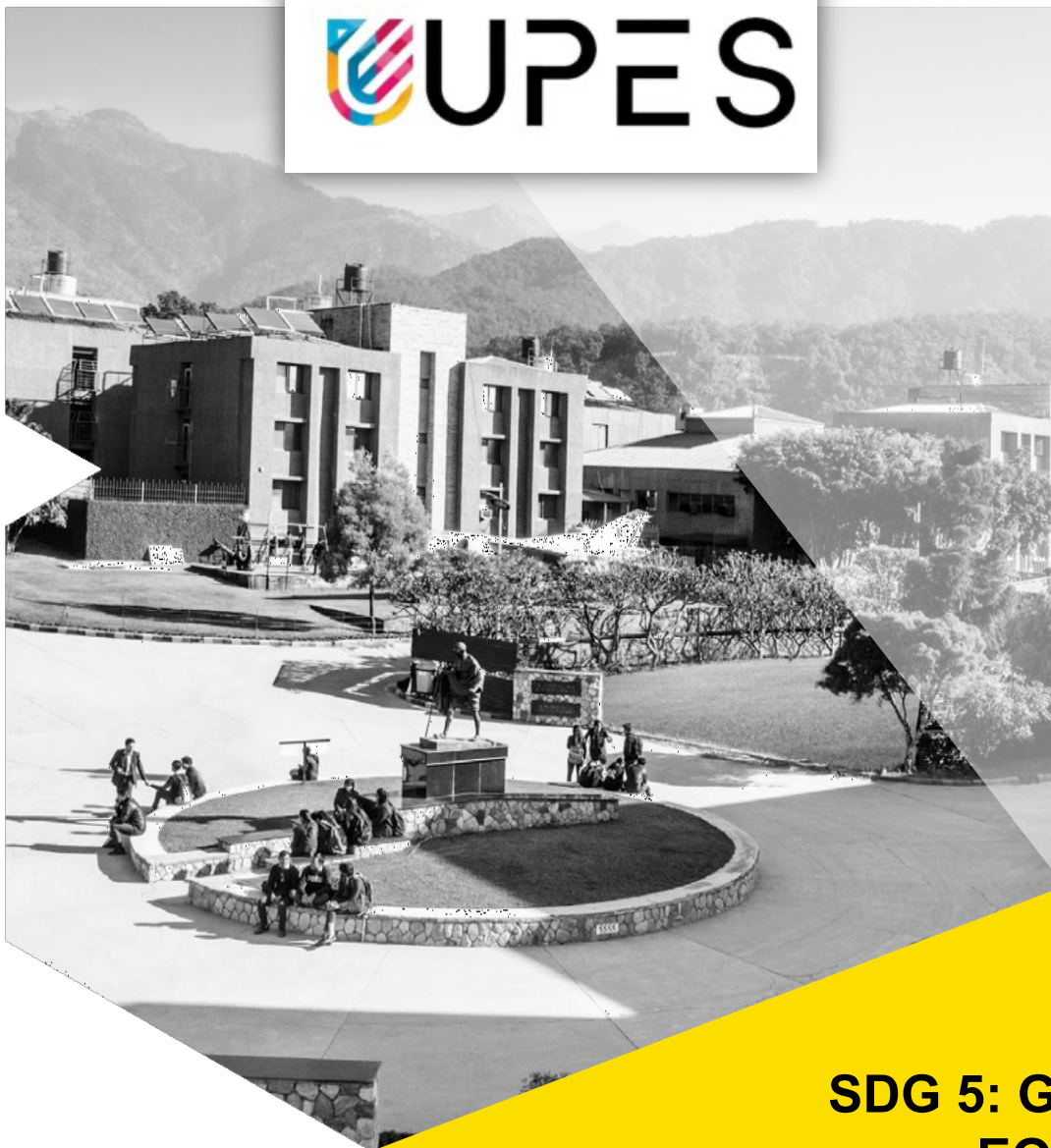




SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**SDG 5: GENDER
EQUALITY**

2025

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5.3.3 Does your university as a body provide women's access schemes?

Women's Access and Empowerment Initiatives at UPES

The University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES) has implemented a range of women's access schemes to promote gender equality in line with the **Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings** criteria. These initiatives provide targeted support to female students and staff through mentoring programs, exclusive scholarships, and other empowerment measures.

