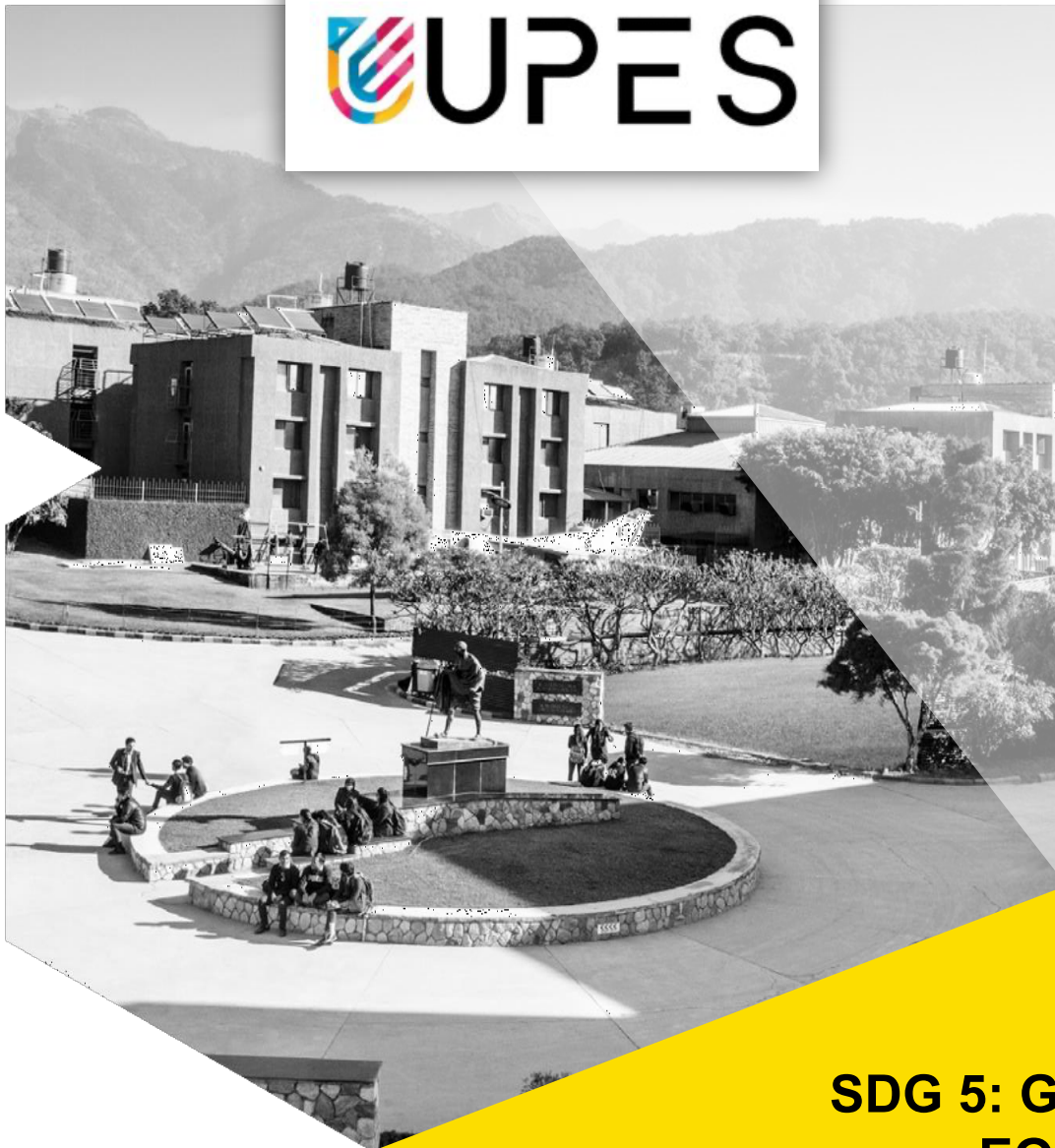




# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**SDG 5: GENDER  
EQUALITY**

**2025**

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## 5.3.2 Does your university as a body have a policy (e.g. an Access and Participation plan) addressing women's applications, acceptance/entry, and participation at the university?

