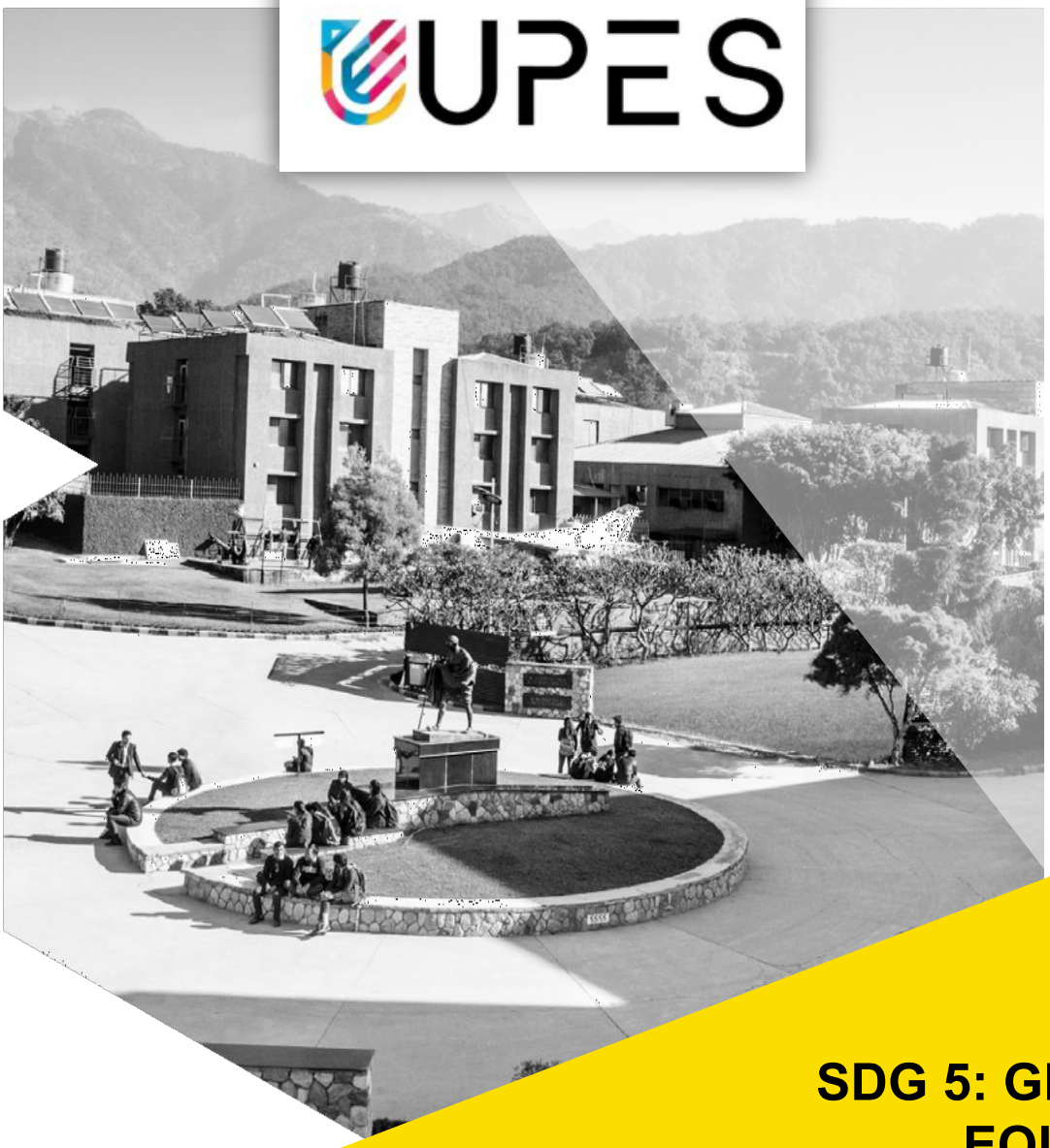
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UPES



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

2025

Table of Contents

5.6.6 Does your university as a body have women's mentoring schemes, in which at least 10% of female students participate?

Women's Mentoring Schemes at UPES University – Participation and Impact

UPES has established robust women's mentoring schemes to support female students academically and professionally, in line with its commitment to women's empowerment. In fact, the university meets and exceeds the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings criterion by engaging *at least 10% of all female students* in formal mentorship programs [1]. These initiatives are comprehensive – encompassing academic guidance, career-oriented mentoring, and personal development – and are delivered through multiple channels, including faculty mentors, alumni networks, industry professionals, and student-led clubs. The overarching goal is to boost women students' confidence, leadership skills, and career readiness [1], thereby fostering greater gender equity in higher education.

