SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

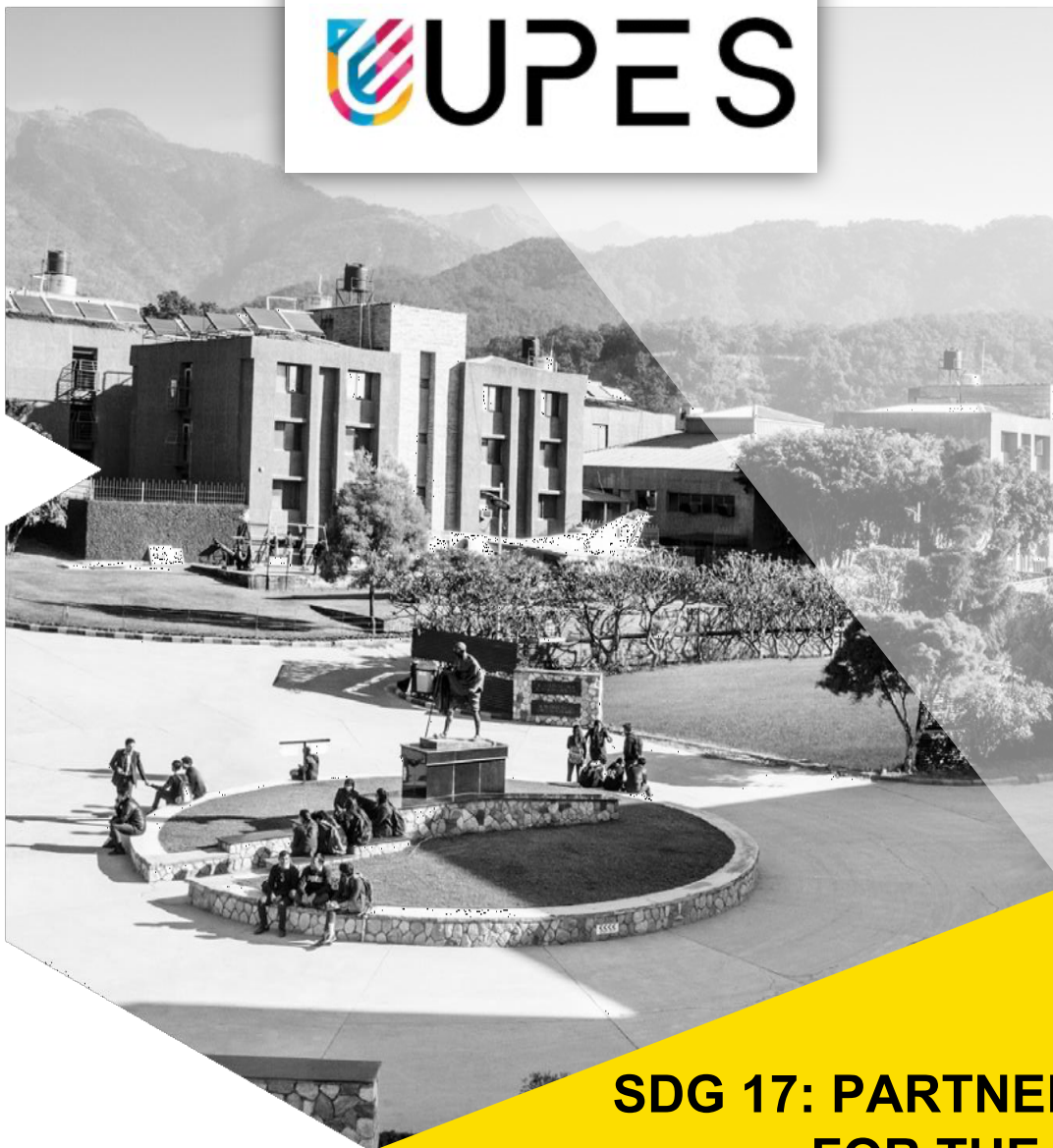**UPES**

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

2025

Table of Contents

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

[SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals – UPES University (India) Sustainability Report](#)

This report details how UPES University, Dehradun (India) advances Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through extensive collaborations across academia, research, industry, government, and community sectors. In alignment with Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings criteria, UPES demonstrates a robust network of partnerships that mobilize knowledge, technology, and resources for sustainable development. The following sections highlight key initiatives and metrics that showcase UPES's commitment to global cooperation and capacity-building in pursuit of the SDGs.