Mentoring Programs for Women at UPES

Mentoring for Female Students – “Shakti” Club

UPES launched the **Shakti initiative** in 2020 (declared as the university's “Year of Women's Empowerment”) to foster an enabling environment for its women students [1]. A key component is a structured mentoring scheme known as the *Shakti Club*, which pairs female students with mentors and industry leaders to guide their academic and professional growth. All women students at UPES are given exclusive access to this mentoring network, which takes them on a “transformative journey from the classroom to the boardroom” through continuous motivation, expert talks, skill-building workshops, and club activities [2]. This wide participation far exceeds the minimum 10% female engagement threshold cited in global benchmarks, effectively ensuring that a large segment of UPES's women student population benefits from mentorship. The mentoring covers not only technical career advice but also confidence-building and navigation of traditionally male-dominated fields, helping women students develop leadership skills and aspire to top roles [3]. For example, as part of Shakti, female students receive training in adaptive skills, professional communication, and team management through carefully designed modules, preparing them to “shatter the glass ceiling” in their future careers [3].

Leadership Mentoring for Women Faculty and Staff

UPES is among the few universities in India that run a formal leadership development program exclusively for its women employees [1]. Under the Shakti initiative, a year-long, module-based **Women's Leadership Training Program** mentors female faculty and staff with high potential. Each cohort of this program spans nine months and focuses on adaptive leadership skills, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and managerial competencies [4]. Every year, about **30 women staff members** are selected to participate, receiving guidance from senior leaders and professional trainers; to date over **120 women employees** have completed this intensive mentoring program and are better prepared to take on leadership roles [4]. This internal mentoring pipeline has started to yield results – several Shakti alumnae have advanced in their careers (within UPES and in industry) after undergoing the training [2]. UPES has even indicated plans to extend this successful women's

leadership mentoring model to other organizations in the future [1], underscoring its commitment to women's professional advancement.

Scholarships and Financial Aid for Women

Financial assistance is a cornerstone of UPES's women's access schemes. The university offers multiple scholarships **exclusively for female students**, significantly lowering economic barriers to women pursuing higher education:

Shakti Tuition Scholarship (25% for All Women)

Starting with the 2020 intake, UPES introduced a universal tuition fee scholarship for **all female students**, covering **25% of tuition fees for the entire program duration** [3]. This is applicable across all undergraduate and postgraduate programs, directly encouraging more women to enroll. In just the first year, over **1,300 women students** joined UPES under this scheme, contributing to an **8% increase in the overall female enrollment ratio** on campus [4].

By 2023, the cumulative impact grew – more than **6,000 female students** from across India have benefited from the Shakti scholarships since launch [4]. This large-scale inclusion effort reflects UPES's strategy to make higher education more accessible for women, addressing the gender gap in university enrollment.

Merit-Enhanced Scholarships for Girls

In addition to the base 25% waiver, UPES rewards academic excellence among female applicants. High-achieving girls (e.g. those scoring above 60% in their Class 12 boards) are eligible for **augmented scholarships up to 30% of tuition** [2]. This tiered support ensures that meritorious young women receive even greater financial encouragement to pursue their preferred fields. Such incentives have been vital in attracting talented female students into STEM and other programs traditionally underrepresented by women.

Dual Scholarship for Uttarakhand Domicile Girls

To promote girls' education in its home state, UPES offers an *additional* concession for female students from Uttarakhand. Eligible local women receive a **33% tuition fee discount as state domicile scholarship**, which is applied *before* the 25% Shakti scholarship – effectively giving them around 50% fee reduction in total [2]. This dual incentive, part of the Shakti initiative, was announced in 2020 to boost enrolment of Uttarakhandi girls who often face multiple barriers to higher education. University officials noted that this *"domicile fee concession is an added bonus"*, providing a significant financial cushion for local families and encouraging more Uttarakhand daughters to aim high and *"break the glass ceiling"* [2].