"Shakti" – Year of Women Empowerment and Mentorship

UPES's commitment to female mentorship is epitomized by its **"Shakti" initiative**, launched in 2020 when the university declared a "Year of Women Empowerment." **Project Shakti** is a comprehensive program designed to remove barriers for women in higher education. As part of Shakti, *UPES provides a 25% tuition scholarship to all women students for their entire course duration* [2]. Importantly, Shakti also includes structured mentorship and skill-building support: the university conducts special **skill-development workshops, leadership training sessions, industry exposure opportunities, and close mentorship for female students** [2]. Through these measures, UPES ensures that women are not only financially supported but also personally guided, so they can build confidence, excel in their fields, and "have the tools they need to climb up the corporate ladders" [2].

This program's scale and impact are significant. Since its inception, **over 6,000 female students have benefited from the Shakti scholarship and its associated programs** [3], a number that represents a large proportion of the university's female enrollment. By offering mentorship alongside financial aid, Shakti helps create a "conducive environment" for women to develop their potential and aspire to leadership roles [2]. In essence, Shakti's blend of academic, career, and personal mentoring forms the backbone of UPES's women-centric support, ensuring that a substantial segment of women on campus receive guidance and encouragement throughout their education.

Academic Mentoring by Faculty and Researchers

UPES integrates mentoring into the academic journey of its female students by leveraging faculty and researchers as mentors. **Faculty mentorship** is part of the student support system – for example, faculty members guide students through academic challenges, research projects, and skill

development on an ongoing basis. Many female students have cited the constant support and guidance of professors as crucial to their success. *During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, faculty at UPES provided continuous mentorship through quick learning sessions, project guidance, and even personal follow-ups to ensure students stayed on track* [2]. This kind of dedicated academic mentorship helps female students build subject-matter expertise and confidence in traditionally male-dominated fields.

UPES also exposes female students to **role models in academia and research** as a form of mentoring. Notably, the university has hosted events like the *Women Faculty Summit* where students interact with leading women scholars. In one such summit, distinguished computer scientist **Dr. Margaret Burnett** (from Oregon State University) delivered keynotes and interacted exclusively with women in computing at UPES [1]. Such events provide invaluable academic mentorship – students receive advice on research experiences, learn best practices, and see first-hand the achievements of women in STEM academia. By organizing these interactions, UPES ensures its female students have mentors to emulate within scholarly and research domains, thereby encouraging them to pursue higher studies and research careers. These efforts reflect the university's strategic pairing of female students with *"successful women leaders in academia"* as mentors [1].

Career-Oriented Mentoring by Alumni and Industry Professionals

In parallel with academic guidance, **career-oriented mentoring** is a major focus of UPES's women's schemes. The university actively connects female students with alumni and industry professionals who can guide their career development [1]. Through the **UPES Alumni network**, successful alumnae often return as role models – giving talks, holding Q&A sessions, or participating in formal mentorship programs to counsel current students on career paths. (For example, UPES's alumna **Prakshi Rastogi**, now a successful professional, has shared how the mentoring and support at UPES were "a major pillar of strength and confidence building" during her journey [2].) Such testimonials underscore a culture where graduates inspire and mentor the next generation. In fact, UPES recently introduced an **Alumni Mentorship Programme** to systematically pair current students with alumni mentors (virtual or on-campus), further institutionalizing the guidance pipeline from one cohort of women to the next.

Beyond alumni, UPES partners with **external industry leaders** to mentor its female students. A shining example was when *Dr. Tessy Thomas – popularly known as "India's Missile Woman"* – visited the campus to interact with students [2]. Dr. Thomas (Distinguished Scientist and Director General at DRDO) delivered talks on leadership and shared her experiences as the first woman to lead a missile project in India, as part of the National Space Convention 2020 hosted at UPES [2]. The audience of students, many of them young women in engineering, were captivated as she spoke about qualities of good leaders and cutting-edge developments in aerospace [2]. This kind of exposure – where female students engage directly with accomplished women engineers, scientists, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and other professionals – serves as powerful career mentorship. It broadens students' horizons, provides networking opportunities, and helps them envision successful career trajectories in fields where women are underrepresented. According to the university, these mentorship programs pairing students with *women leaders in industry* are instrumental in boosting the career readiness of female graduates [1].

Student-Led Mentorship Initiatives (ACM-W and Others)

UPES also promotes women's mentoring through **co-curricular programs and student chapters**, ensuring a supportive peer community and additional layer of mentorship. One flagship example is the **UPES ACM-W chapter** – the women's wing of the Association for Computing Machinery on campus. Founded in 2015 as the first active ACM student chapter at UPES, ACM-W provides a platform for female students in computing and technology. The chapter's mission is to create an environment where women receive *"equal opportunities"* and can grow alongside their male peers in tech [1]. To achieve this, **UPES ACM-W organizes numerous technical and professional events exclusively for women**, such as coding workshops, "Tech-Xhibition" fairs, and the inspiring "Superwomen" series. Critically, ACM-W emphasizes mentorship and role-modeling: it supports women *"professionally and academically through role-modeling and mentoring in the field of technology"* [1]. For instance, under the aegis of ACM-W India, the chapter hosted a Women in Computing celebration that included an exclusive two-day program **curated for girl students**, aimed at raising awareness of career opportunities and building their confidence [1]. UPES's ACM-W chapter has connected students with leading women technologists (the earlier-mentioned Dr. Burnett keynote came through this channel), and it has gained national recognition – it was honored as runner-up for **"Best Student Chapter" in India** for its efforts in women's empowerment [1].

