of the Department of Education and Training, supporting inclusion and achievement for Victorian students who are blind or have low vision. It provides:

- transcription of learning materials into accessible formats
- professional learning and training for education professionals
- specialised teaching programs for eligible students
- specialised equipment and technologies for schools, via the Vision Technology Library
- the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic, in partnership with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

For more information, see:

Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) website:
www.svrc.vic.edu.au

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Inclusive education means that all members of every school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture. This includes making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

Specialised equipment and assistive technology supports inclusive education practice by:

- removing barriers to access to curriculum content
- supporting full participation of students in learning activities
- supporting students to demonstrate knowledge and strengths at assessment
- allowing students with and without disabilities and additional learning needs to participate and learn together in the same classes/environment.

The services provided by the Vision Technology Library align with the Department's SHARE Principles of Inclusive Education. It provides schools with specialised resources so that they can meet the unique requirements of their students in line with these principles.

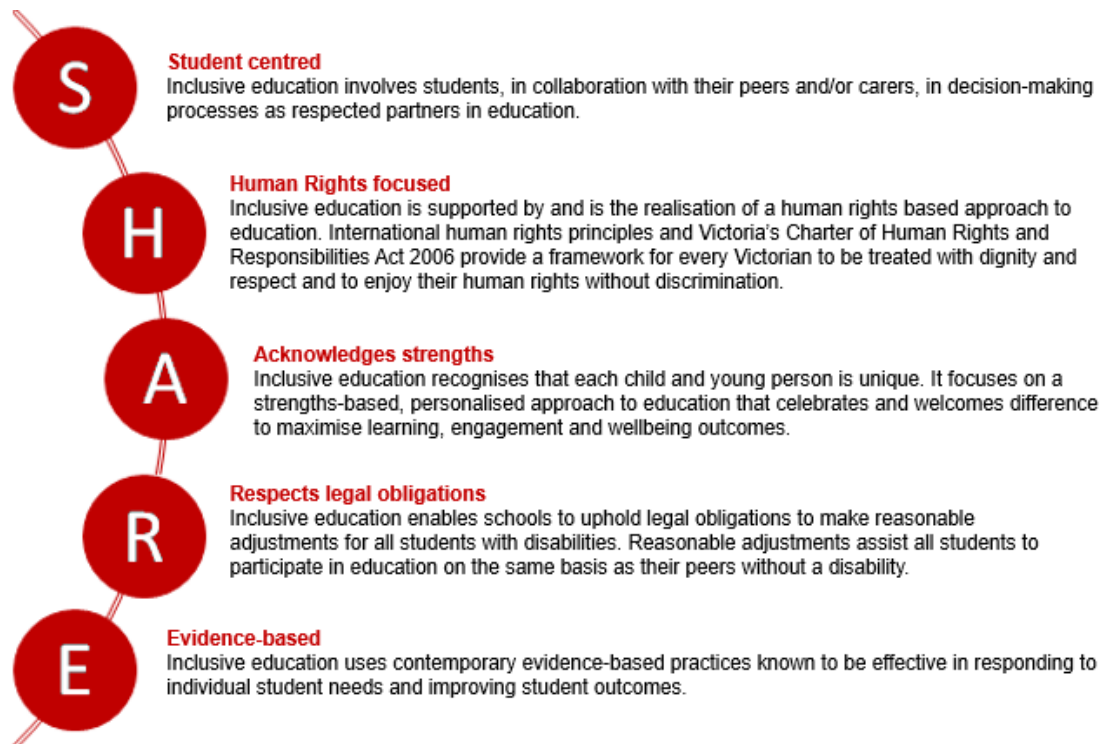


Figure 1. The Department of Education and Training's SHARE Principles of Inclusive Education.

WHAT IS PROVIDED

The Vision Technology Library provides specialised equipment and assistive technologies to address identified vision-related needs within a school, which will have a demonstrated impact on students' access, participation and/or learning. This includes all aspects of school life, including classroom learning, co-curricular activities and access to school-based recreational opportunities.