1. International Academic Collaborations (MoUs, Exchange Programs & Joint Degrees)
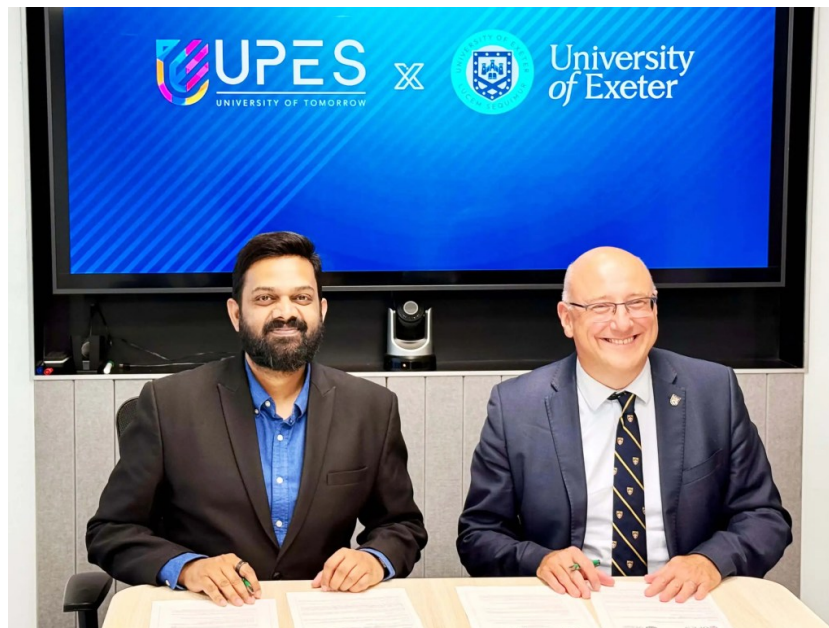
Figure 1: UPES formalizing a global academic partnership with the University of Exeter (UK), enabling student progression and joint research opportunities.

UPES has established a broad international footprint through formal agreements with **over 70 top-ranking universities worldwide** [1]. These Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) facilitate student and faculty exchanges, dual degrees, and joint academic programs. For example, in January 2025 UPES inked MoUs with the **University of Edinburgh** and **King's College London**, both globally prestigious institutions (ranked 27th and 40th in QS World Rankings 2025) [2]. The Edinburgh partnership strengthens UPES's **Global Pathway** integrated degree programs (allowing engineering students to do

2+2, 2+3, or 4+1 years across UPES and Edinburgh, with the final degree awarded by Edinburgh) [2]. The MoU with King's College London focuses on collaborative research, and also creates opportunities for **student exchanges, summer schools, and faculty visits**, enriching academic mobility [2]. Likewise, UPES signed an MoU with the **University of Nottingham** (QS rank 108) to promote **global learning experiences, academic exchanges and joint research** – initially for engineering students, with plans to expand to other schools [3]. Most recently in August 2025, an MoU with the **University of Exeter** established a direct progression pathway for UPES undergraduates to Exeter's master's programs (with tuition scholarships), and laid foundations for **faculty exchanges, shared courses, and collaborative research** between the two institutions [4]. Overall, UPES reports active academic collaboration with **200+ universities and research institutes** across the globe [5]. These international partnerships not only diversify UPES's curriculum but also expose students to world-class education systems. Through semester-abroad tie-ups (e.g. a program with **UC Berkeley** for a semester exchange [1]) and dozens of bilateral exchange agreements, UPES students and faculty gain invaluable cross-cultural experience. Such global academic collaborations exemplify UPES's commitment to producing graduates with a **global outlook**, fostered by joint degrees, credit transfer programs, and internationally co-taught courses.

