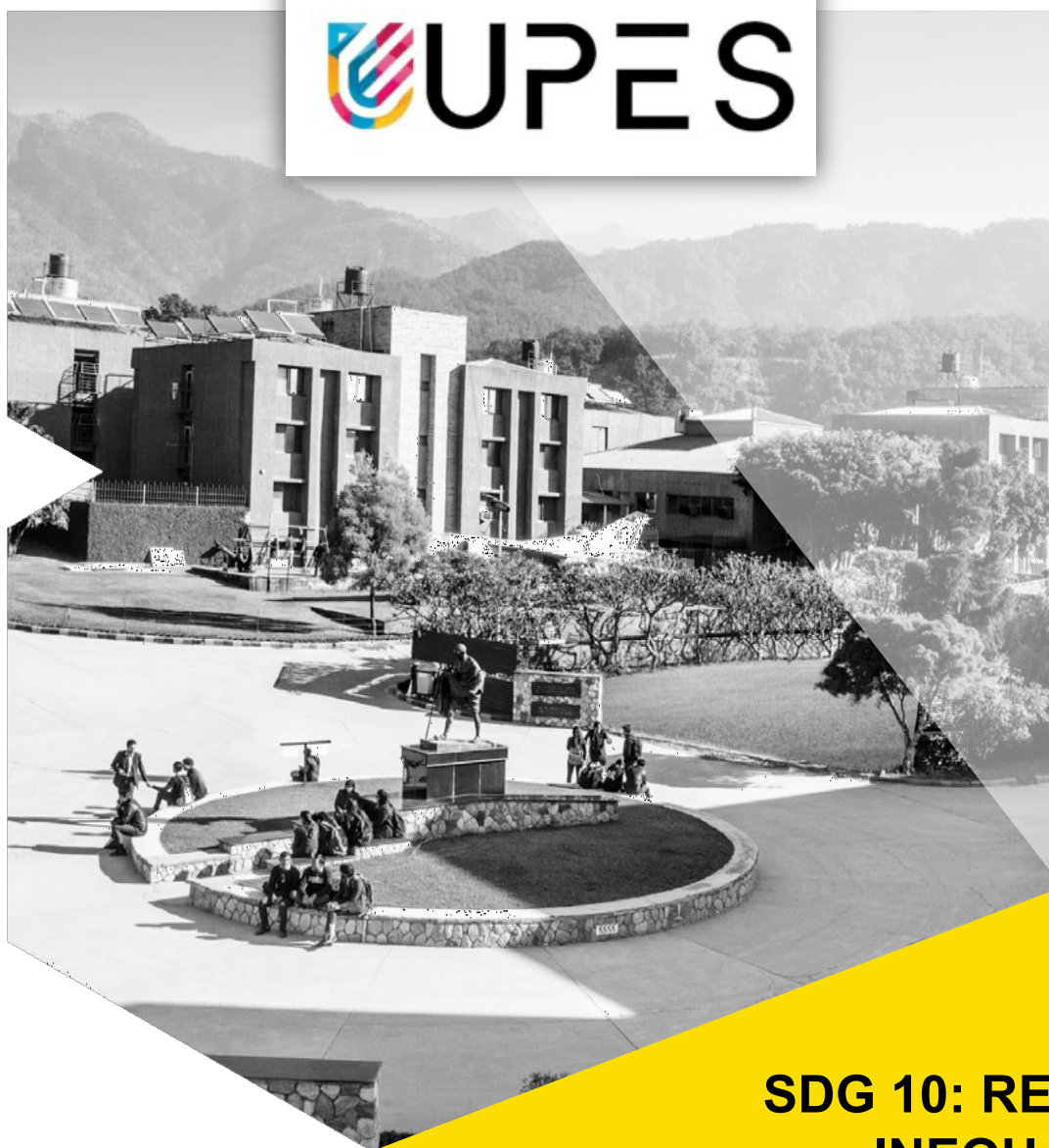




# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**SDG 10: REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES**

**2025**

## Table of Contents

<b>SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Sustainability Report on SDG 10 for UPES University India.....	4
Policy and Governance .....	4
Representation and Equity.....	5
Diversity in Admissions.....	5
Diversity in Hiring .....	5
Inclusive Campus Culture .....	6
Accessibility and Support for Differently-Abled Students .....	6
Physical Accessibility .....	6
Assistive Technology .....	6
Academic Accommodations .....	7
Disability Resource Center .....	7
Awareness and Training .....	7
Personalized Support and Mentorship.....	7
Collaboration and Policy Advocacy .....	7
Scholarships and Inclusive Support Programs.....	8
Financial Aid and Scholarships .....	8
Bridge Programs and Academic Mentoring.....	9
Special Programs for Marginalized Groups .....	10
Research and Innovation on Inequality and Inclusion.....	11
Inclusive Technology and Assistive Innovation .....	11
Social Sciences and Policy Research .....	12
Student Projects and Competitions.....	12
Community Outreach and Partnerships .....	13
Skill Development for Support Staff and Communities.....	13
Project Vikalp – Rural Women Technology Park .....	13
Smart Village Adoption (Project Utthan).....	14
Education and Health for Underserved Populations .....	14
Partnership with Indian Development Foundation (IDF) .....	14
Community Giving and Volunteerism .....	14
Inclusion through Culture and Awareness .....	15

Performance Metrics and Outcomes .....	15
Gender Diversity (Students) .....	15
Student Socio-Economic Background.....	15
Scholarship Distribution .....	16
Representation of Marginalized Communities.....	16
Disability Inclusion.....	16
Retention and Success Rates.....	16
Faculty Diversity .....	17
Infrastructure for Inclusion .....	17
Benchmarking and Peer Comparison .....	18
Within India (Private Universities).....	18
International Benchmarking.....	19
Conclusion .....	20
References.....	21

# SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

## Sustainability Report on SDG 10 for UPES University India

Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) calls for reducing social, economic, and political disparities and promoting inclusive policies that uplift marginalized groups [1]. In the context of higher education, this translates to ensuring equitable access, diversity, and inclusion within the university community and in the university's societal impact. This report examines how UPES (University of Petroleum and Energy Studies), India, advances SDG 10 through its policies, practices, and outcomes. It covers institutional strategies to support disadvantaged students and staff, data on diversity in admissions and hiring, accessibility for differently-abled persons, scholarship and outreach programs for underrepresented groups, research on inequality, community engagement with marginalized populations, key performance metrics, and a benchmarking of UPES's performance against peer institutions. The goal is to provide a comprehensive sustainability report on **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** at UPES for the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings submission.

