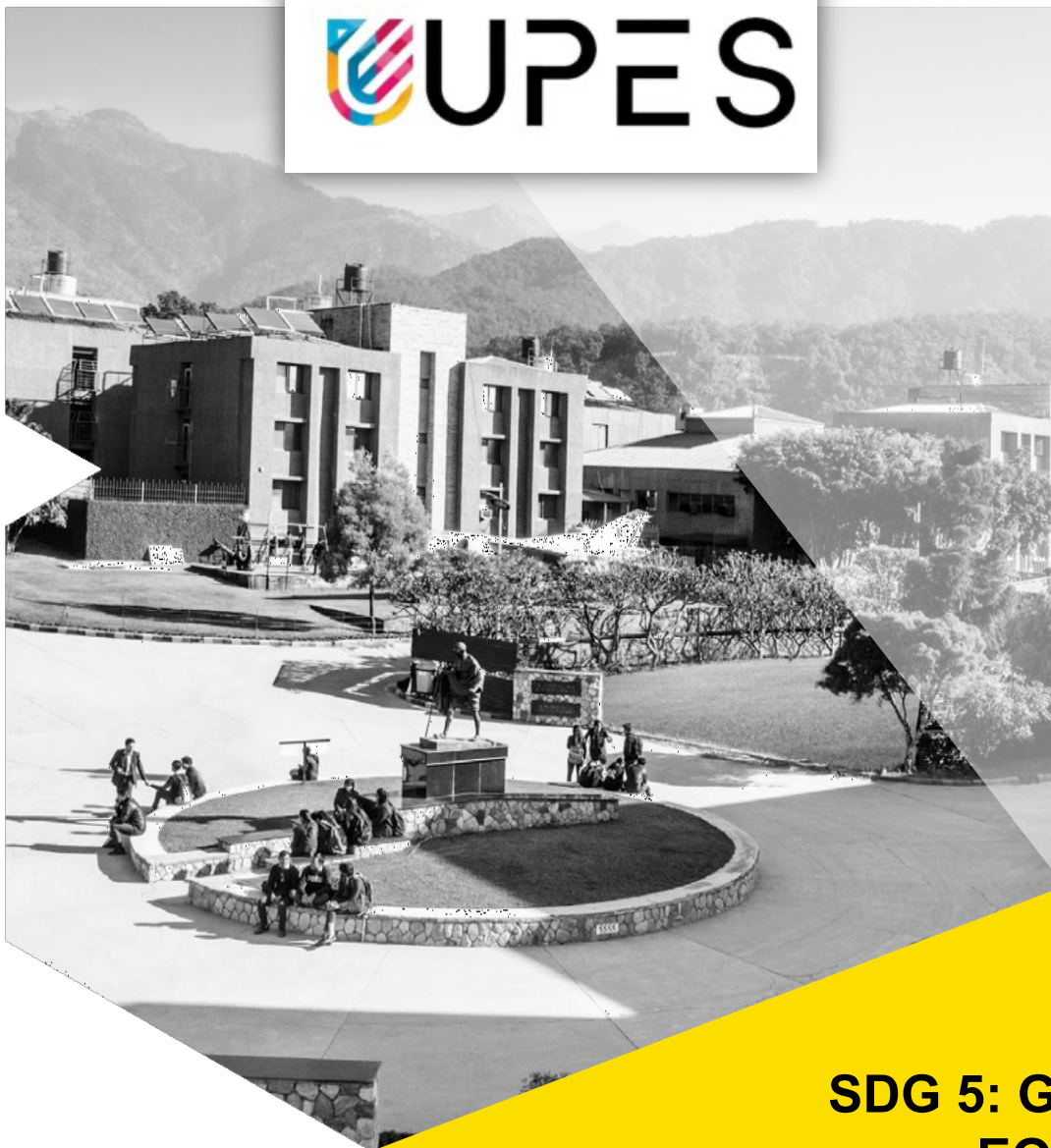




SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**SDG 5: GENDER
EQUALITY**

2025

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5.6.3 Does your university as a body have a maternity and paternity policies that support women's participation?