Full Scholarships for Underprivileged Young Women

Beyond mainstream admissions, UPES partners with community organizations to support girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Notably, the university works closely with the **Purkal Youth Development Society (PYDS)** to identify meritorious underprivileged girls and offers them **100% scholarships to pursue higher education at UPES** [5]. Through this collaboration (often referred to as *Project Protsaahan*), the university covers full academic fees and provides mentorship and career guidance to the selected female students, enabling them to transform their lives through education. Several such fully sponsored scholars have been enrolled, exemplifying UPES's commitment to inclusivity.

“Adopted Daughters of UPES” Program

Under a community initiative called *Project Payal*, UPES has adopted dozens of girl students from neighboring rural areas to nurture their educational journey. The university currently **supports 49 underprivileged girls** from villages around its campus – lovingly termed the “*Adopted Daughters of UPES*” – by funding their schooling and personal development [5].

These girls are provided financial assistance, exposure to campus resources, and enrichment activities to prepare them for higher studies. When they later qualify for university, many will be primed to take advantage of UPES's scholarships and continue into tertiary education. This long-term investment in the girl child creates a pipeline of empowered young women ready to enter college.

Impact:

The scholarship schemes above have had measurable positive outcomes. UPES reports a significant rise in female student intake and diversity on campus since launching Shakti – female enrollment grew by about **8% in one year** [4], and the momentum continues. By removing financial hurdles, these programs have enabled thousands of women to access fields like engineering, computer science, law, and management at UPES (sectors where women are historically underrepresented).

University leadership emphasizes that the goal is not only to increase women's numbers, but also to prepare more “**women leaders across various sectors**” by giving them equal opportunities [5]. This comprehensive financial support strategy is thus directly aligned with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) targets and THE Impact Ranking metrics on women's access to education.

Other Targeted Support Initiatives for Women

Beyond mentoring and scholarships, UPES has put in place a variety of **additional support programs and policies** to empower its women students and staff:

Career Development and Training

UPES provides women-focused career counseling, skill development, and networking opportunities throughout the academic journey. Under the Shakti initiative, female students regularly attend **special masterclasses and training sessions** designed to prepare them for the future workforce [2]. These sessions cover emerging career fields (for instance, **“New Collar”* jobs in STEM industries) and build competencies like leadership, innovation, and personal branding for women early in their careers. The university also invites successful women professionals and alumni to conduct talks, panel discussions, and workshops – offering its female students relatable role models and practical guidance. Such targeted coaching has helped many UPES women confidently pursue internships and placements in traditionally male-dominated domains. As one example, UPES organized a dedicated workshop to **prepare girl students for new-collar jobs in STEM**, challenging stereotypes and equipping participants with in-demand tech skills and industry mentorship [2]. By supplementing academic learning with these programs, UPES ensures its women graduates are career-ready and empowered to take on leadership roles in their fields.

Safe and Inclusive Campus Environment

Ensuring women’s safety and equal inclusion on campus is a top priority for UPES. The university implements **strict anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies** to provide a secure learning and working environment for female students and employees [6]. An official *Anti-Discrimination Cell* oversees any complaints of bias on the basis of gender (among other categories), and the university has a formal **Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment** in place, in line with legal requirements. According to UPES guidelines, the institution is *“committed to provide [a] safe working and academic environment to all girl students and its women employees,”* with clear procedures for redressal of any sexual harassment complaints [6].

Regular awareness workshops and training are conducted for staff and students on gender sensitization (for instance, educating the campus community on respectful conduct and unconscious biases) [3]. Additionally, the physical campus is equipped with modern security measures – CCTV surveillance, 24x7 campus security, well-lit pathways, and transport facilities – to ensure that women feel safe at all times. These initiatives collectively foster an inclusive atmosphere where women can focus on their studies and work without concern for their personal safety or dignity.

Women’s Networking and Support Groups

UPES encourages the formation of peer support networks and clubs that champion women’s causes. The Shakti Club itself functions as a support group for female students, where they can share experiences and find mentorship. The university also celebrates events like **International Women’s Day**, conducts confidence-building programs (e.g. self-defense workshops, leadership talks), and promotes student societies in fields like technology and entrepreneurship with active female participation. Such platforms give women at UPES a voice and a community, furthering their sense of belonging. A testament to this supportive culture is that UPES women have excelled in various arenas – from winning national scholarships (e.g. a UPES student won the Linux Foundation’s Women in Open Source scholarship [3]) to securing placements in esteemed organizations in large numbers. In 2020, UPES proudly noted instances of its female students interning at ISRO, participating in NASA programs,

and bagging multiple job offers, reflecting how an empowering ecosystem can lead to outstanding outcomes [3].

