SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

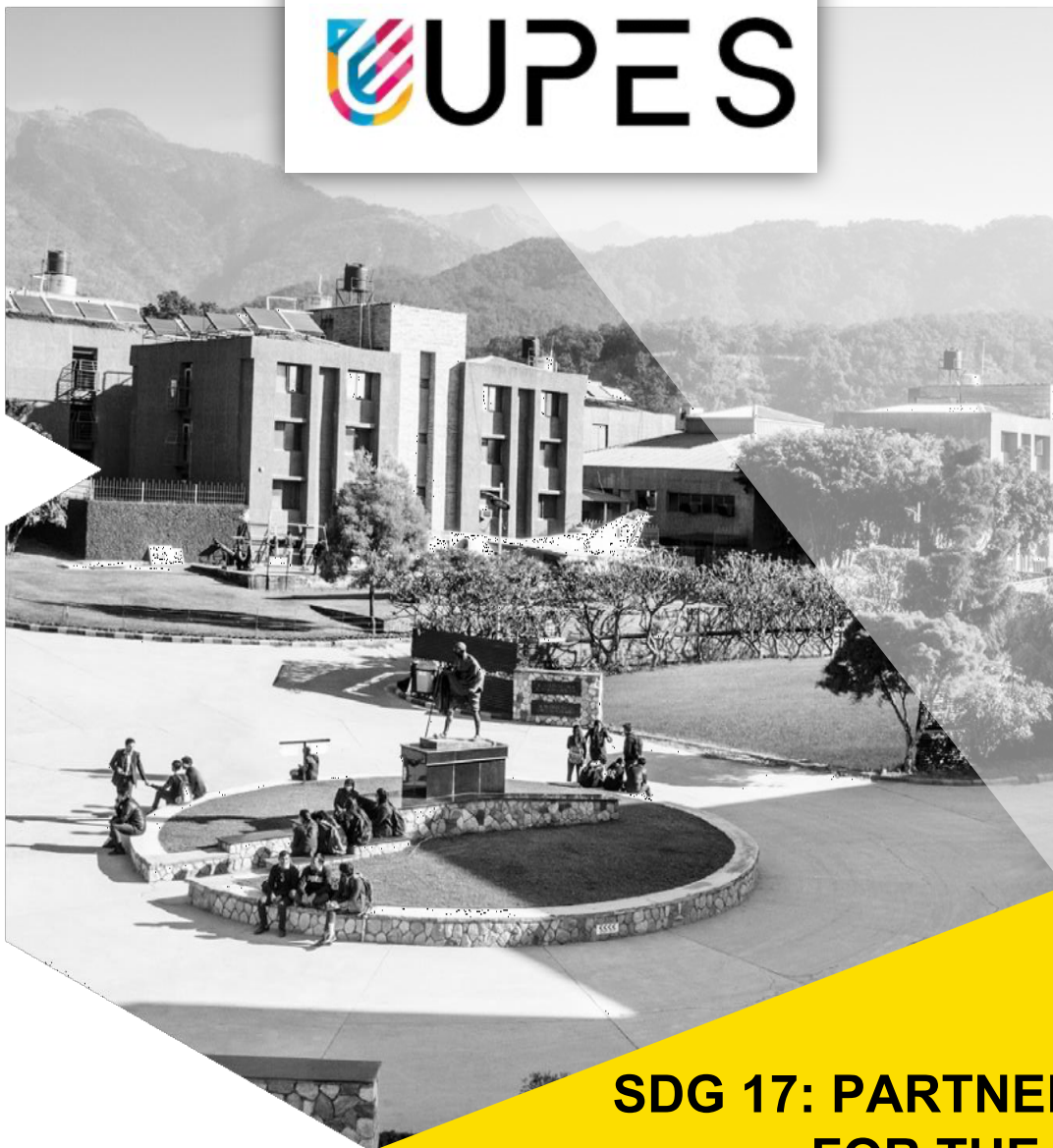**UPES**

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

2025

Table of Contents

17.4.1 Does your university as a body have a commitment to meaningful education around the SDGs across the university?

UPES demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to meaningful education around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by embedding sustainability principles throughout its curriculum, research, and campus activities. Key initiatives include:

