

FAQs about the DEAL Project and the cancellation of the Elsevier contract by the University of Münster, effective 31 December 2016

What was cancelled?

In consultation with some 60 German universities, the University of Münster cancelled all contracts guaranteeing access to online journals provided by Elsevier Publishing, effective 31 December 2016. These include approximately 2,500 academic journals which are of particular interest to the Faculties of Medicine, Chemistry and Pharmacy, Biology, Psychology/Sport and Exercise Sciences, Geosciences, Physics and Economics.

Why was the contract with Elsevier cancelled?

The cancellation came about during negotiations with Elsevier which were being conducted by the DEAL project group. The “Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany” (MPG, Fraunhofer, Leibniz Association, Helmholtz Association, German Research Foundation (DFG) and German Rectors’ Conference (HRK)) launched the DEAL Project under the aegis of the German Rectors’ Conference (<https://www.projekt-deal.de>). The aim was to secure nationwide licensing rights to information services provided by the major scientific publishers, such as Elsevier, Wiley and Springer/Nature. The DEAL Project represents more than 100 negotiation mandates by German universities. The Head of Administration of the University of Münster granted a corresponding mandate. When Elsevier failed to offer the DEAL project group an acceptable proposal for a new contract, the chief negotiators were forced to take this course of action.

How will the cancellation affect my work as a researcher and academic?

Starting 1 January 2017, the current issues of all Elsevier journals will no longer be accessible online. However, you will still be able to obtain the articles via interlibrary loan or rapid document delivery services (e.g. Rapidoc). You will likely have to do the same for articles in issues published in 2016 and earlier because – due to a limited selection of offers by Elsevier – the University could only purchase a handful of subscriptions with permanent archive access rights.

Fortunately, users will still be able to access issues of some 1,500 Elsevier journals published between 1907 and 2002. These will remain permanently accessible to online users thanks to a DFG-financed national licence.

Is there any other way to obtain the articles I need?

If the articles were published in journals for which there are no archive rights for that particular year, you may order them via interlibrary loan or document delivery services.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

If you have any questions concerning the cancellation of the subscription contracts to the Elsevier journals, you may contact the Deputy Director of the University Library, Dr. Peter te Boekhorst (Peter.te.Boekhorst@uni-muenster.de / +49 (0)251 / 83-24023).

What were the demands of the DEAL project group?

The DEAL project group wanted to broker a new nationwide contract with Elsevier Publishing that would provide permanent access rights to all Elsevier journals for all German universities and research organisations, including an automatic open-access switch for all publications by German institutions and an acceptable pricing model based on publication quantity.

How did the University secure access to Elsevier journals in the past?

In past years, various institutes of the University of Münster and the University Library held licenses for about 170 online journals supplied by Elsevier Publishing. According to the licensing contract, cancellation of the subscription would also entail cancellation of access to all online journals. In 2010, the University of Münster also obtained a license to the so-called “Freedom Collection”, providing access to the complete range of Elsevier’s online journals, but not including archive rights.

Who is especially impacted by the cancellation of the Elsevier contract?

Elsevier journals are particularly important to the teaching staff, researchers and students in the Faculties of Medicine, Chemistry and Pharmacy, Biology, Psychology/Sport and Exercise Sciences, Geosciences, Physics and Economics. There are also several journals that are more widely read among academics in the humanities.

Does the cancellation affect access to Elsevier's SCOPUS database?

The cancellation only applies to Elsevier's online journals. Existing contracts providing access to the databases operated by Elsevier Publishing (e.g. SCOPUS) are not affected.

Has the University of Münster cancelled contracts with other major publishers?

No. For the moment, the DEAL project group is only negotiating with Elsevier. The project group plans to initiate negotiations with the other major providers of academic journals, such as Wiley and Springer/Nature, in 2017 and 2018.

Can I still publish articles in Elsevier journals?

The cancellation only affects contracts governing access to the online journals. Members of the University of Münster still have the opportunity to publish their articles in journals supplied by Elsevier Publishing.