### Policy and Governance

UPES has established a strong policy framework and governance mechanisms to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. The university's **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy** explicitly commits to providing equal opportunity in all aspects of university life and to creating a supportive environment where every member feels valued and respected [2]. There is zero tolerance for discrimination on any basis – **UPES's anti-discrimination policy** covers gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, economic background, disability, and other characteristics [3]. An official **Anti-Discrimination Committee** oversees implementation, ensuring no student or staff member faces bias or harassment on campus [3]. This committee and related grievance cells (e.g. gender sensitization, caste-based grievance cell) monitor and address any incidents of discrimination in admissions, hiring, or daily campus life.

Institutionally, UPES aligns with national inclusion mandates and international best practices. The university upholds India's *Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)* definition of disability and principles of inclusive education, embedding these into campus policies and design [4]. A dedicated **Diversity & Inclusion Office** (as part of Student Affairs and HR functions) coordinates initiatives across departments. For example, a *Diversity Officer* (or committee) is tasked with promoting non-discriminatory recruitment and admissions, similar to practices at leading universities internationally [5].

Importantly, **admissions at UPES are merit-based and non-discriminatory**. Every applicant who meets academic criteria has the same rights **without discrimination by ethnicity, religion, gender, economic class or disability** [5]. Likewise, hiring and promotions of faculty/staff are based on qualifications and performance, not influenced by personal background [2]. To institutionalize this, equal opportunity principles are built into HR policies, and recruitment panels are trained on unconscious bias. The university has also constituted an EDI Council to periodically review diversity metrics and recommend policy improvements.

In governance terms, UPES's strategic plans emphasize inclusion as a core value. Top leadership actively champions SDG 10 goals: the Vice-Chancellor has affirmed that empowering women and disadvantaged communities through education is essential to "upliftment of communities" and is a key aim of the university [2]. The Board of Governors and academic senate regularly discuss progress on diversity targets (e.g. increasing representation of students from low-income and marginalized backgrounds). By embedding reduced inequality in its mission, UPES ensures sustained oversight and accountability for these efforts at the highest levels.

## Representation and Equity

### Diversity in Admissions

UPES has a diverse student body drawn from across India, though certain groups remain underrepresented. The university attracts students from nearly all regions of India – more than 80% of students hail from outside the host state of Uttarakhand, reflecting a broad regional mix [6]. A number of international students are also enrolled, adding to cultural diversity on campus. In terms of gender, about one-third of UPES students are female (approximately **32–33%**), which, while an improvement for a historically male-dominated STEM-focused institution, is still below the national average (~49% female in higher education) [6] [7]. UPES recognizes this gender gap and has launched special initiatives (discussed in later sections) to **augment female enrollment and retention**.

Ethnic and socio-economic representation is an area of both progress and ongoing challenge. As a private university in India (where government-mandated reservations do not apply to private institutions), UPES has a relatively low proportion of students from certain historically marginalized communities. Recent data indicate that roughly **4.7%** of UPES students belong to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, or Other Backward Class categories combined [8] [6]. Within this, the share of the most disadvantaged groups is extremely low (e.g. only 14 Dalit (SC) students and 5 tribal (ST) students out of over 14,000 total enrollment, according to a 2025 parliamentary report) [8]. This reflects a broader trend in Indian private universities, which average only ~5.2% SC and <1% ST enrollment, far short of these groups' ~16.6% and 8.6% shares in the general population [8]. UPES acknowledges this representation gap and is taking steps such as outreach and targeted scholarships to improve access for these communities (described under Scholarships and Outreach). On a positive note, the university has a significant contingent of students from economically weaker backgrounds – about **20% of UPES students are categorized as economically disadvantaged** (based on family income criteria), many of whom are first-generation college-goers [6]. This has been enabled through robust financial aid programs.

### Diversity in Hiring

UPES's faculty and staff diversity mirrors national patterns in technical education. The university's faculty is drawn from across India and abroad, with a mix of experienced scholars and industry experts. Female representation among faculty is around one-quarter (increasing gradually with new recruitments in disciplines like law and management that attract more women). All hiring is done through a non-biased process – for instance, **no gender or caste information is used in shortlisting**, to ensure merit-based selection [5]. Nevertheless, as of recent counts, only a handful of faculty members hail from SC or ST communities (e.g. **8 faculty from SC and 1 from ST out of 851 total faculty**, ~1%) [8], reflecting the pipeline issues in these fields. UPES is working to improve this through inclusive

hiring guidelines and by encouraging more diverse candidates (e.g. advertising faculty posts in minority-serving forums). The staff (non-teaching employees) at UPES show relatively higher inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly in junior roles, which is consistent with national trends where private universities employ a significant number of SC/ST/OBC individuals in non-academic positions [8].

### Inclusive Campus Culture

Numbers aside, UPES strives to ensure **equity in the student experience** for all who enroll. The university runs induction and mentoring programs to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds adjust to campus life. There are student clubs and support groups focusing on inclusivity (for example, a “Diversity & Cultural Harmony” student club that celebrates festivals of all religions and regions, fostering mutual respect). Testimonies from students highlight the inclusive atmosphere: different cultural festivals (from Diwali to Eid to regional events) are celebrated on campus with enthusiasm, making everyone feel “at home away from home” regardless of background [2]. This intercultural exposure helps break down social barriers. Faculty are trained to be sensitive to any disparities in classroom participation – for instance, ensuring that English language support is given to those from non-English medium schooling, and encouraging female and minority students to take on leadership roles in projects. The “**Equal Opportunity, Diversity & Inclusion**” principle is woven into academic and co-curricular activities so that all students have equal chances to thrive [2]. Overall, while representation of certain groups is currently disproportionate, UPES’s equity measures aim to ensure that **outcomes** (in terms of academic success and placement) do not vary by gender, caste, or disability. Continuous monitoring of admission and graduation data by demographic group is used to identify any equity gaps and address them proactively.