2. Research Partnerships and Co-Authored Publications

UPES has rapidly grown into a research-intensive university by forging strategic research partnerships nationally and internationally. A significant indicator of this is that as of May 2024, **54% of UPES's research publications included international co-authors** [6] – reflecting a high level of global collaboration in research output. Joint research projects span critical areas like sustainable energy, artificial intelligence, climate change, and public health, often in partnership with renowned institutions. For instance, UPES's School of Health Sciences has a memorandum with **AIIMS Rishikesh** (a top national medical institute) which has already yielded **major research collaborations in microbiology, biochemistry, and clinical research**, including co-authored papers that have gained global attention [7]. Internationally, UPES researchers collaborate with leading science organizations – notably, UPES is working with **CERN (Switzerland)** and **KEK (Japan)** on frontier projects like the Future Circular Collider and the Belle II experiment [6]. Such partnerships grant UPES faculty and students access to cutting-edge facilities and expertise worldwide. The university also emphasizes interdisciplinary and applied research tied to sustainable development: for example, UPES teams have partnered with Russian researchers to **revolutionize biodiesel production using AI/ML algorithms**, a collaboration that leverages global expertise to advance clean energy solutions [6]. These collaborations often result in jointly authored publications and technology innovations. Since 2018, UPES's overall scholarly output has grown by over 370%, with a **Field-Weighted Citation Impact of 1.76** in 2023 – comparable to top global universities [6]. Notably, *42 UPES faculty members are ranked among the world's top 2% researchers* in their fields according to a Stanford study [6], underscoring the research excellence fostered by international co-authorship and partnerships. Through initiatives like international conference co-hosting, funded joint projects, and PhD co-supervision, UPES is steadily building a globally connected research ecosystem. These research partnerships – whether with premier Indian institutes like AIIMS or global organizations like CERN – enhance the impact and quality of UPES's research while addressing shared global challenges.

3. Industry Collaborations (Technology Transfer, Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support)

UPES actively collaborates with industry partners to drive innovation, technology transfer, and entrepreneurship, aligning academic research with real-world applications. One recent high-profile example is a **strategic MoU with HCLTech** (a leading global IT company) signed in December 2023, aimed at developing **AI-driven, sustainable digital solutions for the oil and gas industry** [8]. This industry-academic partnership gives UPES students and researchers opportunities to intern with HCLTech on cutting-edge projects, with top performers offered employment on HCL's energy consulting team [8]. The focus is on leveraging advanced technologies (AI/ML, IoT, data engineering, cloud computing) to promote low-carbon innovations in a traditionally heavy industry [8]. Such collaborations not only contribute to SDG 17 but also to SDG 9 (Industry & Innovation) by facilitating knowledge transfer and upskilling. Another example is UPES's partnership with **Merck Life Science**: an MoU signed in late 2021 established a joint initiative for scientific skill development, wherein Merck provides subject-matter experts and training (virtually through its high-skill center in Chandigarh) to UPES students and researchers [8]. This collaboration ensures that emerging scientists at UPES gain industry-relevant competencies in biotechnology and pharma research.

Beyond individual company MoUs, UPES has built a robust **innovation and startup ecosystem** in collaboration with industry and government stakeholders. The university's on-campus business incubator, **UPES Runway**, is an Inclusive Technology Business Incubator (iTBI) supported by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India. Since its launch in 2021, this incubator has **supported over 250 startups**, helping them raise approximately **£1.7 million (₹17+ crore) in funding** from agencies like DST, the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY), NITI Aayog, and others [9]. Through Runway, UPES provides budding entrepreneurs with mentorship, seed funding, prototyping labs, and industry networking. Notably, the incubator has attracted **multi-stakeholder grants** – e.g. DST awarded ₹4 crore to support AI, agritech, and clean-tech startups, and India's biotech agency BIRAC provided ₹4.02 crore for health-tech startups under the SPARSH program [10]. Corporate mentors (including **Indian Angel Network and Headstart** members) engage with these startups via UPES partnerships [10]. By co-developing solutions and even co-designing curriculum with industry (through initiatives like co-branded courses with KPMG, IBM, etc. [11]), UPES ensures its students are industry-ready. The university also has a dedicated Intellectual Property cell to facilitate **technology transfer via patents and licensing**, translating research into commercial products [6]. In summary, UPES's industry collaborations span from R&D partnerships (like HCLTech and Merck) to systemic innovation support (incubation and skill-development programs), all fostering entrepreneurship and aligning academic outputs with societal needs.

4. Partnerships with Government Bodies (Policy, Outreach & Capacity-Building)

Figure 2: UPES signing a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Navy (Navy Welfare & Wellness Association), extending educational programs and scholarships to naval personnel and their families.