### UPES Policy on Women's Applications, Entry, and Participation Based on Public Web and Social Media Content

#### Commitment to Women's Empowerment

The University of Petroleum & Energy Studies (UPES) has made a strong institutional commitment to **gender equality**, aligning its efforts with Sustainable Development Goal 5.

In 2020, UPES officially declared the **"Year of Women's Empowerment,"** launching a comprehensive initiative called **Project Shakti** [1]. *Shakti* was introduced with the theme *"Accelerating the Gender Equality Journey: Empowering Women from Classroom to Boardroom,"* underscoring UPES's resolve to empower women at all levels [1] [2].

This multifaceted program combines policies, scholarships, and training to foster an inclusive environment where women can thrive academically and professionally. High-profile supporters – including government officials, industry leaders, and activists – lauded *Shakti* as *"a step forward in bridging the gender gap by empowering women in the real sense"* [1].

UPES's approach to SDG 5 recognizes that **gender equality is a fundamental human right and integral to sustainable development** [3]. The university has translated this understanding into concrete goals such as eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal access to education and opportunity [3].

To achieve these goals, UPES has implemented a range of measures – **from financial aid for female students to capacity-building programs for women staff – and cultivated partnerships that benefit women in the wider community.**

Below, we explore the key initiatives, policies, and events through which UPES is advancing gender parity on campus and beyond.

#### Scholarships and Educational Access for Women

One of the flagship efforts under *Shakti* is the provision of **significant scholarships for female students** to improve their access to higher education. In 2020, UPES announced a **25% tuition fee scholarship for all women enrolling in any undergraduate or postgraduate program** [1]. This bold step – a response to the financial barriers that often prevent women from pursuing quality education – led to **over 1,300 young women joining UPES under the scheme, raising the overall female enrollment ratio**

by 8% [3]. The “Shakti scholarship” offer was explicitly aimed at “*speeding up the gender equality journey*” by enabling more women to attend college [4].

In addition, UPES reserves *at least half of its high-value academic merit scholarships for girls*, including opportunities for 100% tuition waivers based on academic excellence [5]. These measures demonstrate the university’s commitment to leveling the playing field in education through financial support.

UPES also reaches out to support **underprivileged and rural girls** through dedicated programs. The university has adopted 49 underprivileged schoolgirls from neighboring villages – affectionately called the “*Adopted Daughters of UPES*” – and supports their entire education and holistic development [2]. UPES works closely with the Purkal Youth Development Society (a local NGO) to offer **100% scholarships for female students** from rural backgrounds who aspire to higher education [2]. In line with its social mission, the university even provides full higher-education scholarships to the children of martyrs and offers special coaching to martyrs’ widows under the *Shakti* initiative [5]. Through these scholarships and sponsorships, UPES is actively **investing in the education of girls and women** who might otherwise lack access, thereby empowering a new generation of women professionals.

## Leadership and Skill Development Programs for Women

UPES distinguishes itself as “*one of the very few universities in India that runs a formal leadership training program for its women faculty and staff*” [2]. This program, also under the **Shakti** banner, is a structured, **nine-month leadership development course for emerging women leaders** at the university [3]. Each year, around **30 women employees (faculty and administrative staff) are mentored** through this program, which focuses on building adaptive skills, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and team management [3]. So far, **120 women staff members have completed the Shakti leadership program**, preparing them to “*shatter the glass ceiling*” and advance into higher leadership roles [3] [2]. By investing in its women employees’ professional growth, UPES not only promotes gender equity in its own workforce but also sets an example that it hopes will “*inspire many other industry players to initiate such causes*” [2]. Indeed, the university plans to open this internal women’s leadership program to participants from other organizations in the future, multiplying its impact [2].

Another important empowerment initiative is **Project Swavalamban**, which targets the most vulnerable women workers on campus. Under the aegis of UPES’s CSR-led *Project Happiness*, *Swavalamban* was launched to “*make the women housekeeping staff self-reliant*” through skills training [3]. With a prestigious grant from the U.S. Embassy and support of the Swachh Bharat mission, UPES organized a **72-hour training program** for its Class IV women employees (janitorial and support staff) [3]. **Forty women housekeeping workers** enthusiastically participated, learning **basic English, technology usage, communication skills, digital literacy, legal rights, and health and hygiene information** from UPES professors [3]. A team of 16 faculty volunteers delivered this training, equipping the women with practical knowledge to improve their confidence and livelihood prospects [3]. *Project Swavalamban* exemplifies UPES’s inclusive approach – extending empowerment and skill-building to women at all levels of its workforce, not just students and faculty.