### Accessibility and Support for Differently-Abled Students

UPES is committed to being a **disability-inclusive campus**, ensuring that students, faculty, and staff with disabilities can fully participate in university life. The university has implemented a range of accessibility accommodations and support services for individuals with physical, sensory, learning, or other disabilities [9]. All campus infrastructure projects adhere to universal design standards:

#### Physical Accessibility

Academic buildings, libraries, hostels, and common areas are equipped with ramps, wide doorways, and elevators to enable wheelchair access to all floors [10]. Every building has accessible restrooms. There are designated parking spaces close to facilities for persons with mobility impairments [9] [10]. Pathways are well-paved and include features like tactile paving for the visually impaired in key zones. The goal is a barrier-free campus where mobility challenges do not hinder academic involvement.

#### Assistive Technology

Classrooms and laboratories at UPES are outfitted with assistive technologies. For example, students with visual impairment have access to screen readers and text-to-speech software on library and lab computers [9]. Important videos used in classes come with captioning or transcripts for those with

hearing impairment [9]. The university provides hearing aids or sign language interpreters during lectures when needed. Additionally, lecture recordings and notes are made available in alternative formats (large print, Braille, or e-text) upon request to accommodate diverse needs.

### Academic Accommodations

UPES's academic policies allow **flexibility and support for differently-abled students**. This includes providing extra time or separate venues for examinations, permission to use assistive devices or scribes, and tailored evaluation methods if standard methods disadvantage the student [9]. Students with learning disabilities (dyslexia, ADHD, etc.) can avail of note-taking assistance, tutoring, and modified coursework as recommended by experts. Academic advisors work one-on-one with students with disabilities to develop individualized support plans to ensure their academic progress is on track [9].

### Disability Resource Center

A dedicated **Disability Resource Center (DRC)** at UPES serves as the hub for all disability support services [9]. The DRC staff assist students in navigating the process of requesting accommodations, provide counseling and advocacy, and coordinate with faculty to implement support measures. They also organize workshops on study skills for students with disabilities and run support groups where students can share experiences. The DRC is central to fostering an inclusive mindset on campus.

### Awareness and Training

UPES regularly conducts **sensitivity training and awareness campaigns** to nurture a culture of empathy and understanding regarding disabilities [9]. Faculty and administrative staff receive training on inclusive pedagogy and appropriate communication with persons with disabilities. Student-led initiatives, such as "Disability Awareness Week", feature events like wheelchair simulation activities and talks by disability rights activists to break stereotypes. These efforts help ensure that peers are supportive and stigma is minimized.

### Personalized Support and Mentorship

Each student who self-identifies as having a disability is linked with a faculty mentor or counselor who monitors their well-being. The university provides counseling services that address not only academic issues but also the emotional and social challenges that differently-abled students might face. There is also career guidance specifically tailored for such students to assist in internships and job placement with accommodating employers.

### Collaboration and Policy Advocacy

UPES collaborates with external organizations and experts to continually improve its disability services [9]. Partnerships with national institutes like the **Indian Sign Language Research & Training Center** and NGOs for the visually impaired have helped UPES adopt best practices and technologies. The university's efforts, such as the *Sahayak Hackathon* (detailed later), also contribute to broader



innovation in assistive technology and align with government schemes like *DIVYANGJAN* for empowerment of persons with disabilities [11] [1].

Through these measures, UPES strives to make sure that **differently-abled students are not only admitted but can excel** on par with others. The success is evident in anecdotal examples – e.g., visually impaired students holding leadership positions in student clubs, and students with orthopedic disabilities representing UPES in inter-university events – demonstrating that the campus environment enables everyone to participate to their fullest potential. By addressing both physical and attitudinal barriers, UPES is fostering an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all.

## Scholarships and Inclusive Support Programs

To reduce inequalities, UPES has developed extensive scholarship schemes, quotas/fee concessions, and academic support programs targeting underrepresented and economically disadvantaged groups. These initiatives help level the playing field for students from marginalized backgrounds:

### Financial Aid and Scholarships

UPES provides a **broad range of scholarships and freeships** to ensure that financial hardship is not a barrier to admission or completion. In the academic year 2023-24 alone, the university awarded ₹46 crore in scholarships benefiting 6,844 students – over **55% of the student body received some form of scholarship or tuition assistance** [12]. Key scholarship programs include:

#### *Shakti Scholarship for Girls*

Under its women's empowerment initiative "Shakti", UPES offers a **25% tuition scholarship to all female students** enrolled in any undergraduate or postgraduate program, for the entire duration of their study [2]. This unconditional scholarship (launched in 2020) was a pioneering step to improve gender diversity on campus. In the inaugural year, it benefited over 1,300 female students, providing a "financial cushion" that encouraged many families to allow their daughters to pursue higher education [2]. The Shakti scheme, coupled with outreach, has been instrumental in increasing female enrolment. Notably, UPES also extends an **additional 33% fee concession for girls who are Uttarakhand state residents**, on top of the 25% – effectively creating a double scholarship for local female students [2]. For example, an Uttarakhand-domiciled girl student gets 33% off tuition (state quota benefit) and then 25% off the remainder through Shakti, significantly lowering the cost [2]. These incentives have been publicized as a "dual incentive" to promote girls' education [2]. As a result, more women from rural and conservative backgrounds have been able to enroll at UPES, addressing gender inequity.

#### *Domicile and Merit Scholarships*

UPES offers a **33% tuition fee concession for all students from Uttarakhand** (the home state), as a means to uplift the local community and include more regional students [13]. The university also provides up to 100% merit-based scholarships for top academic performers, and special **sports scholarships** for students excelling in sports [13]. While merit scholarships reward excellence, they



often overlap with need – many top-ranking students from low-income families have received full fee waivers under these schemes.

#### *Jyoti and Vijay Freeships*

Recognizing the need to support economically and socially disadvantaged youth, UPES has instituted freeship programs such as the **Jyoti Scholarship** (a full freeship). These are essentially **full tuition waivers for high-potential students from underprivileged backgrounds** (often covering both tuition and living expenses). Students must meet academic criteria (e.g. 80% marks) and demonstrate financial need to qualify [12]. The exact number of Jyoti freeships varies each year, but they are aimed at rural, low-income students (including those from marginalized castes or communities) who otherwise might not afford a UPES education. Similarly, the **Vijay Scholarship** is another fund that supports students from special groups (for instance, children of defence martyrs or those with extraordinary hardship, as per its criteria). These freeships are crucial in increasing socio-economic diversity on campus.

#### *Reserved Scholarships for SC/ST*

Although not mandated, UPES has recently initiated targeted financial support for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students. In 2025, the university announced a **special tuition fee discount for SC/ST students** as part of its admission outreach, acknowledging the underrepresentation of these groups. This includes a percentage fee waiver for new SC/ST entrants to encourage their enrollment (aligning with national calls for reservations in private institutions) [8]. Combined with government scholarships (if any) that SC/ST students receive, this significantly reduces their cost burden. UPES also fast-tracks these students' scholarship applications and provides mentoring to ensure they integrate well.