UPES University Maternity and Paternity Support Policies – Report for THE SDG Impact Rankings

Maternity Leave Policies for Female Staff and Students

For Female Staff

UPES has a comprehensive maternity leave policy that provides substantial time off with full pay. Female employees are entitled to up to **26 weeks of paid maternity leave** for the birth of a child (for the first two children), aligning with India's national standards [1]. In cases where a woman already has two or more children, the policy grants 12 weeks of paid leave for subsequent births [1]. These provisions are **in full compliance with the Maternity Benefit Act (1961, amended 2017)**, which mandates 26 weeks of paid leave for new mothers [1] [2]. UPES requires a minimum of 80 days of service in the prior 12 months for eligibility, matching the Act's criteria [1]. Crucially, maternity leave at UPES is **fully paid**, ensuring women do not suffer financial loss during this period [1]. This generous duration and pay status meet the national legal requirements and underscore the university's commitment to supporting women employees.

Flexibility and Additional Benefits

The maternity policy is designed with flexibility to accommodate mothers' needs. Notably, UPES allows extensions of maternity leave beyond the initial 26 weeks – an employee may request up to **an extra 6 months of leave** (beyond the statutory period), which can be granted by management (utilizing any accrued paid leave first, then as unpaid leave) [1]. This means new mothers have the option of roughly one year off in total if needed, preserving their job security. The policy also provides **work-from-home options** in cases where a pregnant or recovering mother is able and willing to work but has mobility restrictions [1]. Additional paid leave is available for special circumstances, such as **6 weeks of leave for miscarriage or medical termination** and up to **1 month of paid leave for pregnancy-related illness** or complications, on top of the regular maternity leave [1]. Upon returning to work, women are supported through **post-maternity accommodations**: for instance, every nursing mother is allowed **two daily breaks during work hours to breastfeed** or express milk until the child is 15 months old [1]. These nursing breaks (on top of normal breaks) enable mothers to care for infants' needs, reflecting compliance with legal provisions and a family-friendly workplace. In sum, UPES's maternity leave for staff is not only lengthy and fully paid, but also flexible – offering extensions, remote work, health-related leave, and schedule accommodations – creating an environment where women can transition to and from maternity with support and without career penalty [1].

Support for Students

While students are not employees (and thus do not fall under “maternity leave” per labor laws), UPES recognizes the importance of supporting female students who become mothers so they can continue their education. The university facilitates this through academic flexibility and dedicated childcare support rather than a formal leave of absence policy. For example, UPES has established an on-campus nursery (detailed in the childcare section below) specifically to **enable student mothers to attend classes and pursue their academic goals without the stress of childcare** [3]. This means a student with a new baby can remain enrolled and participate in coursework, with her infant cared for nearby. If needed, students can arrange **temporary breaks or rescheduling of exams** on a case-by-case basis (similar to accommodations for any medical or personal emergency), ensuring that pregnancy or childbirth does not force a permanent dropout. In practice, the combination of a family-friendly campus and flexible academic policies serves as the equivalent of “maternity support” for students. UPES’s approach thus addresses the needs of female students who are recent mothers, helping them balance their studies and motherhood so that they can **continue and complete their education** [3]. This supportive stance for student-parents is an important element in maintaining women’s participation in higher education.

On-Campus Childcare Facilities (Nursery, Daycare, Breastfeeding Rooms)

One of the cornerstone support systems at UPES is its **on-campus childcare facility**, which is available to both students and staff. The university has established a daycare centre known as the “*Bright Futures Nursery*” to provide supervised childcare for infants and young children right on the UPES campus [3]. This facility is particularly geared toward enabling **student-parents** (especially recent mothers who are students) to attend lectures and labs knowing their children are in safe hands nearby. **Location and accessibility** are key: the nursery is centrally located on campus, making it easy for parents to drop off and check on their children between classes [3]. For UPES students, the service is provided **free of charge**, ensuring that no financial burden hinders a young mother or father from using the daycare [3]. This inclusive policy reflects UPES’s student-centric approach – all students, regardless of economic background, can access childcare support as needed.