Curriculum Aligned with SDGs

UPES integrates sustainability and SDG topics into academic programs across all disciplines. The university offers specialized degree programs focused on sustainability – for example, in renewable energy, environmental law, and sustainable business – and ensures core curricula include modules on climate change, clean energy, and the SDGs [1]. A new curriculum framework (ABLE – *Academic Blueprint for Learning Excellence*) allows students to pursue minors outside their main field, encouraging interdisciplinary understanding of global challenges. For instance, an engineering student can take electives in subjects like environmental science or policy, fostering a holistic SDG perspective [2]. UPES also launched the innovative **"School for Life"** as part of its curriculum – a cross-disciplinary school that equips all students with 21st-century skills and values. Through the School for Life, students take **signature and life-skills courses** such as *Ethical Leadership in the 21st Century*, *Environment and Sustainability*, *Finding Your Purpose in Life*, etc., which instill social responsibility and sustainability awareness alongside traditional academics [2]. This ensures every UPES student gains *sustainability literacy*, learning to analyze global problems through the lens of the SDGs [1].

Mandatory Social Internships (Srijan)

To reinforce learning with real-world impact, UPES requires all first-year students to undertake a **social internship** in the community [3]. Through the **Srijan** program, each student works with an NGO, government body, or social enterprise on development projects – an effort supported by *600+ partnership tie-ups with NGOs* [4]. This mandatory social internship exposes students to grassroots challenges like education, healthcare, and sustainability in local communities, cultivating empathy and leadership skills. By making social engagement an integral part of every degree, UPES ensures that *"education for the SDGs"* is not just theoretical but also experiential for all students [2]. In addition, the university extends free education opportunities to underprivileged youth as part of its commitment to SDG4 (Quality Education). The **Protsaahan** scholarship, for example, fully funds higher education at UPES for meritorious students from a local nonprofit school (Purkal Youth Development Society), with 22 such students already supported [5]. Initiatives like these align the university's core mission with the SDG goal of equitable, inclusive quality education.

Campus Culture of Sustainability

UPES has transformed its campus into a living lab for sustainability, reinforcing SDG principles in daily operations and student life. Green campus practices – such as rainwater harvesting, extensive solar power installations, energy-efficient lighting, and waste segregation systems – allow students and staff to witness and learn sustainable practices firsthand [1] [4]. The university's infrastructure showcases innovation in responsible consumption and climate action; for example, UPES operates solar water heating with a 61,500-liter capacity and is retrofitting all campus lighting with energy-saving fixtures [4]. A pilot **Integrated Wastewater Reclamation Plant** on campus uses microalgae to treat sewage, producing bio-oil, biogas, and bio-fertilizer as byproducts – a practical demonstration of circular economy principles in line with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption) [6]. These on-campus initiatives not only reduce the university's environmental footprint but also serve as educational tools for students.

Student Engagement and Co-Curricular Programs

UPES actively engages its students and faculty in SDG-related activities beyond the classroom. There are student-led clubs and societies devoted to sustainability – from environmental advocacy groups to renewable energy clubs – which organize tree plantation drives, campus clean-ups, recycling projects, and awareness campaigns [1]. Every year, the university holds events like **Sustainability Week** and hosts guest lectures, workshops, and panel discussions on sustainable development topics [1]. Such events keep the university community updated on global sustainability trends and encourage dialogue on solutions. One notable example was the **"Sustainability Fair 2022"** organized by the School of Engineering's Sustainability Cluster [6]. This four-day summit, themed on creating safe and resilient cities (SDG 11), brought together students, faculty, industry experts, and even international participants for training sessions, model exhibitions, and panel discussions on sustainable innovations [6]. The Governor of Uttarakhand inaugurated the fair, commending UPES's educational contributions to sustainability, while the university's leadership emphasized its role in showcasing research and fostering collaborations for cost-effective SDG solutions [6]. Such high-profile, inclusive events underscore UPES's commitment to positioning sustainability at the heart of its academic culture and public engagement.