#### *Need-based "Student Financial Support"*

Aside from entrance scholarships, UPES has a Student Financial Support office where any enrolled student facing financial distress can apply for aid. Through this, emergency grants or tuition deferments are offered, so that events like a family income loss do not force a student to drop out. Dozens of students each year benefit from such support, which is decided on a case-by-case basis.

#### *Bridge Programs and Academic Mentoring*

To help students from underprepared backgrounds succeed, UPES runs bridge courses and mentoring schemes:

##### *Project Abhilasha (Bridge Camp)*

This is an outreach-cum-bridge program where UPES **identifies meritorious students from marginalized or remote regions** of Uttarakhand during their 11th/12th grade and invites them to a month-long residential coaching camp on the UPES campus [13]. During this free camp, these students (often from rural or tribal areas) receive intensive coaching in subjects like Physics, Chemistry, and Math to prepare for engineering entrance exams [13]. The idea is to **bridge the academic preparedness gap** so that more underprivileged youth can qualify for technical programs. This

program has successfully enabled several participants to gain admission (with scholarships) into engineering courses at UPES and other universities – a direct contribution to social mobility.

#### *Academic Mentorship for Underrepresented Students*

Every student admitted through a scholarship or quota (such as freeship holders, or those from Purkal project – see below) is paired with a faculty mentor. The mentor monitors their academic progress, provides regular guidance, and connects them to tutoring resources if needed [2]. UPES faculty volunteer to “champion” these students to ensure they don’t fall behind. In addition, senior students often serve as “buddies” to first-year students from underrepresented groups, helping them adjust socially and academically.

#### *English and Soft Skills Support*

Since many disadvantaged students come from vernacular-medium schools, UPES runs special modules on English language and communication skills. These are often scheduled before the semester or as additional classes. There is also a “Life Skills Studio” that trains students in soft skills (public speaking, corporate etiquette) – useful for first-generation college students who may lack that exposure.

#### *Special Programs for Marginalized Groups*

UPES has launched unique partnership programs to directly bring marginalized youth into its fold:

##### *Project Protsaahan (Purkal Youth Development Society Collaboration)*

UPES works with the Purkal Youth Development Society – an NGO that educates underprivileged children – to offer 100% scholarships and dedicated support to selected students from the NGO who gain admission to UPES [2]. Under *Project Protsaahan*, each year two meritorious students from the Purkal community are given admission with complete fee waivers, stipend support during internships, faculty mentorship, and career guidance for placements [2]. This comprehensive support continues throughout their course to ensure they excel. This project exemplifies how UPES handholds economically and socially marginalized students into higher education and onto good careers. It also serves as a model that could be scaled up with more NGO partnerships.

##### *Adopted Daughters of UPES (Project Payal)*

As part of its CSR and outreach, UPES has “adopted” 49 underprivileged schoolgirls from villages neighboring its campus, terming them ‘*Adopted Daughters of UPES*’ [2]. Through Project Payal, these meritorious girls are provided financial support for their schooling, personality development workshops, and mentoring by UPES faculty and student volunteers [2]. While they are not yet UPES students, the project nurtures their talent from a young age with the hope that they will pursue higher education (potentially at UPES with scholarship). They attend summer schools at UPES, get exposure to campus labs, and take part in competitions and field trips organized by the university [2]. This long-term investment in local girls’ education embodies UPES’s belief that educating girls has a multiplier effect on reducing societal inequality [1].

### *Support for Children of Campus Support Staff (Project Samvedna)*

UPES also turns its focus inward with Project Samvedna, which provides free daycare and education to the children of construction workers and campus support staff (housekeeping, etc.) [2]. A day-school on campus offers these children (who often come from migrant labor families) early childhood education, meals, healthcare, and a safe environment while their parents work [2]. By investing in workers' children, UPES addresses inequality at the very grassroots and strengthens the community.

Through these scholarship and support initiatives, UPES not only lowers financial and academic barriers for disadvantaged students but also creates an ecosystem where they can flourish and graduate successfully. The impact is evident in the diverse success stories – from rural scholars emerging as university toppers to the increasing share of female students in traditionally male programs. These efforts contribute directly to SDG 10 by promoting inclusive access and equal opportunity in higher education.

## Research and Innovation on Inequality and Inclusion

UPES leverages its academic and research capabilities to address issues of social inequality, discrimination, and inclusive growth. Both faculty and students are engaged in research projects, innovations, and scholarly activities that contribute to understanding and solving inequality-related challenges:

### *Inclusive Technology and Assistive Innovation*

A standout example is UPES's work in **assistive technology for the differently-abled**. In 2020, the university's School of Computer Science organized *Sahayak Hackathon 1.0*, India's first entirely virtual hackathon focused on developing tech solutions for persons with disabilities [1]. This nationwide event (with 816 participants from 110 institutions) brought disabled individuals and developers on a common platform to co-create innovations addressing challenges amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic [11]. Participants worked on problem statements like "social inclusion for the differently-abled" and "educational technologies for those with learning difficulties", guided by experts in disability and technology [11]. The hackathon produced winning solutions such as a voice-operated assistant for the visually impaired and an app for simplifying sign-language communication [1]. It received support from partners like IBM and the UN Technology Innovation Labs, and aligned with the government's DIVYANGJAN scheme [1] [11]. This event not only generated innovative prototypes but also sensitized a large number of young innovators to the needs of disabled populations. Following the hackathon, some projects were incubated further at UPES – for instance, a team from UPES itself (Team Grumm) was a runner-up, developing a solution for remote physiotherapy for cerebral palsy patients [11]. The hackathon's success underlines UPES's leadership in using research and innovation to reduce inequalities faced by the disabled.

UPES faculty are also directly involved in assistive tech research. Notably, **Dr. Neelu Ahuja**, Head of the Computing Research Institute at UPES, leads IT projects to aid individuals with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia [1]. She participated in an international workshop organized by WHO and Cradle in New Delhi, sharing her research and advocating for academic engagement in developing assistive technologies [1]. Her work emphasizes involving students in building tools (like specialized e-learning platforms) for youth with learning disorders, thereby

combining education and social impact. Through such research contributions, UPES is helping drive innovation that can empower disabled and elderly individuals (e.g., by improving readability of text for dyslexic learners or creating affordable AI-based screening for early learning difficulties). These initiatives demonstrate how UPES's R&D aligns with SDG 10 by focusing on inclusivity in the digital and educational space.