The on-campus nursery is well-equipped with **parent-friendly amenities**. There are **dedicated breastfeeding and quiet rooms** available, providing mothers with private, comfortable spaces to nurse their babies or spend quality time during breaks [3]. Diaper-changing stations and child-friendly furnishings are also provided to make the space convenient and safe. The childcare center maintains **flexible hours** aligned with the university schedule: it operates during regular class hours and even offers extended hours during examination periods to accommodate parents who may need to study or take exams [3]. Parents can utilize flexible drop-off and pick-up timings, which means they can plan around their class or work schedules without a rush [3]. Qualified caregivers and early childhood educators staff the facility, offering not just babysitting but also early developmental activities in a nurturing environment. In essence, the campus nursery allows student mothers (and fathers) to continue their education **without having to pause their studies due to childcare responsibilities** [3]. This significantly reduces the risk of female students dropping out after becoming mothers, as they have a support system that lets them balance both roles.

Childcare for Staff

UPES extends similar support to its employees by ensuring childcare is available for faculty and staff with young children. For those working at the main campus in Dehradun, there is an **on-site day care facility** (run in partnership with a local reputed nursery school) that staff can avail themselves of [1]. Female employees returning from maternity leave – as well as any staff with children under school age – are encouraged to use the daycare on campus. In cases where an employee is based in an office or location without an on-campus nursery, the university facilitates access to **nearby childcare centers** so that all staff have this support [1]. Importantly, UPES allows women employees to **visit the daycare during work hours as needed** (for example, to breastfeed or check on their child) without hindrance [1]. This open access policy means a new mother on the faculty can step away for a short period to nurse her infant at the campus childcare centre and then return to work – a critical support for continuing breastfeeding and bonding. By providing a convenient daycare and accommodating mothers' schedules, UPES ensures that having a young child does not become an impediment to a woman's work responsibilities or career progress. The availability of **nursery services for both students and staff** creates a family-friendly campus atmosphere. It sends a strong signal that women (and parents generally) are welcome and valued in the university community. Such facilities not only comply with legal requirements (India's law requires employers with 50+ employees to provide crèche facilities [2]), but in many ways exceed them by making the service free for students and easily accessible for all parents on campus. The inclusion of breastfeeding rooms and flexible hours exemplifies best practices in supporting parenting within an educational institution.

Alignment with National Laws and Standards

UPES's maternity and childcare policies are closely aligned with, and in some aspects exceed, the requirements of **India's national laws**. The **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017** is the governing law in India that mandates key benefits for working mothers, and UPES adheres to these mandates. The Act expanded paid maternity leave in India from 12 weeks to **26 weeks** for mothers of newborns (for the first two children) and introduced provisions like workplace crèche (daycare) facilities for organizations with 50 or more employees [2]. UPES explicitly bases its policies on this framework: the university's 26-week leave duration, the eligibility criteria of 80 days of prior service, and benefits such as nursing breaks are **"in accordance with the provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act (1961, amended 2017)"** [1]. By providing the full 26 weeks of paid leave, UPES meets the legal standard; by allowing additional unpaid leave up to 6 months and offering other perks, it even goes beyond the law's minimum in fostering flexibility. The Act also requires a **crèche (childcare) facility** on-site or nearby for any establishment with 50+ employees, along with permitting women to visit the crèche during work [2]. UPES fulfills this obligation through its on-campus daycare center and arrangements for off-campus offices [1]. The provision that mothers can take nursing breaks to visit their child is reflected in UPES's policy of two breastfeeding breaks daily up to 15 months postpartum [1], which closely mirrors the intent of the law.

It's worth noting that Indian law does not mandate paternity leave for private institutions – the only formal rule is a 15-day paternity leave for government (civil service) employees [1]. In this context, UPES's decision to grant 15 days of paid paternity leave to its staff can be seen as **exceeding statutory**

requirements and following emerging best practices. This progressive stance is in line with global trends and demonstrates compliance with the broader spirit of gender equality promoted by national policies. Furthermore, UPES provides **90 days of paid adoption leave** for female employees who adopt a child, which aligns with legal provisions extending maternity benefits to adopting mothers (the Maternity Benefit Act provides adoptive mothers of infants a similar entitlement) [1]. All these measures indicate that UPES not only complies with the letter of Indian laws on gender and labor rights, but often goes a step further. The university's policies were crafted to respect these laws and even set a positive example. This alignment ensures legal compliance, and importantly, it contributes to a campus culture that upholds women's rights and welfare as a priority – echoing India's national objectives of improving women's workforce participation and equality [2].