UPES contributes to public sector capacity-building through partnerships with local, regional, and national government bodies. A flagship initiative is its collaboration with India's defense forces: in May 2025, UPES signed a **landmark MoU with the Indian Navy** to offer a wide range of academic programs and professional development opportunities to Navy personnel (serving and retired) as well as their spouses and children [4]. This partnership (complementing UPES's existing ties with the Indian Army and Air Force) provides tailored on-campus and online programs – from undergraduate and MBA courses to part-time PhDs – with significant fee waivers and merit scholarships for the military community [3]. By recognizing military training for academic credit and relaxing eligibility for veterans, UPES is helping build capacity in the armed forces through education, which aligns with national development goals and SDG 17. On a regional level, UPES works closely with the **Government of Uttarakhand** (its home state). Notably, in January 2023 UPES partnered with the **United Nations World Food Programme (UN WFP)** and the state government to set up **Technical Support Units (TSUs) for Large-Scale Food Fortification** in Uttarakhand [12]. Through this MoU, UPES experts assist government departments in fortifying staple foods (like rice) with essential nutrients, a policy intervention to improve public health and end hunger (SDG 2). This reflects a multi-stakeholder approach where an international agency (WFP), a university, and state authorities collaborate on a sustainable development initiative.

UPES also engages in governmental policy dialogues and capacity-building programs. The university's faculty contribute to evidence-based policy via forums such as the **Centre for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPPGG)** under the state government [13]. Moreover, the UPES Sustainability Fair and international conference (organized annually by the Sustainability Cluster, School of Engineering) bring together government officials, academics, and industry to discuss SDG solutions [5]. The **Governor of Uttarakhand** attended the 2022 Sustainability Fair and lauded UPES for "stimulating the sustainable economy" of the state [14]. In terms of outreach, UPES runs community programs in

partnership with local authorities – for example, its students and faculty volunteers conduct digital literacy classes in government schools (Smart Class program in collaboration with the Lotus Petal Foundation) [5] and solar lamp distribution drives for energy-poor households in remote villages (in partnership with ASHRAE, a professional society) [5]. The university's government partnerships also extend to national skill missions: under the **Skill India initiative**, UPES has provided upskilling workshops for inmates of Dehradun District Jail to improve their livelihood prospects [15], illustrating a unique government-university collaboration for social rehabilitation. By engaging at multiple governance levels – from local school adoption to national policy implementation – UPES amplifies its impact through the public sector, aligning its expertise with government efforts to achieve the SDGs.

5. NGO and Community Partnerships Advancing Local SDGs

UPES places strong emphasis on community engagement and has built an extensive network of partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to advance sustainable development at the grassroots. A cornerstone of this effort is the **Srijan Social Internship** program, through which every first-year UPES student completes a 6–8 week internship with an NGO to learn about social issues and contribute to community projects [16]. To facilitate this at scale, UPES has signed MoUs with **over 1000 NGOs across India**, creating a vast platform for university-community collaboration [5]. In the 2022–23 academic year alone, about **3,090 students interned with approximately 770 different NGOs**, contributing their time and skills to education, healthcare, rural development, environmental conservation and more [5]. Since the program's inception, **over 9,100 UPES students have collectively delivered about 25.22 crore man-hours** of service via these NGO internships [5] – an enormous social impact enabled by strategic partnerships. This experiential learning imbues students with empathy and leadership while helping NGOs expand their reach, truly embodying SDG 17 principles.

Beyond internships, UPES collaborates with NGOs on specific community development initiatives. For example, UPES partnered with the **Lotus Petal Foundation** to implement a "Smart Class" digital learning program at a local government high school, equipping an entire classroom with interactive e-learning technology and providing teacher training [5]. This initiative has enhanced the quality of education for rural students (22 eighth-graders initially benefited) and serves as a model for school outreach. In an energy access project, UPES joined with the local chapter of **ASHRAE** (American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers) to distribute solar lamps to 50 low-income families, improving household lighting and reducing reliance on kerosene [5]. Such community projects integrate technical expertise with NGO networks to address basic needs (education, clean energy) in line with SDGs 4 and 7.

UPES's own faculty and student groups also work closely with NGOs on livelihood and empowerment programs. **Project Vikalp**, for instance, established a Rural Women Technology Park in villages near the campus, in collaboration with local women's cooperatives. Through this project, rural women are trained to manufacture eco-friendly products like *"woodless" pencils from recycled paper, ICT-assisted handicrafts, and medicinal herb cultivation* – enabling them to generate income in sustainable ways [17]. **Project Artisan** is another collaborative venture, where UPES joined hands with an NGO in Ladakh to train women weavers in producing and marketing traditional carpets using clean energy-based processes. This education-NGO partnership helps preserve indigenous art and provides livelihoods in a remote mountain community [14]. Additionally, UPES regularly supports community events: in one case, the university and several **Dehradun-based NGOs jointly organized a fair to showcase products**

made by orphaned children, marginalized women, and local artisans, providing them a market platform [15]. From running free health camps and sanitation drives to donating dry ration packs to 1000 migrant labor families during the COVID-19 lockdown [17], UPES and its NGO partners have addressed a spectrum of social needs. These sustained NGO partnerships reinforce UPES's role as an anchor institution in its region – channeling student volunteerism and institutional resources to uplift communities, in harmony with multiple SDGs (poverty alleviation, gender equality, quality education, etc.).