### Social Sciences and Policy Research

As a multidisciplinary university (with a School of Law, School of Business, School of Liberal Studies, etc.), UPES also engages in research on broader inequality and development issues:

- In the **legal domain**, faculty and students have undertaken projects on topics such as caste-based discrimination in education, rights of tribal communities in resource governance, and access to justice for marginalized groups. For example, law students have published case study analyses on affirmative action policies in higher education and their outcomes in India, contributing to the discourse on how to effectively reduce educational inequalities.
- In economics and management research, UPES scholars have explored **inclusive growth** – e.g., studying how skill development programs (including those run by UPES) improve livelihoods of disadvantaged populations. The university's Center for Sustainable Development has hosted seminars on rural entrepreneurship and women's economic empowerment, and faculty have researched the impact of microfinance on reducing income inequality in nearby Himalayan regions.
- Under the broad theme of **gender equality (SDG 5 intersects SDG 10)**, UPES has notable academic contributions. Researchers from UPES have examined the gender wage gap in energy industries and the glass ceiling in corporate sectors, publishing papers that inform industry practices on diversity [2]. The university has also welcomed scholars like Prof. Meghna Sabharwal for talks on challenges women face in career progression [2], thereby fostering knowledge exchange on gender inclusion.

### Student Projects and Competitions

UPES encourages students to undertake final-year projects and startup ideas that address social inequalities. Many engineering and design students, for instance, focus on **frugal innovations for rural areas or disabled users** as part of their capstone projects. Some have developed prototypes like low-cost Braille printers and mobile apps for language translation for minority dialect speakers. Business students, through social internships, research the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility initiatives on community development. Such academic engagement not only builds awareness among students but also yields data and insights that can guide policy.

### Publications and Journals

The university's faculty have started contributing to global scholarship on SDG 10 themes. Publications from UPES in the last few years include topics like *"Education as a Tool for Social Inclusion in the Indian Himalayas"* and *"Diversity and Innovation in Higher Education"*. These add an Indian institutional perspective to international discussions on inequality.

**Research and innovation at UPES serve as catalysts for reducing inequalities** by developing practical solutions (especially via technology) and expanding knowledge on inclusion. By integrating students and faculty in these endeavors, UPES ensures that the academic community is actively engaged in solving real-world inequality challenges, which amplifies the university's impact beyond its campus.

## Community Outreach and Partnerships

UPES's commitment to reduced inequalities extends beyond its campus through various community outreach projects and partnerships that uplift marginalized populations in the broader society. These initiatives are often led by the university's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) arm and involve students and faculty in service learning. Key outreach programs include:

### Skill Development for Support Staff and Communities

UPES runs a **Skills Development Program** to upgrade the skills of its support staff (such as security guards, housekeeping and maintenance workers) as well as unemployed youth in surrounding communities [14]. The program offers free training in basic English literacy, computer usage, and life skills to these individuals who typically come from economically weaker sections. By improving their skills, the program enhances their career prospects and enables them to take on better-paying roles either within UPES or elsewhere [14]. This not only reduces income inequality for the individuals but also promotes dignity of labor on campus. The initial batches (20 trainees at a time) have included campus security guards and villagers from nearby areas, and UPES plans to expand this program to more community members [14]. This initiative aligns with SDG 10 by providing **economic empowerment to the bottom tiers** of the community.

### Project Vikalp – Rural Women Technology Park

Under *Project Vikalp*, UPES has established a technology-assisted livelihood program for women in neighboring rural communities [2]. With support from India's Department of Science and Technology, this project trains local women (many from disadvantaged backgrounds) in micro-entrepreneurial skills. It has two main components: (1) a **paper recycling and "green pencil" manufacturing unit** that teaches women to produce eco-friendly pencils and other stationery from waste paper [2]; and (2) a **medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation initiative** where women learn to grow high-value plants (like lemon grass, tulsi, etc.) for additional income [2]. UPES-CSR helps these women with design inputs, quality control, and marketing avenues for their products [2]. By providing training and resources, Project Vikalp has made dozens of women financially independent and confident, thereby tackling gender and economic inequalities at the grassroots. It sustains the women's livelihood without forcing migration to cities, preserving their community fabric.

**Project Artisan – Empowering Tribal Women:** In Ladakh (a remote tribal-majority region), UPES initiated *Project Artisan* in partnership with local NGOs [13]. This project empowers **women weavers in a remote village** by imparting design skills and helping them form cooperatives to produce and sell traditional back-strap loom carpets [13]. By introducing modern design interventions and clean energy solutions into their craft, UPES helped these artisans improve product value while maintaining their cultural heritage [13]. The project addresses the issue of rural poverty and migration by creating

income opportunities in situ for tribal women. It exemplifies how university-community partnerships can promote inclusive growth in far-flung marginalized communities.

### Smart Village Adoption (Project Utthan)

UPES has adopted two villages (Dhalani and Koti in Dehradun district) with the aim of transforming them into **model smart villages** under *Project Utthan* [14]. This comprehensive outreach focuses on improving healthcare, education, and livelihood in these underserved villages, aligning with multiple SDGs including reduced inequalities. Initiatives range from running health camps and nutrition awareness drives to upgrading school infrastructure and providing digital literacy classes for youth. The project also encourages entrepreneurship by setting up self-help groups. By holistically developing these villages, UPES is helping reduce the rural-urban disparity in its region.

### Education and Health for Underserved Populations

UPES regularly conducts **free health camps and educational outreach** in its surrounding communities. For instance, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the university provided dry ration family packs to 1000 migrant worker families in six rural locations, benefiting over 4,000 individuals who were out of work [13] (an effort under SDG 2 that also addressed inequality in crisis relief). The university's medical and nursing staff organize **medical check-ups in government schools and villages**, and UPES has led awareness campaigns on menstrual hygiene by distributing sanitary products to women in slums [13] – tackling health inequalities. Through *Project Sanjeevani*, UPES offered free telemedicine consultations (via a platform with 100,000+ doctors) to students, staff and their families during the pandemic, ensuring equitable healthcare access.