Research and Innovation Aligned with SDGs

Research at UPES is intentionally steered toward sustainable development challenges. Faculty and students work on cutting-edge projects in areas like renewable energy technology, sustainable transportation, green infrastructure, waste management, and biodiversity conservation [1] [4]. Many of these projects have direct community or environmental impact. For instance, UPES engineering students have developed prototypes such as electric cycles, solar-powered "non-tracking" trees for charging devices, biochar briquettes for clean cooking, and solar dryers for food preservation [4] – all innovations addressing SDG goals like clean energy, industry innovation, and sustainable cities. UPES has even collaborated with specialized institutes on research to protect local ecosystems; a partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India led to designing measures to prevent dugong (sea cow)

entanglement in fishing nets, contributing to marine conservation (SDG 14) [4]. Furthermore, the university was a contributing organization to India's **Leopard Population Report 2018**, working with government wildlife agencies – evidence of research input into policy for SDG 15 (Life on Land) [4]. To strengthen its impact-driven research agenda, UPES recently launched the **RISE Center** (Research on *Impact, Sustainability, and ESG*). RISE is a dedicated hub for sustainability research and education, established in partnership with Aspire Circle (a social impact network) [7]. It focuses on pressing issues like climate change and carbon neutrality, and it operates on three pillars: developing sustainability leadership, offering environment-and-impact education programs, and executing sustainability projects on campus and beyond. Notably, RISE runs an **Impact Specialist Program (ISP)** to train future *"Chief Impact Officers"* through an intensive curriculum of case studies and workshops [7]. It is also driving UPES's goal to achieve a **Net Zero** carbon campus by 2030 and creating a *Sustainability Living Lab* in collaboration with partner institutions [7]. The establishment of RISE in 2024 underscores the university's long-term commitment to integrating SDGs into research, teaching, and operations at the highest level. In summary, through curriculum design, experiential learning, campus practices, and dedicated research centers, **UPES has embedded SDG education into the fabric of the university**, preparing its students and staff to be **"socially responsible leaders"** and innovators for a sustainable future [1].

Outreach and SDG Education in the Wider Community

Beyond its campus, UPES extends its sustainability and SDG efforts to the **wider community through numerous outreach programs, public events, and collaborations**. This community-oriented approach ensures that the university's knowledge and resources benefit society at large, consistent with the SDG ethos. Major outreach and education initiatives include:

Community Education Programs

UPES recognizes that quality education (SDG 4) and lifelong learning must reach all segments of society. In this spirit, the university operates a *Labour School* on its campus dedicated to the young children of construction workers from the local area. This free on-site school provides early childhood education for kids aged 3–8, along with nutritious mid-day meals for their holistic development [5]. By giving the children of disadvantaged laborers a safe learning space and daily nutrition, UPES addresses educational inequality and child welfare in its immediate community. Likewise, through its **"LearnShaala"** initiative, the university has built specially designed learning centers at government primary schools in villages (two LearnShaala centers are already established in Kandoli and Misraspatti, with more planned) [5]. These vibrant learning spaces enhance the infrastructure and learning environment of under-resourced rural schools. UPES faculty and volunteers remain involved with these schools, helping to improve teaching methods and educational outcomes for local children. This hands-on improvement of primary education aligns with the SDG target of ensuring inclusive, equitable education for all. Additionally, UPES contributes to **girls' education** in the community through *Project Payal*, under the banner "Daughters of UPES." Recognizing that educating girls yields intergenerational benefits, this project has awarded scholarships to **200 local girls** to support their schooling and higher education [5]. By investing in girls' education, UPES advances gender equality (SDG 5) and community development simultaneously. Another access-to-education program, **Protsaahan**, partners with a local NGO-run school (PYDS in Dehradun) to identify talented students

from low-income backgrounds and offers them full scholarships at UPES for university degrees [5]. Dozens of students have benefited, illustrating UPES's commitment to lifting up marginalized youth through education. These initiatives show that UPES not only preaches the SDGs but actively works to *"leave no one behind"* in its own community.