Where applicable, support for maintaining loaned equipment and staff training in the use of this equipment will be provided by the SVRC. Staff working with eligible students can also apply to borrow equipment for a short period of time for the purposes of professional learning.

No funding is provided directly to schools through this service. All equipment is owned and managed by SVRC. Specialised blind and low vision equipment lending is not dependent on other funding provided through the Program for Students with Disabilities.

In scope	Out of scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Specialised equipment ✓ Assistive technologies (including software) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Equipment that can present a risk of physical harm, restraint or exclusion within the school environment if not appropriately supervised × Equipment that does not provide support for a specific blindness or low-vision impairment × Equipment that is deemed not appropriate for inclusion in a technology library either due to its low upfront cost or its consumable nature. (Items should be able to be tracked, returned and re-lent to other schools at a reasonable cost) × Permanent infrastructural improvements and modifications to school buildings or grounds × Equipment readily provided elsewhere (for example, equipment provided under other departmental programs, or reasonable and necessary supports funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)) × Equipment and technology for students in non-government schools × Equipment or technologies already purchased × Funding directly acquitted to schools (for example, for staffing costs) × Glasses and eyewear × Equipment that does not align in any other way with the Department's SHARE principles of inclusive education.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Equipment from this library will be lent out to Victorian government schools, following an assessment of the suitability of requests.

Student eligibility for this program will be determined by the Department's Educational Vision Assessment Clinic¹ (EVAC). EVAC is staffed by a team of specialists including a paediatric ophthalmologist and orthoptist from the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and education officers (specialist educators in vision impairment) from SVRC. EVAC includes a clinical eye assessment at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and a functional vision assessment at the student's school. EVAC is also used to determine eligibility for the Department's Visiting Teacher service and for all of the other services provided by SVRC.

Equipment is only loaned to Victorian government schools whilst an eligible student is currently enrolled and using the equipment. When an eligible student leaves a school, equipment must be immediately returned to SVRC, or (subject to approval) transferred to the student's new Victorian government school.

Victorian government school staff and Visiting Teachers working directly with eligible students are also able to apply to borrow items for short-term loan (no more than one Term). This technology is provided in order to support the ongoing professional learning of staff working with eligible students.

Non-government schools are not eligible to apply.

HOW TO REQUEST AN ITEM

Applications must be completed online at <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/collaboration/SVRC>. (Department of Education and Training user ID and password required).

In most instances applications should be completed on behalf of the school by the eligible student's Visiting Teacher (Vision). If a Visiting Teacher is not available to complete this application, schools should contact vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au to make alternative arrangements. Schools must ensure that their principal is aware of and supports the application before it is submitted.

Schools must use the online application form to select the individual pieces of equipment or technology they wish to borrow. **Schools can only request to borrow equipment that is currently listed as available.** If an item is not available, schools can submit ideas for new items via an online suggestion form, which can be accessed from the above link. SVRC will contact you if this item becomes available.

The online application must outline how the student's vision impairment impacts them at school, and how the recommended technology will support their learning and engagement. The application must provide supporting evidence to justify each request. This may include professional advice in relation to the student's needs, such as a formal assessment by a clinician.

Where possible, the application should also explain how the requested equipment was identified as the most suitable solution to address the identified need, including details of any alternative options that were considered and why they were not suitable. Example applications can be found on SVRC's website, www.svrc.vic.edu.au.

Applicants should provide details of any other applications or sources of funding that have been considered to address the identified need. They must also include the time-frame that each item is expected to be borrowed for.

¹ In exceptional circumstances, SVRC can determine whether to lend equipment to a school for a student who has not yet been seen by EVAC, based on clear evidence, including a recent ophthalmological assessment.

Equipment for staff training

Equipment and technology is available for short-term loan to Victorian government school staff and Visiting Teachers working directly with eligible students, for the purpose of training and professional learning.

To apply, teachers or allied professionals should submit an online application at <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/collaboration/SVRC>. (Department of Education and Training user ID and password required). If you cannot view the page, please contact SVRC to request access.

Applications must be endorsed by the staff member's Principal or manager. It also must include a detailed description of how this equipment loan will help the staff member to enable or improve student access and participation at school.