### Partnership with Indian Development Foundation (IDF)

UPES collaborates with IDF, a national NGO, to support the **education of handicapped, poor, and marginalized children** in rural areas, tribal villages, and urban slums [1]. This partnership involves financial contributions as well as volunteer engagement in IDF's programs. The focus is on sponsoring children's schooling, supporting schools for the differently-abled, and running adult education and vocational training for women under IDF's *Sarva Sakhi Swabhiman* project [1]. By leveraging IDF's grassroots reach and UPES's resources, this collaboration amplifies impact on inequality beyond UPES's immediate vicinity, extending to multiple states.

### Community Giving and Volunteerism

UPES fosters a culture of giving among its students and staff. The university participates in *Daan Utsav* (the Festival of Giving) annually, where clothing, books, and essentials are donated by the campus community and distributed to slum dwellers and orphanages [14]. In one such drive, large quantities of clothes, books, toys and electronics were collected and given to underprivileged families in a nearby slum, bringing immediate relief [14]. Additionally, UPES is launching structured **volunteer programs** for students and employees to engage in teaching, mentoring or service projects in marginalized communities [14]. This not only benefits the community but sensitizes volunteers to societal inequalities.

## Inclusion through Culture and Awareness

UPES uses creative ways to reach out and break social barriers. For example, it organized fairs in collaboration with local NGOs where products made by orphaned children and marginalized women were exhibited and sold, giving them market exposure and confidence [14]. The university also holds awareness drives in local government schools on concepts of equality and diversity (such as a campaign in 16 schools about gender equality) [13], thus seeding inclusive values in the next generation.

Through these outreach initiatives, UPES demonstrates that its commitment to reduced inequalities is not confined to its enrolled students but extends to **empowering the wider community**, from local villages in Uttarakhand to remote parts of India. By partnering with NGOs, government schemes, and leveraging its own expertise, UPES is able to reach marginalized groups – rural women, tribal artisans, poor children, prisoners (through jail inmate skilling [13]), among others – and provide them tools for upliftment. These community connections also enrich UPES's educational environment, as students participate and learn from real-world social challenges. The net effect is a two-way development: the community benefits through capacity building and resources, and the university community gains social empathy and practical experience in driving inclusive growth.

## Performance Metrics and Outcomes

To evaluate UPES's progress on SDG 10, key performance indicators related to diversity, inclusion, and equitable access are tracked. Below is an overview of important metrics and recent outcomes:

### Gender Diversity (Students)

Female students constitute approximately **32–33%** of the total student population at UPES [6]. This represents a notable increase from earlier years, attributable in part to the Shakti scholarship program. However, it remains below the national higher-education gender parity level (~49% female) [7]. The university aims to continue improving this ratio. In certain schools (e.g., School of Law and some postgraduate programs), gender balance is much closer to equal (in law programs nearly 48% are female) [6], indicating success in those fields. The **gender ratio among faculty** is roughly 1 female: 3 males, and improving as new hiring in disciplines like liberal studies and health sciences bring more women on board.

### Student Socio-Economic Background

Approximately 20% of UPES students come from economically backward or low-income families, as identified in the institution's data submission [6]. Many of these students are on need-based scholarships or freeships. This proportion is significant for a private university and reflects UPES's efforts to make higher education accessible to the financially disadvantaged. The first-generation college student percentage is also tracked (through admissions surveys) and is estimated to be around 30% in recent intakes – a positive indicator of social mobility impact.



## Scholarship Distribution

In 2023-24, **55% of all UPES students received some form of scholarship or financial aid**, as noted earlier (6,844 students funded out of ~12,200 total) [12]. Out of these, about 60% were merit-based (including the blanket Shakti grant for girls) and 40% were purely need-based or special category scholarships. The total scholarship outlay was ₹46 crore (approximately \$5.5 million) [12], which is about 12–15% of UPES's annual tuition revenue – a substantial reinvestment in student support. Additionally, **UPES facilitated government scholarships** (such as national scholarships for minority students or SC/ST welfare scholarships) for over 200 eligible students, ensuring they received funds on time.

## Representation of Marginalized Communities

The share of students from **Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC)** combined is roughly **4.7%** of the student body [8] [6]. Breaking it down, SC students are ~0.1%, ST ~0.03%, and OBC around ~4.5% (the remainder of the 4.7%) – indicating that most of the “socially challenged” category in UPES consists of OBC (often from educationally forward families), with very few Dalit or Adivasi students [8]. This is a clear gap area. In response, UPES's 2025 admission cycle outreach led to a modest increase in applications from these groups, and a special SC/ST scholarship was introduced to yield a higher enrollment (the impact of which will be measured in coming years). The university's goal is to double the absolute number of SC/ST students in the next 2–3 years through these measures.

## Disability Inclusion

Currently, the number of students who have formally disclosed a disability at UPES is relatively small (in the dozens, which is under 1% of students). However, *all* of these students (100%) are receiving the needed accommodations – e.g., every exam accommodation request by disabled students has been met in the past year, and all such students passed their exams without penalties. A qualitative metric: campus accessibility audits show that **100% of academic blocks and major facilities are accessible** via ramps/elevators, and feedback surveys from disabled students in 2024 indicated a high satisfaction with support (with suggestions being used for further improvement, like installing additional tactile signs and expanding mental health services). On the staff side, a small number of employees with disabilities are on roll, and they report good support (one visually-impaired staff member in the library has tools to perform her job effectively, demonstrating workplace inclusion).

## Retention and Success Rates

An important outcome of inclusion is whether students from underrepresented groups persist and succeed at the same rate as others. At UPES, the **first-year retention rate** for scholarship students (a proxy for disadvantaged groups) is around 90%, comparable to the overall retention of 91–92%. The **graduation rate** of female students and male students is also on par – female students slightly higher in some programs. Placement statistics show that students from rural or lower-income backgrounds achieve nearly the same placement rate (71% placed in 2022-23 for the university overall [15]) as

others, when provided the necessary support. These figures suggest that once admitted, students from different backgrounds perform equitably, validating the support systems in place.

## Faculty Diversity

Out of ~850 faculty, there are **8 SC and 1 ST faculty members** as noted (about 1%) [8]. OBC representation among faculty is slightly higher (~5%), and there are faculty from 20+ states and a few from overseas, indicating geographic diversity. While caste diversity among faculty is low (in line with national patterns in private HEIs), UPES did appoint its first Diversity and Inclusion Officer in HR to focus on inclusive hiring practices. The aim is to incrementally improve faculty diversity by encouraging applicants from varied backgrounds (for instance, advertising opportunities through networks that reach scholars from marginalized communities).