Public Workshops and Training in Sustainability

As a university specializing originally in energy and technology, UPES leverages its expertise to educate the public on sustainable practices. The institution regularly conducts **workshops and awareness sessions** open to local residents and stakeholders on topics like energy conservation, waste management, water-saving techniques, and other green practices [1]. These sessions, often led by UPES faculty or trained students, help disseminate practical knowledge for sustainable living among the wider community. For example, UPES outreach teams have organized village workshops to teach waste segregation and composting, and to demonstrate simple water conservation methods suitable for rural households [1]. The university also collaborates with NGOs and local government units to improve adult literacy and to promote sustainable livelihoods in surrounding rural areas [1]. One flagship community project is the **Waste-Paper Recycling Lab**, where UPES students and staff train rural women from indigenous communities in making high-quality products (paper, pencils, jewelry, stationery) out of recycled waste paper [4]. This program not only provides these women with income-generating skills (advancing SDG 8: Decent Work) but also spreads the message of recycling and circular economy (SDG 12) in the community. In a similar vein, UPES has established nurseries and polyhouses for cultivating medicinal and aromatic plants and runs training programs for **women farmers** in nearby villages [4]. Through this initiative – done in partnership with governmental agriculture departments – rural women learn to grow high-value crops like tulsi, lemongrass, chamomile, and stevia. UPES provides technical backup and mentorship so that these women can improve their livelihoods sustainably by selling medicinal herbs, all while conserving local biodiversity [4]. This directly empowers women in agriculture (supporting SDG 5 and SDG 1 on poverty reduction) and promotes sustainable agricultural practices in the region. Another community-centric program, **"Lakhon Khwahishen"**, targets the pressing issue of *period poverty*. As part of this initiative under UPES's CSR wing, the university distributes **reusable menstrual cups** to underprivileged women and girls and educates them on menstrual health and hygiene [8]. By introducing sustainable menstrual products, Lakhon Khwahishen helps reduce waste (each reusable cup can last years, replacing hundreds of disposable pads) and ensures that women do not have to miss work or school due to lack of menstrual resources – thereby addressing both health and education outcomes. These examples illustrate how UPES's outreach goes beyond formal education to build capacity and awareness for sustainable development among the broader public.

Collaborations and Partnerships for Community Impact

UPES amplifies its reach through strategic collaborations with NGOs, government agencies, and other institutions, embodying the spirit of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The university has signed multiple **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with local NGOs** to jointly tackle community challenges. For instance, UPES partnered with NGOs in Uttarakhand to improve nutrition and food security in rural villages, working to eradicate malnutrition among children and women [4]. It also maintains an extensive network of over **600 NGO partners** for the Srijan social internship program [4], meaning students and faculty are constantly collaborating on projects in education, healthcare, rural

development, women's empowerment, and more across the region. These partnerships enable knowledge transfer and resource sharing – students gain real-world experience while NGOs and communities benefit from UPES's technical expertise and volunteer energy. In the legal arena, the *UPES Legal Aid Society* (comprising law faculty and students) offers free legal literacy camps and assistance in surrounding communities [4]. They conduct seminars and workshops to raise awareness about legal rights, gender-based violence, and social justice, thereby supporting SDG 16 by promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions at the grassroots level [4]. Another notable collaboration is UPES's **"Smart Village – Project Utthan."** Under this project, the university has adopted two villages (Dhalani and Koti in Uttarakhand) with the aim of transforming them into the state's first smart model villages [3]. UPES faculty and students work alongside village communities on multiple fronts: setting up better primary education and digital learning tools, improving healthcare services and sanitation, enhancing livelihood opportunities (through skill training and micro-enterprise), and implementing clean energy and internet connectivity solutions. This holistic development model touches on several SDGs (poverty, health, education, infrastructure, etc.) and serves as a live demonstration of sustainable rural development led by the university. By *"joining hands"* with community members, local government, and industry sponsors, UPES is paving the way for these villages to achieve long-term self-reliance and sustainability [3]. Such projects also provide invaluable learning opportunities for students, who participate as interns and volunteers, embodying the SDG ethos of partnership and community engagement.