Loans for the purpose of staff training will be provided for no more than one-term, after which time they must be returned to SVRC.

Equipment such as embossers or printers that are used to support a student over a longer period of time should be applied for via the student's application.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

SVRC will review the eligibility and appropriateness of each equipment request, in line with the process outlined on the next page. This assessment process will ensure that items are lent to schools in a fair and transparent manner, focused on achieving positive student outcomes.

Once a request is received, it will be assessed by an expert panel consisting of the SVRC Vision Technology Library Coordinator and two specialist teachers from SVRC. The panel will meet regularly (at least once per-month during term-time) and will make a judgement based on the process outlined on the next page.

The expert panel may nominate an alternative item or an alternative loan timeframe to that which was applied for, based on what they believe will best meet the student's needs. SVRC will inform the applicant of any modifications made to their request and provide an explanation for why any changes have been made.

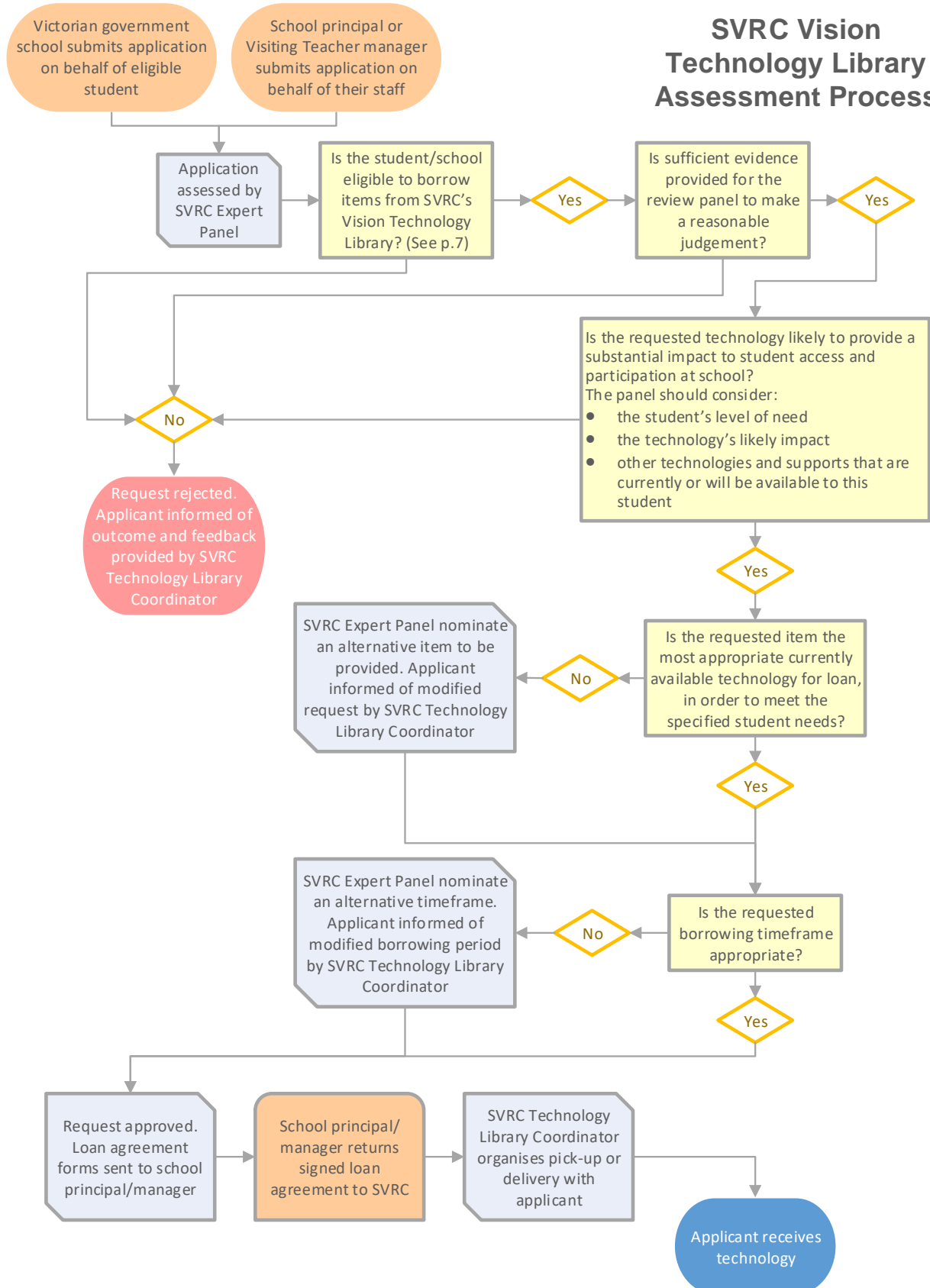
Applicants may withdraw their application at any stage by contacting the SVRC Technology Library Coordinator. If an application has been withdrawn or rejected due to insufficient evidence, a new application for this equipment can be made. Applicants who have previously had their request rejected are advised to contact SVRC and seek feedback prior to re-submitting.