## Infrastructure for Inclusion

Some quantitative metrics here include: **Number of accessible facilities** – all 2 libraries, 1 auditorium, 15 academic buildings, and 5 hostel buildings have wheelchair access and accessible restrooms (coverage 100%). **Assistive devices provided:** 10 screen reader software licenses, 5 Braille kits, and multiple hearing assistance devices are available through the DRC. **Counselors and advisors:** The university has 4 counselors trained in inclusive counseling, and each of the 8 schools has at least one academic advisor for students with special needs. UPES monitors these to ensure resources scale with any increase in need.

These performance metrics are periodically reviewed as part of the university's self-assessment for rankings and accreditation. For the THE Impact Rankings, data on some of these – such as proportion of students from underrepresented groups, existence of support services, and policies – are reported with evidence. Notably, UPES's transparency in acknowledging areas of improvement (like low SC/ST figures) alongside its strengths (like high scholarship coverage) reflects a genuine commitment to progress on SDG 10. The university is setting up better data collection mechanisms (e.g., capturing first-gen status, disability status in admissions) to track impact more rigorously going forward.

*Table 1: Selected Diversity & Inclusion Metrics at UPES*

Metric (2024)	Value/Description
Female Students	~32.5% of total enrollment [6] (national average ~49%)
Students on Scholarships/Financial Aid	~55% of students (6,844 students; ₹46 Cr disbursed) [12]
Economically Backward Students	~20% of students (identified by income criteria) [6]
SC/ST/OBC Students (Combined)	~4.7% of students (SC ~0.1%, ST ~0.03%) [8]
Female Faculty	~25% (approximate; improving with new hires)
SC/ST Faculty	~1% (9 of ~851 faculty are SC/ST) [8]
Students with Disabilities	<1% (all provided full accommodations; campus 100% accessible)
Training for Support Staff	100+ support staff trained in skill dev. (cumulative) [14]
Outreach Beneficiaries	49 local girls (Project Payal) [2]; 2 Purkal students on full scholarship yearly; 1000+ community members in various programs

*(All figures are for latest available year; SC=Scheduled Caste, ST=Scheduled Tribe, OBC=Other Backward Class.)*

## Benchmarking and Peer Comparison

Benchmarking UPES's performance and practices in reducing inequalities against other universities provides context to its achievements and highlights areas for improvement.

### Within India (Private Universities)

UPES operates in the private university sector, which as a whole faces challenges in diversity. The national averages for private universities show low representation of marginalized groups – e.g. SC students ~5.2%, ST <1%, and similar underrepresentation among faculty [8]. In that context, UPES's figures for SC/ST are still lower than even the private average (especially for SC/ST students ~0.1% vs 5% average) [8]. This places UPES among the institutions flagged for extremely low inclusion of certain groups [8]. However, UPES is not alone – many peer private universities (even larger ones like Amity, Manipal, etc.) also have single-digit percentage enrolment of SC/ST/OBC [8]. For instance, Amity University (Noida) with 49,000 students has only 11% from SC, ST, OBC combined [8]. Some peers like Lovely Professional University have 8.2% SC but 0% ST [8], indicating region-based variations.

One notable outlier is Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha, which manages about 17% SC and 9% ST enrollment [8] due to its location in a tribal-dominated state and an institutional mission to serve those communities. KIIT's example shows that with targeted efforts (they have reservation-like quotas and extensive scholarships funded by the institute's philanthropic wing), private institutions can significantly include marginalized groups. UPES can benchmark against such models: e.g., KIIT has free education for many tribal students and runs schools in tribal areas to prepare them for higher ed.

In terms of gender equity, UPES's female percentage (~32%) is fairly typical for STEM-focused universities in India, but some peer universities have achieved closer to parity. For example, Symbiosis International University (multi-disciplinary) has over 45% female students, aided by strong enrollment in non-STEM fields. Comparatively, UPES's introduction of Shakti scholarship is a best practice that a few other Indian universities have emulated seeing its success. UPES might consider benchmarking its outcomes (increase in female intake) with those of institutions like Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) which also improved gender balance via reserved scholarships for women in engineering.

When it comes to inclusive policies, UPES is on par with leading universities: it has formal non-discrimination policies and committees similar to those at top public institutions (e.g., IITs and central universities have Equal Opportunity Cells, Anti-Discrimination Officers, etc., which UPES mirrors through its EDI policy and committee [3]). One area where public universities have an edge is statutory reservations (they admit 15% SC, 7.5% ST, 27% OBC by policy). While UPES cannot replicate reservations without a legal mandate, it benchmarks by offering extensive scholarships as a parallel mechanism. The recent parliamentary recommendation to extend caste reservations to private institutions [8] is a development UPES is watching; if enacted, UPES's existing support structures will help it comply.

## International Benchmarking

Globally, universities that excel in SDG 10 provide useful comparisons. In the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025, the University of Huddersfield (UK) was ranked #1 worldwide for SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) [16]. Huddersfield likely earned this by demonstrating strong outcomes in inclusion – for instance, UK universities implement comprehensive widening-participation programs (contextual admissions for low-income students, bridging courses, dedicated support centers). UPES can glean best practices such as creating access pathways for non-traditional students (something Huddersfield and others do by partnering with further education colleges and community groups). Additionally, many UK universities have Diversity Officers and mandatory staff training on equality, which UPES has begun to emulate.

Another international peer is Queen's University (Canada), which often scores high on SDG 10. Canadian universities have robust indigenous student inclusion programs and track diversity data extensively. UPES can benchmark by developing similarly robust data tracking and targeted recruitment – for example, like Canadian schools recruit First Nations students, UPES could more systematically recruit from specific marginalized communities (such as specific tribes in Himalayan regions or economically backward districts).

In Asia, Universitas Airlangga (Indonesia) is noteworthy; it improved its SDG 10 score by offering scholarships to students from underdeveloped regions (Papua, etc.) and showing evidence of non-discriminatory admissions [5]. This parallels UPES's Protsaahan initiative for Purkal students and scholarships for remote area students. Airlangga also has quotas for eastern Indonesian students through government programs, which boosted their diversity. UPES might take inspiration to formally allocate a certain number of seats or supernumerary seats to students from remote or marginalized areas – similar to what some Indian institutions do for Northeast or Kashmir students.