Supporting Women's Enrollment, Retention and Advancement

UPES's maternity, paternity, and childcare policies form an integrated support system that significantly contributes to women's participation in higher education and the workforce – from enrollment, to retention (staying on board), to advancement in their careers or studies. The positive impact can be seen in several ways:

- **Higher Enrollment of Female Students**

By fostering a women-friendly environment, UPES makes itself an attractive choice for prospective female students. Initiatives such as a special **25% tuition scholarship for all female students in 2020** helped boost the intake of women; over 1,300 female students joined under that scheme, leading to an **8% increase in the overall female enrollment ratio** at UPES [4]. This surge suggests that proactive support and incentives can draw more women into higher education. Moreover, the existence of childcare facilities like the Bright Futures Nursery sends a message that even women who have young children (or plan to start families during their studies) will be supported on campus. This assurance can encourage women who might otherwise hesitate to pursue or continue university education due to family responsibilities. In summary, UPES's policies and programs reduce the barriers to entry for women students – be it financial barriers through scholarships or logistical barriers through childcare – thereby improving female enrollment and access to higher education.

- **Retention of Women (Students and Staff)**

The university's family-friendly policies are crucial for retaining women through life transitions such as motherhood. For **students**, the availability of on-campus childcare and flexible academic accommodations means that pregnancy or childbirth does not force them to drop out. A student-mother can continue attending classes while her baby is cared for safely at the nursery, and she can utilize breastfeeding rooms and adjusted schedules as needed [5]. This kind of support is directly aimed at **preventing attrition of female students**; it allows women to return to or continue their studies after having a child, which contributes to higher female graduation rates. For **staff and faculty**, the generous maternity leave (half a year fully paid, with options to extend) ensures women do not feel compelled to resign when they become pregnant. They can take the necessary time off and be assured their position is secure and waiting for them, which strongly aids retention. Additionally, by giving new fathers leave and providing daycare for their children, UPES helps reduce the pressure on women employees at home – a more balanced sharing of childcare often enables women to remain in full-time work. The net effect is that women employees at UPES are more likely to **return to work**

post-childbirth and continue their careers, rather than dropping out of the workforce. Indeed, supportive policies like paternity leave have been shown to increase overall employee satisfaction and reduce turnover [1]. Thus, UPES's approach likely contributes to higher retention rates of talented women in both academic and administrative roles.

- **Advancement and Development**

Beyond just retaining women, UPES actively works on **advancing women's careers** and leadership progression, recognizing that support must continue after the point of return. For instance, UPES runs a program called **"Shakti"** – a targeted leadership development initiative for its women staff. This nine-month program focuses on building adaptive skills, communication, and leadership competencies among female employees, preparing them for higher positions. Every year 30 women staff members undergo this mentorship and training, and to date **120 women employees have completed the Shakti program** and enhanced their leadership potential [4]. By investing in women's professional growth in tandem with family-friendly policies, UPES helps ensure that women not only remain in the workforce but also **rise to senior and decision-making roles**. The supportive ecosystem – from maternity leave to childcare to training – results in women being able to take on promotions or pursue advanced research/education because they have the necessary institutional backing. Moreover, the presence of numerous women faculty and administrators who have benefited from these policies creates role models for younger women. It cultivates a campus ethos where female success is visible and achievable, further encouraging women students to aspire to advanced degrees and leadership positions (closing the loop between education and career advancement).

In conclusion, UPES University's maternity and paternity policies, along with robust on-campus childcare support, form a comprehensive framework that empowers women. These measures are in line with national laws and global best practices for gender equality. They enable women to **enroll in higher education, remain in their academic or professional roles even as they raise families, and progress to higher echelons** without being held back by life events like childbirth. Such an environment directly contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by removing barriers to women's full participation. UPES's experience – evidenced by increased female enrollment and active programs to develop women leaders – demonstrates that when an institution invests in family-friendly policies and an inclusive infrastructure, it reaps the benefits in terms of greater gender balance and the success of its women students and staff [4]. The university stands as a case study of how maternity/paternity benefits and childcare facilities can support and even accelerate women's enrollment, retention, and advancement in both higher education and the workforce.

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