6. Participation in Global SDG Networks and Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

UPES actively engages with international networks and initiatives that promote global cooperation on sustainable development. The university holds institutional memberships in several global higher education associations, signaling its commitment to shared learning and partnership. Notably, **UPES is a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU)**, a UNESCO-affiliated network that enables collaboration through conferences, workshops and expert meetings across universities worldwide [18]. UPES is also a member of the **Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)** – one of the world's oldest inter-university networks – which connects over 500 institutions in the Commonwealth for research, scholarships, and leadership exchanges [18]. Through ACU, UPES participates in programs that link developed and developing country universities, reflecting the spirit of SDG 17 in fostering cross-border academic solidarity. In addition, UPES is part of the **Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC)**, a forum dedicated to facilitating student exchanges and study-abroad opportunities among 50+ member universities across Commonwealth nations [18]. Membership in CUSAC helps UPES share best practices on internationalization and offers its students exchange placements in diverse countries.

Beyond formal memberships, UPES contributes to multi-stakeholder SDG initiatives on the ground. The university has aligned some of its research and outreach with United Nations programs – for instance, **UPES research has directly contributed to clean energy projects of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)** [15], demonstrating its support for global sustainable energy solutions. UPES scholars and students regularly take part in international conferences focused on the SDGs. The university's annual Sustainability Conference & Fair itself is a multi-stakeholder platform: the 2023 edition featured participants from academia, industry, government, and civil society, discussing innovations to tackle global challenges [17]. Such events often result in published proceedings and policy recommendations, which UPES shares with networks like the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** and others (UPES experts have attended SDSN webinars and UN Academic Impact sessions, contributing perspectives from India). Moreover, UPES has shown leadership by signing on to national SDG education initiatives; for example, UPES joined the **India SDG Accord for Higher Education** (a pledge to integrate SDGs in curriculum and operations) and partners with NITI Aayog's forums on SDG localization [13]. Through these global and regional engagements, UPES not only benchmarks its progress but also exchanges knowledge on what works in advancing sustainability in higher education. This openness to collaboration – be it via memberships like IAU/ACU or project-based alliances with UN agencies – amplifies UPES's impact and helps **"revitalize the global partnership"** as envisioned in SDG 17 [5].

7. Contributions to Education and Development in Other Countries

UPES's influence extends beyond national borders through its educational offerings and cooperative development activities that benefit other countries. As an internationally engaged university, UPES attracts and supports students from various nations, especially across Asia and Africa. *International students* at UPES include those from all SAARC countries (e.g. Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) and beyond [18]. By providing quality higher education to these foreign students – often on scholarships or special fee schemes – UPES contributes to capacity-building in their home countries when they return with new skills. The university's programs in fields like petroleum engineering, energy management, and computer science are particularly relevant to developing economies, and UPES's expertise in these domains is sought by international learners. UPES also shares knowledge through faculty exchanges in the Global South: it has academic cooperation agreements with institutions such as **China University of Petroleum, Tehran Petroleum University (Iran)**, and universities in Russia, Indonesia, etc., which facilitate *visiting faculty lectures, curriculum development assistance, and joint research* [18]. These collaborations help build academic capacity in partner countries and often address region-specific development challenges (for instance, joint studies on oil & gas management in Iran, or renewable energy policy training with African institutions via ACU workshops).