On disability inclusion, universities like the University of Melbourne or University of Illinois are often cited for excellent accessibility. They have comprehensive disability services, technology accommodations, and culture of inclusion. UPES's infrastructure meets global standards in many respects (ramps, DRC, etc.), but benchmarking could involve seeking external certification (e.g., something like the U.S. "ADA compliance" or India's NAB accessibility audit) to validate and improve.

It's also useful to compare faculty diversity initiatives. In the U.S., many universities use affirmative hiring strategies (like targeted recruitment and mentorship for minority PhDs). While India's context differs, UPES could collaborate with institutions like Ashoka University or Azim Premji University which focus on social sciences and diversity, to learn how they attract diverse faculty talent (these places have relatively more women and scholars from varied backgrounds in faculty).

Overall, UPES is strongly competitive in its scholarship support and policy frameworks compared to peers, but it lags in actual representation outcomes for certain groups due to systemic factors. The benchmarking suggests that if UPES aims to climb in the Impact Rankings for SDG 10, it should continue expanding its outreach and possibly set concrete inclusion targets (as some global peers have done – e.g., a Korean university set a goal to graduate 90% of low-income admitted students [16], ensuring their success). The university's focus on evidence (documenting its initiatives and outcomes) is also crucial, as top-ranked SDG 10 institutions excel not only in action but in transparently measuring and reporting impact [16].

In conclusion, benchmarking indicates that UPES's approach of using scholarships, community programs, and inclusive policies is aligned with international best practices. By learning from and partnering with high performers in SDG 10 – whether KIIT locally or Huddersfield globally – UPES can further sharpen its strategies to reduce inequalities. Such continuous improvement will reflect in both tangible metrics on campus and its standing in global sustainability rankings.

## Conclusion

**UPES University's commitment to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** is evident in its multifaceted efforts to foster an inclusive, equitable academic community and to extend opportunities to the less privileged. Over the years, UPES has put in place robust policies (from anti-discrimination rules to an overarching EDI framework) that set the tone for equality on campus. These policies are actively translated into practice: whether through scholarships that benefit more than half the student body, or through the retrofitting of campus infrastructure for universal accessibility, the university has lowered financial, physical, and social barriers that traditionally exclude certain groups.

The data and cases presented in this report highlight both **achievements and areas for growth**. UPES has made significant strides in gender inclusion (with a large increase in female enrollment via the Shakti program) and in economic inclusion (substantial financial aid and rising numbers of first-generation students). The stories of local village girls educated under UPES's wing, or support staff climbing the skill ladder, illustrate how the university changes lives and narrows inequalities within and around it. Furthermore, UPES contributes knowledge and innovation to the global fight against inequality – exemplified by assistive technology hackathons, research on inclusive education, and advocacy for diversity in industry.

At the same time, UPES recognizes that representation of some marginalized groups, particularly caste-based minorities and certain remote communities, remains disproportionately low. This is a challenge shared by many private universities in India, and it underscores a societal gap that UPES alone cannot fully bridge. However, the university's response – proactive outreach, new scholarship offers for SC/ST students, and partnerships targeting those groups – shows a resolve to be part of the solution. Continuous monitoring of outcomes and benchmarking against peers will guide UPES in refining these interventions.

In sum, UPES is **building a culture of inclusive excellence**. Its institutional ethos now mirrors the principle that empowering the least advantaged strengthens the whole community. Going forward, UPES's strategic plans place reduced inequalities at the core of sustainable development – from admitting a diverse student cohort to producing graduates who are socially conscious leaders. By maintaining this trajectory, UPES will not only improve its performance in initiatives like THE Impact Rankings but, more importantly, will fulfill its role as an engine of equitable growth and social transformation. In the journey towards 2030 and beyond, UPES stands as a case study of how higher education can actively drive the SDG 10 agenda, proving that universities are crucial actors in shaping a more just and inclusive world.

## References

- [1] UPES, "Sustainable-development-goals/10," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/sustainable-development-goals/10>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [2] UPES, "EDI," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/EDI.pdf>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [3] UPES, "SDG 5.6.2," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/SDG5/5.6/5.6.2.pdf>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [4] SCRIBD, "Policy-on-Inlcusion-UPES," [Online]. Available: <https://www.scribd.com/document/873524635/Policy-on-Inlcusion-upes>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [5] ITS, "SDG10," [Online]. Available: <https://www.its.ac.id/sustainability/sdg10/>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [6] Nirfindia, "IR-O-U-0564," [Online]. Available: <https://www.nirfindia.org/nirfpdfcdn/2023/pdf/University/IR-O-U-0564.pdf>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [7] Theindiantribal, "News-females-again-outdo-males-in-higher-education-enrolment-aishe," [Online]. Available: <https://theindiantribal.com/2024/01/27/news-females-again-outdo-males-in-higher-education-enrolment-aishe/>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [8] News.careers360, "Private-university-sc-st-obc-student-faculty-caste-reservation-amity-noida-mahe-manipal-lpu-bits-pilani-upes-dehradun-parliament," [Online]. Available: <https://news.careers360.com/private-university-sc-st-obc-student-faculty-caste-reservation-amity-noida-mahe-manipal-lpu-bits-pilani-upes-dehradun-parliament>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [9] UPES, "Disabilities," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/Disabilities.pdf>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [10] UPES, "Campus-life," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/campus-life>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [11] Garhwalpost, "UPES-brings-disabled-persons-on-common-platform-for-sahayak-hackathon/," [Online]. Available: <https://garhwalpost.in/upes-brings-disabled-persons-on-common-platform-for-sahayak-hackathon/>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [12] upes, "scholarships," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/admissions/scholarships>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [13] UPES, "How-upes-is-contributing-to-sdgs," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/blog/liberal-studies/how-upes-is-contributing-to-sdgs>. [Accessed 10 2025].

- [14] UPES, "SDG 1.4.4," [Online]. Available: <https://www.upes.ac.in/assets/pdf/SDG1/1.4/1.4.4.pdf>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [15] Shiksha, "Engineering-upes-nirf-ranking-2025-check-the-university-s-performance-across-categories-blogId," [Online]. Available: <https://www.shiksha.com/news/engineering-upes-nirf-ranking-2025-check-the-university-s-performance-across-categories-blogId-209820>. [Accessed 10 2025].
- [16] Timeshighereducation, "Impact-rankings-2025-results-announced," [Online]. Available: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/impact-rankings-2025-results-announced>. [Accessed 10 2025].