Beyond campus, UPES has initiated or partnered in several **women-centric skill development and livelihood projects**. For example, **Project Vikalp** provides vocational training to rural women, helping them learn eco-friendly crafts and entrepreneurship skills to earn a sustainable income [5]. This

program has **empowered over 625 women** in surrounding communities so far [5]. Likewise, **Project Artisan** (in Ladakh) trained **27 women weavers** in advanced design and production techniques for traditional back-strap loom carpets [3] [5]. By blending modern design education with preserving local heritage crafts, Project Artisan created new income opportunities for these women artisans while combating rural poverty. These initiatives illustrate how UPES's empowerment efforts extend from its own campus to **uplift women in the broader society** through education and skill development.

## Gender-Inclusive Policies and Campus Support Systems

In addition to programs and financial aid, UPES has instituted strong internal policies to ensure gender equity and a safe, inclusive campus climate. The university's official Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy enshrines a *zero-tolerance stance toward gender-based discrimination* [2]. All hiring, promotions, and student admissions are strictly merit-based – *"UPES does not tolerate any form of bias or discrimination against any employee"*, and any breach of this principle results in disciplinary action [2]. There is explicitly a policy of non-discrimination against women in place, as well as parallel protections for transgender individuals, to foster an environment of equal opportunity for all genders [3]. UPES complies fully with the PoSH Act (2013) in India by maintaining an Internal Complaints Committee and clear procedures to address sexual harassment or any gender-based misconduct on campus [6]. The university publicly commits to a "zero tolerance" policy on sexual harassment and actively works to create a campus free of gender bias and intimidation [dr.ddn.upes.ac.in](http://dr.ddn.upes.ac.in). In these ways, UPES's governance and HR practices back up its SDG5 goals with concrete policy safeguards.

To support women's full participation in academic life, UPES also provides family-friendly facilities and benefits. All women employees are entitled to generous maternity leave, consistent with or exceeding national legal requirements (currently 26 weeks of paid leave in India). The university similarly offers paternity leave for new fathers, recognizing the importance of shared caregiving responsibilities – a progressive step to normalize *both* parents' roles in child-rearing (thus indirectly supporting women's careers). For students and staff with young children, UPES has established an on-campus childcare center known as the *Bright Futures Nursery*. This facility is centrally located on campus and offers free-of-cost daycare services in a safe, nurturing environment [7]. *Bright Futures Nursery* operates during extended university hours (even covering exam periods) to accommodate class schedules, and it provides certified childcare professionals, breastfeeding/quiet rooms, and age-appropriate learning activities for the children [6]. By providing accessible childcare at no charge, UPES enables student mothers to continue their studies and women staff to continue working without the burden of finding daycare [6]. This initiative directly supports women's education and career aspirations, and has been lauded as reflecting *"UPES's leadership in fostering an inclusive educational environment"* for student-parents [6].

Moreover, UPES encourages a culture of gender sensitivity and advocacy through student-led mechanisms. The university has a "Gender Champions" student committee – a group of trained student volunteers (male and female) tasked with promoting gender equality on campus [7]. These Gender Champions serve as ambassadors of respect and fairness, ensuring that *"girls are treated with dignity and respect"* in all campus spaces and helping to monitor and address issues like eve-teasing or gender harassment among peers [7]. They work alongside the administration to conduct gender-sensitivity workshops, awareness campaigns, and to keep an eye on any discriminatory behavior, thereby *"facilitating an enabling environment within the University"* for women [7]. Through such

initiatives, UPES actively engages its student community in the mission of gender justice and strives to embed values of equality in campus life.

Finally, UPES takes a data-driven approach to improving female representation. The university measures and tracks the rate of women's applications, admissions, and program completions to identify gaps and gauge progress [3]. It also monitors outcomes like the comparative graduation rates of female vs. male students and has policies to protect anyone who reports discrimination from retaliation [3].

By monitoring these indicators, UPES can continually refine its outreach and support strategies – for instance, by encouraging more women to apply in STEM programs where they are underrepresented [3]. In summary, the university's policies and support systems are designed to create a level playing field and a safe, supportive atmosphere so that women students and staff can flourish.