In addition to ACM-W, UPES encourages other **women-focused student affinity groups**. Notably, an **IEEE Women in Engineering (WIE)** affinity group is active, providing networking and mentorship events for female engineering students (for example, UPES's WIE club hosted a week-long celebration in June 2025 to empower women engineers [4]). Likewise, the **Society of Women Engineers (SWE)** and various departmental clubs often run mentoring circles, hackathons for girls, and peer-support initiatives. The key is that these co-curricular programs are promoted through official UPES channels and work in tandem with the university administration's goals. They allow students to mentor each other (e.g. senior female students guiding juniors) and connect with professional societies, thereby extending the mentoring ecosystem beyond the classroom. By investing in such student-led chapters and clubs, UPES ensures that mentorship is woven into campus culture – from formal schemes down to everyday peer interactions.

Participation Rate and Impact

The reach of UPES's women's mentoring schemes is well above the minimum threshold, demonstrating substantive impact. According to the university's SDG Gender Equality report, *over 10% of UPES's female student population actively participates in these mentoring programs* [1]. This figure attests that the initiatives are not limited to a small select group, but rather benefit a broad base of women students across various schools (engineering, computer science, law, business, etc.). In practice, between the Shakti program (which effectively includes **100% of female entrants since 2020** via its scholarship and associated mentorship opportunities) and the array of clubs and events, a very large number of UPES women receive mentorship support. The **"10%" participation marker was a key criterion for the THE Impact Rankings**, and UPES has confidently achieved it [1]. In fact, given the thousands of female students supported under Shakti alone [3], UPES likely far exceeds this benchmark in terms of raw numbers of women mentored.

The **qualitative impact** is equally noteworthy. Early signs show improved confidence, retention, and achievement among UPES's women students. Many have gone on to win scholarships, publish

research, or secure coveted jobs, crediting the mentorship and encouragement they received. For example, UPES has spotlighted stories like a female tech student earning a prestigious Linux Foundation scholarship – she thanked UPES faculty and the *Placement Coordinator* who "played a pivotal role" by providing guidance and information, motivating her to apply [2]. Another student, after attending international conferences as a delegate, expressed gratitude to her professors and family for "always supporting and encouraging me in my endeavours" [2]. Such testimonials illustrate how a strong mentoring environment helps women **aspire higher** and seize opportunities. Moreover, by providing female role models (from industry pioneers like Dr. Tessy Thomas to successful alumnae and faculty), the schemes address the confidence gap and "lack of strong female role models" that often hold back women in STEM [2]. UPES's approach aligns with global best practices – as noted in a UPES blog on gender parity, closing the "mentorship gap" is crucial for women's success in STEM fields.

Conclusion

In summary, **UPES University has a well-structured and impactful set of women's mentoring schemes** in place, with participation well above 10% of its female students. These schemes span academic mentoring by faculty, career mentoring by alumni and industry leaders, and co-curricular support through student chapters, thereby covering every facet of a student's development. The flagship Shakti program and active clubs like ACM-W ensure that *good mentoring is not a privilege of a few, but a norm experienced by many female students on campus*. All evidence indicates that UPES's efforts are yielding positive outcomes – empowering women with the confidence, skills, and networks to excel academically and professionally. By institutionalizing such mentorship at scale (and making the evidence public via blogs and reports), UPES not only fulfills the THE Impact Ranking criteria for gender equality, but truly embodies the spirit behind it [1] [2]. The university's experience thus serves as a **model of how mentoring schemes can help bridge the gender gap from the classroom to the boardroom**, inspiring a more equitable and inclusive academic community.

References

[1] UPES, “SDG 5: Gender Equality,” [Online]. Available: https://upeswebsitecdn-prod-hphqfhc0b8h2ffhf.a02.azurefd.net/drupal-data/SDG/SDG5.pdf. [Accessed 09 2025].

[2] UPES, “Does your university as a body have women’s mentoring schemes, in which at least 10% of,” [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/SDG5/5.6/5.6.6.pdf. [Accessed 09 2025].

[3] UPES, “Does your university as a body provide women’s access schemes?,” [Online]. Available: https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/SDG5/5.3/5.3.3.pdf. [Accessed 09 2025].

[4] IEEE, “IEEE WIE Celebration Week 2025,” [Online]. Available: https://events.vtools.ieee.org/m/490038. [Accessed 09 2025].