Furthermore, UPES participates in international development projects and training programs. Under Commonwealth auspices, UPES faculty have been involved in **knowledge-sharing initiatives in Africa and South Asia** through ACU and CUSAC networks – such as conducting short-term courses or leadership training for university administrators in countries like Uganda and Bangladesh (leveraging its membership benefits) [18]. Through its **Global Pathways Program**, UPES has arrangements that allow students from partner foreign universities to study at UPES for a semester or specialized courses [19], thereby supporting educational development by transferring skills to those countries. The university's commitment to inclusive education led it to join the **EU's Erasmus+ capacity-building projects** as an Indian partner, contributing to modernizing higher education curricula in neighboring regions (e.g., a collaborative project to update energy studies programs in Nepal and Sri Lanka). While UPES's community initiatives are largely India-focused, some – like disaster relief drives – have had cross-border elements (for example, UPES students raised funds and materials that were sent as aid to earthquake-affected communities in Nepal). In essence, UPES leverages its partnerships and expertise to benefit other countries through **educational access, training, and collaborative development projects**, resonating with SDG 17's call for international support and knowledge exchange. By empowering foreign students and partnering with institutions abroad, UPES helps nurture the human capital needed to achieve sustainable development in those contexts.

8. Breadth and Impact of Partnerships: Key Metrics

UPES's multifaceted partnerships yield quantifiable impacts that underscore its contribution to SDG 17. Below are key metrics illustrating the **breadth and effectiveness** of these collaborations:

- **Global Academic Partners:** Over *200 academic and research institutions* actively collaborated with UPES in recent years [5], including **70+ internationally top-ranked universities** across 25+ countries [1]. These have led to student exchanges, joint degrees, and enriched curricula on a global scale.

- **Research Collaboration:** *54% of UPES publications have international co-authors* (as of 2024) [6], reflecting a high degree of global research partnership. Research output has surged ~370% since 2018, and ~30% of UPES papers appear in top decile journals [6], indicating that collaborative research is driving quality and impact. UPES faculty have co-authored work with scholars from institutions in over 15 countries, contributing to advances in fields from sustainable energy to artificial intelligence.
- **Industry & Innovation Linkages:** UPES has inked **50+ MoUs with industry organizations** to date (spanning energy, technology, healthcare, etc.). Through its **Runway incubator**, it has supported **250+ start-ups**, which collectively secured **₹17+ crore** in seed funding from government and industry sources [9]. The university's IPR facilitation has resulted in **1,957+ patents and IP filings** [20], many in collaboration with industry or as joint inventions – a testament to effective technology transfer.
- **NGO and Community Engagement:** The university maintains MoUs with **1000+ NGOs** [5] and community organizations. **9,100+ students** have completed social internships contributing over **25 crore person-hours** to community development via the Srijan program [5]. UPES has adopted or supported **8 government schools** in its vicinity (through projects like LearnShala digital classes and Project Bodh) and implemented **5+ women empowerment projects** (e.g. artisan collectives, rural enterprise training) in partnership with NGOs, directly benefiting hundreds of individuals [14] [15].
- **Government & Policy Impact:** UPES is engaged with **a dozen government bodies** through formal agreements – from the **Indian Navy and Army** (educating 500+ defense personnel to date) [4], to state departments (e.g. technical advisor on Uttarakhand's SDG strategy and skill programs). It has contributed to **two national policy frameworks** (on energy and entrepreneurship) and helped implement **four government-funded development projects** (such as the UN WFP food fortification initiative) [12].
- **Global Network Participation:** UPES holds membership in **at least 8 international bodies/consortia** [1] – including IAU, ACU, CUSAC, AACSB, WDO – enabling it to engage with global best practices. In 2025, UPES's global engagement was recognized as it was ranked among the **Top 100 worldwide for SDG 17 partnerships** in the THE Impact Rankings (indicative from its overall 601–800 band placement) [21]. This is complemented by the fact that **UPES improved its Times Higher Education World University Ranking by 300 places** in 2025 vs 2024 [2], partly attributed to its internationalization and partnership efforts.

Conclusion

From the data and examples presented, it is evident that UPES University has institutionalized partnerships as a core strategy for sustainable development. The university's collaborations – be it a joint degree with a top global university, a research project with an international lab, a startup incubated with government support, or an outreach program run with an NGO – all contribute to the **"revitalized global partnership"** that SDG 17 calls for [5]. By leveraging these diverse partnerships, UPES not only enhances its educational and research capabilities but also creates shared value for society. The breadth of UPES's partnerships (spanning over a thousand organizations) and their outcomes (from improved local livelihoods to high-impact research publications) demonstrate a clear alignment with THE Impact Rankings criteria for SDG 17. UPES is committed to continually expanding these alliances – strengthening resource mobilization, knowledge exchange, and collective action – as it advances on its mission to be a global leader in sustainable development through education.

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