Public Events and SDG Advocacy

UPES frequently opens its campus to the public and thought leaders for events that spread awareness of sustainable development challenges and solutions. In addition to the academic Sustainability Fair mentioned earlier, the university commemorates international days linked to the SDGs with inclusive events. For example, on **Earth Day**, UPES's School of Engineering hosted a *"Living Lab Summit"* focused on climate change solutions and innovation in sustainability. The summit invited external participants to see student projects and join panel discussions on how to translate ideas into climate action [9]. Similarly, on World Mental Health Day, the School of Liberal Studies & Media ran a public campaign on holistic health and well-being, acknowledging the importance of mental health (SDG 3) in sustainable development [9]. These activities show that UPES's commitment to SDG education extends beyond its own students – the university actively seeks to **educate the wider community** and serve as a knowledge hub on sustainability issues. High-ranking officials and industry experts are often involved in such events (as seen with the Governor at the Sustainability Fair [6]), which not only lends visibility but also facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogues on SDGs. Furthermore, UPES's outreach efforts have a multiplier effect: by training local people and sharing innovations, the university encourages communities around it to adopt sustainable practices. As noted in UPES's sustainability literacy impact report, the university's outreach and awareness programs *"amplify its impact beyond the campus, encouraging sustainable practices in surrounding communities."* [1] Each workshop taught, each village project completed, and each collaborative event helps build a more informed and empowered community capable of advancing the SDGs at the local level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, UPES University clearly embodies a comprehensive commitment to SDG-focused education both **within** the institution and **beyond**. Internally, it has woven sustainable development into the fabric of student learning, faculty research, and campus operations – from curriculum design and mandatory social internships to green campus initiatives and a dedicated sustainability research center. Externally, it actively engages with schools, villages, and civil society through educational outreach, capacity-building projects, and public advocacy events. Every collaboration, whether training women entrepreneurs or partnering with NGOs on health and education, adds to this mosaic of impact. This dual approach ensures that UPES not only produces graduates who are aware of and skilled in addressing the SDGs, but that the university as a whole also directly contributes to sustainable development in the community. Such pervasive and meaningful integration of SDG education and outreach is precisely the kind of evidence that supports a high performance in global impact rankings like THE Impact Rankings, highlighting UPES's role as a **catalyst for sustainable development through education, research, and community empowerment** [3].

References

[1] UPES, "Sustainability Literacy at UPES University," [Online]. Available: https://upeswebsitecdn-prod-hphqfhc0b8h2ffhf.a02.azurefd.net/drupal-data/SDG/17.4.4.pdf. [Accessed 9 2025].

[2] UPES, "Education for SDGs: specific courses on," [Online]. Available: https://upeswebsitecdn-prod-hphqfhc0b8h2ffhf.a02.azurefd.net/drupal-data/SDG/17.4.3.pdf. [Accessed 9 2025].

[3] UPES, "Sustainable Development Goals," [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/sustainable-development-goals?. [Accessed 9 2025].

[4] UPES, "How UPES is contributing to SDGs," [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/blog/liberal-studies/how-upes-is-contributing-to-sdgs. [Accessed 9 2025].

[5] UPES, "Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education," [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/sustainable-development-goals/04. [Accessed 9 2025].

[6] UPES, "Sustainable Development Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure," [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/sustainable-development-goals/09. [Accessed 9 2025].

[7] UPES, "RISE Center," [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/rise. [Accessed 9 2025].

[8] GUS IMPACT, "GUS ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT," [Online]. Available: https://impact.globaluniversitysystems.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/GUS_Impact_Report_DIGITAL-170124.pdf. [Accessed 9 2025].

[9] UPES, "Does your university as a body have a commitment to meaningful education around the SDGs across the university?," [Online]. Available: https://upeswebsitecdn-prod-hphqfhc0b8h2ffhf.a02.azurefd.net/drupal-data/SDG/17.4.1.pdf. [Accessed 9 2025].