Community Outreach and Women's Empowerment Projects

UPES extends its impact beyond campus through CSR initiatives that uplift women and girls in the broader community. Key outreach programs (grouped under the Shakti and CSR umbrella) include:

- **Project Payal – “Daughters of UPES”**

A girl child education program that identifies **meritorious girls from underprivileged backgrounds** in villages around the UPES campus and supports their schooling and personality development [5]. These girls, referred to as the *Daughters of UPES*, are mentored by university faculty and student volunteers through summer camps, competitions, and exposure visits. By investing in their education early, Project Payal creates opportunities for these young women to pursue higher education and careers that would otherwise be out of reach.

- **Project Samvedna – Daycare & Education for Workers' Children**

This initiative addresses the needs of women in the workforce by providing a free “*day school*” on campus for the children of construction workers and other laborers. The day school offers **daycare, meals, basic education, and health check-ups** for these children [1]. Project Samvedna not only ensures the well-being and early education of kids, but also enables working mothers (many of whom are employed on campus construction sites or nearby) to remain at work knowing their children are in safe hands. This support indirectly empowers those women to sustain employment and improve their family's quality of life.

- **Project Vikalp – Rural Women Technology Park**

Through Project Vikalp, UPES empowers **women in neighboring rural communities** by imparting skill training and facilitating income-generation activities [1]. With support from India's Department of Science & Technology, a technology park has been established focusing on two main areas: (1) **Manufacturing of eco-friendly “Green” pencils** from recycled paper, which provides jobs and promotes environmental responsibility; and (2) **Cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants**, where local women learn to grow high-value crops and make products (like essential oils) for additional income [7]. UPES experts assist these women entrepreneurs with product design (including ICT-assisted handicrafts) and marketing strategies to help them become financially independent [7]. Dozens of women have been trained under Vikalp, and the program serves as a model of integrating sustainable development with women's economic empowerment.

- **Project Protsaahan – Scholarships for Marginalized Girls**

As mentioned earlier, Project Protsaahan focuses on **sponsoring higher education for underprivileged girl students** in collaboration with the Purkal Youth Development Society.

UPES provides full university scholarships (tuition waivers, and often living expense support) to selected girls who show academic promise but lack financial means [5]. Each sponsored student is also paired with faculty mentors and career service advisors who monitor their academic progress and assist with internships and job placements. This comprehensive support has enabled several young women from socio-economically weak communities to graduate from UPES and secure professional careers – a profound transformation of their “classroom to boardroom” journey.

These initiatives illustrate that UPES’s commitment to women’s empowerment is multi-faceted – spanning financial, academic, professional, and social support. The university’s efforts are backed by policy and monitored for impact.

For example, UPES tracks metrics such as the women’s graduation rate relative to men’s, the female enrollment in STEM programs, and the number of women in faculty and leadership positions, to continuously gauge progress [8]. According to the university’s SDG report, the percentage of female students and staff has steadily risen as a result of the Shakti programs and proactive hiring policies [6]. Moreover, UPES publicly shares success stories of its women students and alumnae – from those who earned prestigious scholarships to those leading startups – to inspire the next generation and highlight the outcomes of these schemes [3].

Conclusion

UPES has established a robust framework of women’s access schemes that address multiple dimensions of gender equity in higher education. Through **structured mentoring programs** (for both students and faculty), **generous scholarships and financial incentives** for women, and **targeted support initiatives** (ranging from career development workshops to community outreach), the university has created an enabling environment for women to thrive. These efforts are well-documented by official sources and have yielded concrete results – increased female enrollment, empowered women graduates, and improved diversity in the talent pipeline [4] [5].

By prioritizing women’s education and empowerment in its strategic plan, UPES not only aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 but also positions itself favorably in global impact rankings. The comprehensive approach – from “classroom to boardroom” – exemplifies best practices in higher education aimed at closing the gender gap. In summary, **UPES does provide extensive women’s access schemes**, and it continues to expand these programs to ensure that women learners and leaders are fully supported, thus aspiring to the highest standards of inclusivity and excellence in the academic world.

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