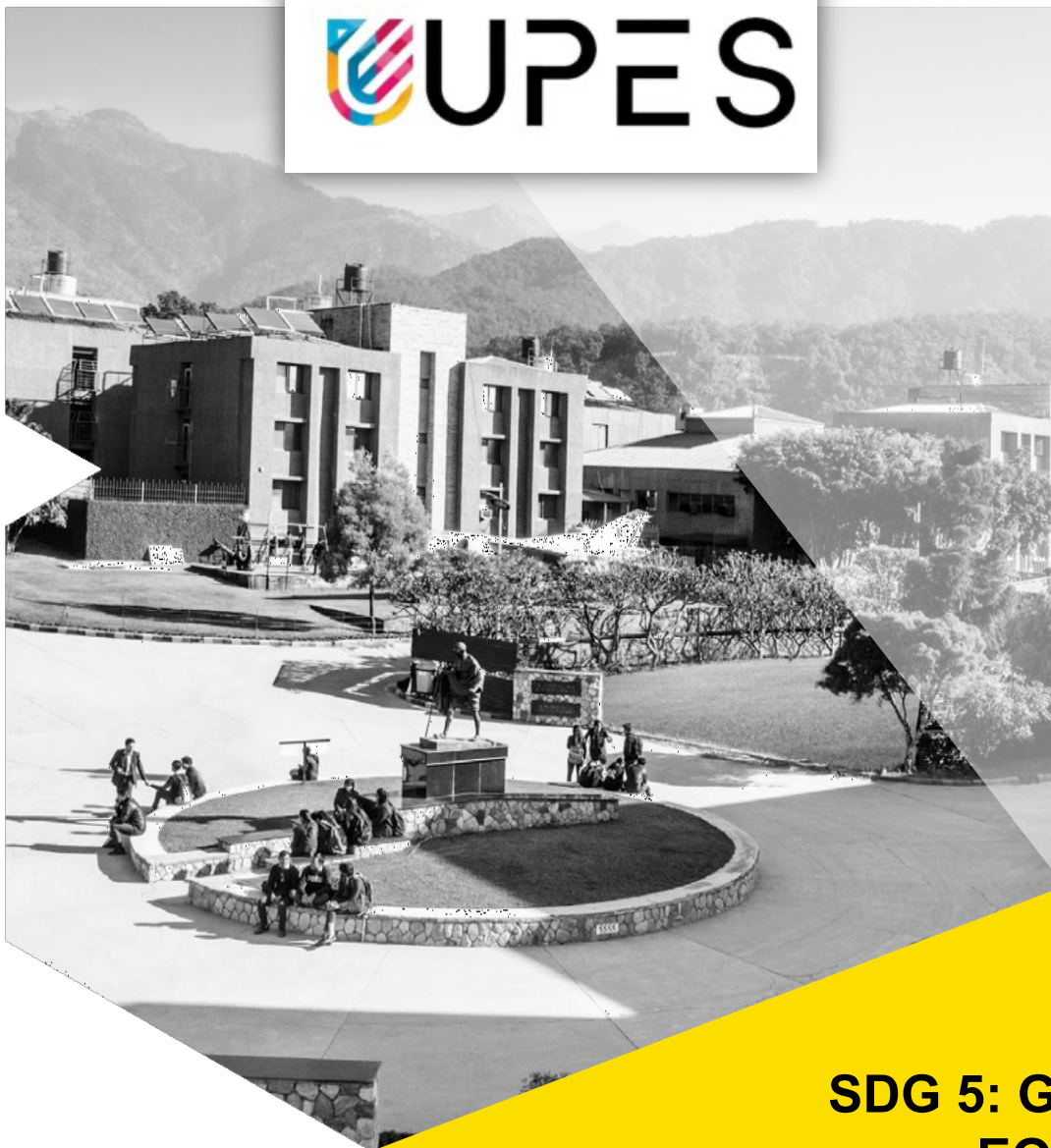




# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**SDG 5: GENDER  
EQUALITY**

**2025**

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## Paternity Leave Policy and Shared Caregiving

UPES implements a paternity leave policy, underlining the institution's commitment to shared caregiving responsibilities. **Male employees** (and eligible new fathers among the staff) are granted **15 days of paid paternity leave** for the birth or adoption of a child, as per the university's HR policy. This duration is in line with the leave allowance given to Central Government employees in India [1], even though there is **no statutory requirement for private-sector employers to provide paternity leave**. By voluntarily offering **two weeks of paid paternity leave**, UPES encourages fathers to take an active role in newborn care, which in turn helps distribute childcare duties more equitably at home. The policy explicitly covers adoptive fathers as well, provided the adopted child is an infant, ensuring that adoptive parents receive similar support [1]. During paternity leave, fathers receive full pay (the leave is fully paid, treating it as a normal paid leave category), removing any financial disincentive to take time off.

This paternity leave provision is significant for promoting **shared caregiving**: when fathers are supported to take leave, mothers benefit from additional help and can recover or return to work/study with less pressure. The university's stance reflects an understanding that gender equality in the workplace is advanced not only by supporting women directly, but also by normalizing paternal involvement in childcare. In fact, evidence shows that organizations offering paternity leave demonstrate support for family life and employee well-being, which **increases job satisfaction and retention** for their staff [1]. UPES's paternity leave policy sends a strong message that parenting is a shared responsibility, and it fosters a culture where female faculty and staff are not the sole default caregivers. By institutionalizing paternity leave, UPES helps challenge traditional gender roles and supports women – for example, a woman faculty member can return to her academic duties sooner or with greater peace of mind if her spouse (perhaps a UPES employee or even a student) can take time to care for the baby. Overall, the paternity leave policy complements the maternity provisions and is a progressive step that exceeds Indian legal requirements, thereby promoting greater gender balance in both the workplace and home.

## 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 [3]. 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 [4]. 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 [5]. 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 [3]. 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 [3]. 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.

## References

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