## Community Outreach and Partnerships for Women's Empowerment

UPES understands that advancing SDG5 goes beyond the campus gates – it requires uplifting women in the broader community. Through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm and collaborative projects, UPES runs several **women-centric community initiatives**. Among these is **Project Payal**, focused on *promoting education for the girl child* in rural and low-income areas [3]. By providing resources and encouragement for girls' schooling (such as scholarships, school supplies, and mentorship), Project Payal addresses root causes of gender gaps in education at the community level. Another initiative, **Project Samvedna**, operates a **daycare center for the children of local construction workers** [2]. This not only ensures safe early-childhood care for the children but also frees up mothers working on construction sites to remain employed, thereby supporting women's economic participation.

In addition, UPES's **Project Vikalp** (mentioned earlier) empowers rural women by training them in sustainable crafts and helping them form self-help groups for income generation [2]. Hundreds of women have benefited from Vikalp's skills workshops (e.g. in making eco-friendly products), which enable them to earn livelihoods and gain financial independence. Through **Project Protsaahan**, UPES lends support to *meritorious but underprivileged girl students* – for example, partnering with the Purkal Youth Development Society to fully sponsor outstanding girls' higher education at UPES [2]. Protsaahan has provided **full scholarships (tuition and fees) for talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds**, allowing bright young women to fulfill their potential. These outreach programs illustrate UPES's holistic approach: tackling educational, economic, and social dimensions of women's empowerment in its surrounding community.

UPES has also undertaken innovative projects to address issues like **period poverty and women's entrepreneurship**. Notably, the university has funded an organization called **DivIn Pro**, an impact-driven business process outsourcing (BPO) enterprise led by women [5]. DivIn Pro's mission is to "*end period poverty*" by improving access to menstrual hygiene products and promoting sustainable menstrual practices in impoverished communities [5]. By supporting this women-led startup (comprised of women and marginalized professionals), UPES is helping to alleviate menstrual health challenges that affect girls' education and women's health, while simultaneously creating employment for women. This exemplifies how UPES leverages partnerships to drive gender-focused social innovation.



Furthermore, UPES often hosts or participates in events that celebrate and encourage women's achievements. The launch of *Shakti* itself was marked by a high-profile panel discussion bringing together change-makers from government, industry, and academia to share ideas on accelerating gender parity in education and the workplace [2]. On **International Women's Day**, the university has organized special seminars, leadership talks, and recognition ceremonies for women contributors in Uttarakhand and beyond [8]. For instance, the UPES School of Law, in collaboration with state bodies, honored 25 inspirational women from Uttarakhand on Women's Day and held discussions on women's rights [9]. Such events – often promoted through UPES's official social media – reinforce the message of women's empowerment and allow students to draw inspiration from successful women leaders and alumni.

## Conclusion

Through a combination of **inclusive policies, targeted programs, and community initiatives**, UPES is actively advancing the cause of gender equality in line with SDG 5. The university's multi-pronged *Shakti* initiative – spanning scholarships for girls, leadership training for women staff, and year-long empowerment programming – has started to yield tangible outcomes in increased female enrollment and enhanced career progression for women. At the same time, a robust framework of **gender-sensitive policies** (non-discrimination rules, anti-harassment measures, parental supports, etc.) provides an enabling environment for women on campus to pursue their ambitions safely and without bias. By extending its reach into the community through projects like Payal, Vikalp, and DivIn Pro, UPES demonstrates a broader social responsibility to uplift women and girls in society at large.

In essence, UPES is striving to create a pipeline “**from classroom to boardroom**” for women – ensuring that more girls enter its classrooms and equipping its female students and staff with the skills and opportunities to become leaders in their fields [1]. These efforts are continuously supported and monitored at the highest levels of the institution. As the university leadership has stated, “*through Shakti, we aim to bridge the gender gap and create a difference in the lives of women by empowering them in the real sense*” [2]. While challenges remain (as they do globally), UPES's initiatives exemplify how an educational institution can proactively contribute to gender equality – not just by complying with norms, but by pioneering programs that empower women, inspire societal change, and uphold the ideal that **empowering women empowers humanity**.

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