Assessment priorities

The assessment of equipment requests will ensure public assets are used appropriately and that the provision of equipment is efficient, equitable and focused on achieving clear positive student outcomes.

Where two or more applications are considered concurrently by the Expert Panel for a single piece of available equipment, priority will be given to applications that best demonstrate that the requested equipment addresses an identified student need, adds value to existing supports and will have a profound impact on students' access, participation and learning at school.

SVRC Vision Technology Library Assessment Process



APPLICATION OUTCOMES

SVRC will contact successful applicants via email and will provide them with an equipment loan agreement, outlining the item/s that are being offered and the terms of the loan. In order to borrow the listed item/s, the applicant must:

- complete and return the equipment loan agreement to SVRC, ensuring that this have been agreed to and signed by their Principal or manager
- coordinate the pickup or delivery of any loaned equipment with SVRC

SVRC will notify unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of their application. Individual feedback on unsuccessful applications will be provided on request.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Delivery of equipment

Once an equipment loan agreement form has been signed and returned, SVRC will contact the applicant to organise the delivery of the item/s. Where possible, SVRC may request support from the student's Visiting Teacher to pick-up and deliver items. Alternatively, items may be couriered out to the school, at the discretion of SVRC.

Transferring items to another school

If an eligible student transfers enrolment to a different Victorian government school, it may be possible to transfer previously loaned item/s to the student's new school. For this to happen, an equipment loan transfer agreement must be completed and signed by both the Principal of the school that the student is leaving and by the Principal of the new school. Schools can request a template equipment loan transfer agreement from vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au.

If a student transfers schools without both the old and new school completing an equipment transfer agreement, or if a student transfers to a non-Victorian government school, all loaned items must be immediately returned to SVRC.

Items loaned to a school cannot be transferred to another school for use by a different student. Unused equipment must be returned to SVRC, so that it is available for other schools to apply to borrow.

Maintenance and repair

Where possible, newly purchased equipment will include extended warranties for repair and maintenance. When maintenance and repair is required, schools will be responsible for liaising directly with the supplier, with support from the SVRC Technology Library Coordinator.

In cases where equipment is no longer within warranty, reasonable repair and maintenance costs will be covered by SVRC, so long as it is clear that the school and parent have made every effort to ensure this equipment has been used appropriately. To apply for maintenance or repairs, contact vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au

SVRC will thoroughly check second-hand equipment prior to reassignment, to ensure all items are lent out in good working order.

Replacing equipment

When there is a continuing student need, it is expected that any loaned equipment should be used for as long as it can to adequately meet this need. If equipment is no longer able to carry out its original purpose, the school should apply online (in the same way as for a new item) to borrow a replacement. Replacements will only be provided when SVRC is satisfied that the original equipment no longer provides its intended function, and that the school has made every effort to ensure this equipment has been used and stored appropriately.

Recording and tracking assets

Schools should note that equipment and technology will remain the property of the SVRC and must be managed in compliance with the SVRC loan agreement. Regardless of value, library items should not be recorded on the borrowing school's asset registry, as it is not their property.

Appropriate use of equipment (taking items home)

Schools are responsible for ensuring that items borrowed from the Vision Technology Library are used appropriately and stored securely. Schools are encouraged to use their discretion in deciding whether to allow students to take items home outside of school hours. In deciding how to manage this equipment, schools are encouraged to speak with the student and their parents about how to maximise the beneficial use of each item, while preventing misuse and avoiding unnecessary damage. Schools may choose to create and send their own user agreement forms to families, detailing expectations regarding care for equipment on loan from SVRC.

Misuse, wilful damage or loss of equipment

Schools are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that loaned equipment is kept in good working order. If the equipment is broken or rendered inoperable through misuse or wilful damage, the school may be responsible for the costs of repair or replacement. SVRC will assess applications to repair or replace equipment following wilful damage on a case-by-case basis. If equipment has been lost, misused or wilfully damaged, a detailed report should be provided, outlining what has occurred, to vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Where loaned items have been substantially and/or repeatedly damaged, SVRC may decide to not approve future loan requests, if they reasonably believe additional items are likely to be lost, stolen or damaged. SVRC will notify schools who are unable to borrow additional items. If a school is unable to borrow an item from SVRC's library, they still must ensure they meet their legal obligations to support their students with disabilities (See below).

Legal obligations

Education and training providers must be aware of their obligations under disability discrimination legislation. In broad terms, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)* state that it is unlawful to discriminate against a student on the basis of their disability. This legislation also states that schools are required to provide students with disabilities with reasonable adjustments, so that they can participate in their education on the same basis as other students.

Schools have [Legal Obligations](#) and must comply with [Disability Standards](#) for all students with disabilities, not just those who are eligible for support under targeted programs. Additional resources provided to schools, including through the Vision Technology Library, do not define or limit the support to be provided for students with disabilities or additional needs.

The [Disability Standards for Education eLearning modules](#) can help schools and education providers to understand their obligations.

Training and professional learning

Training (both face-to-face and online) in the effective use of specialised equipment is provided by SVRC. This training is provided by technology specialists, both within SVRC and from external experts, where available.

For information about upcoming training, visit SVRC's website, www.svrc.vic.edu.au. To request additional training that is specific to your school's needs, please contact vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au. Please note: Not all individual requests for training can be accommodated and all training is subject to availability.

ANNUAL LIBRARY STOCKTAKE

Schools that have borrowed items from the Vision Technology Library will be asked to complete an annual stocktake form, which must be completed and returned to SVRC. The stocktake form will be sent out to include an individualised list of items that have been borrowed by that school. Once received, schools will need to sight each item, confirming that all items are in operable condition and are still being used by the eligible student/s.

If there are any discrepancies between the items physically present at school and the list of items sent by SVRC, schools must contact vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au.

RETURNING EQUIPMENT

Schools are required to return loaned items to SVRC prior to the end of the borrowing period, or whenever the eligible student leaves the school (whichever comes first). When returning an item, schools are advised to contact vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au in order to discuss delivery options. Visiting Teachers may provide support to schools in order to return equipment.

Please note the following instructions prior to returning items:

- Wherever possible, all items should be returned in their original boxes
- If items were lent out with carry bags, power cords and/or other accessories, these must be returned alongside borrowed items
- All accounts and passcodes must be removed from iPads and all contents and settings must be erased. This includes logging out of any iCloud accounts
- All loaned software must be de-activated, including Duxbury, Zoomtext, JAWS and Fusion. Please note: Wiping the computer is not the same as deactivating software.
- All student files and folders must be removed from loaned items and transferred to an appropriate storage device that the student can access
- Speech mode must be turned on for all braille note takers
- All stickers or markings made by the student or school should be removed

FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

For information on SVRC's Vision Technology Library, contact:

Statewide Vision Resource Centre Vision Technology Library

370 Springvale Road, Donvale VIC 3111

Web: www.svrc.vic.edu.au

Email: vision.tech.library@edumail.vic.gov.au

Phone: 03 9841 0242