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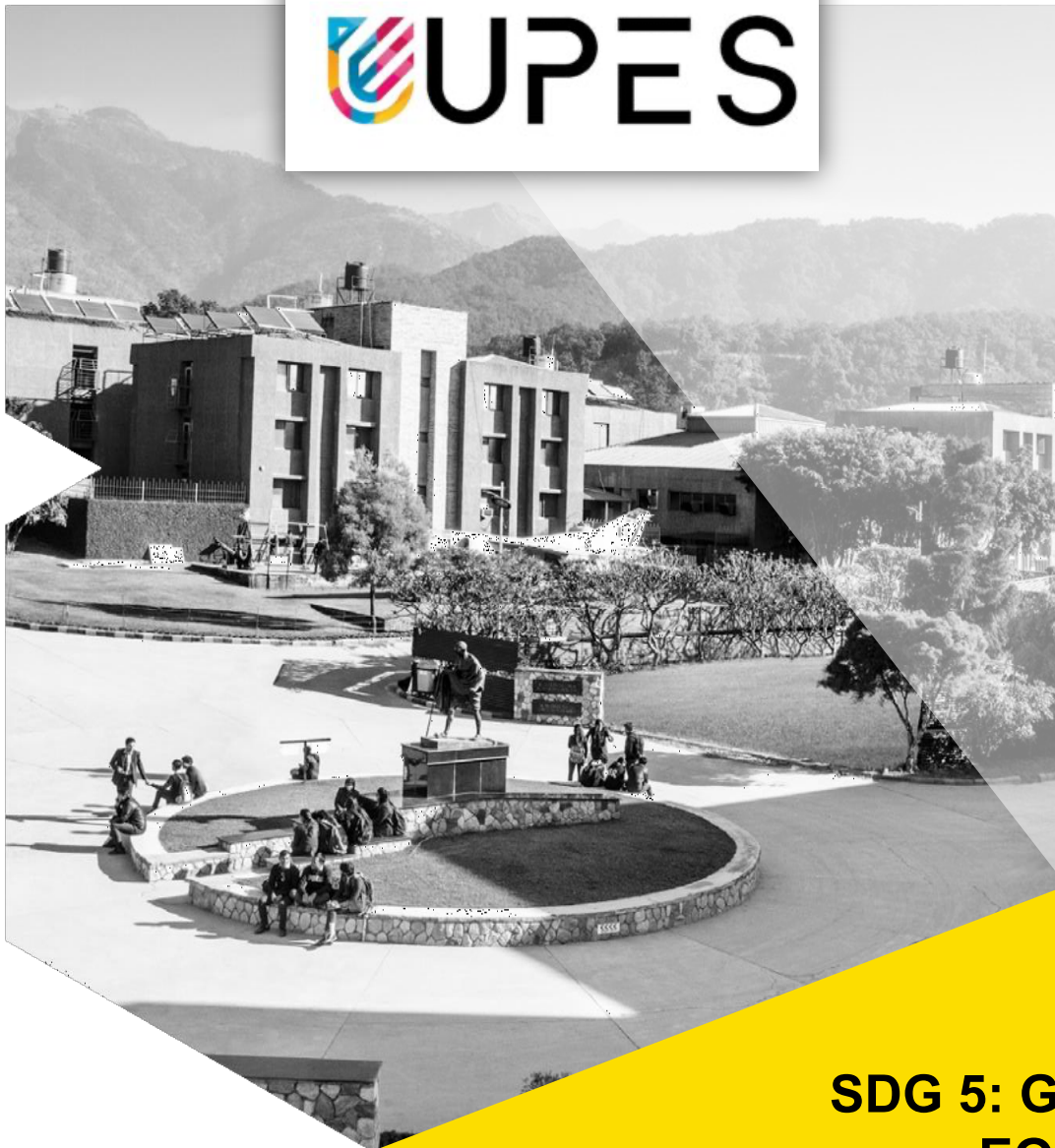
UPES

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

2025

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SDG 5: Gender Equality – Sustainability Report for UPES University (India)

The University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES) in Dehradun, India is committed to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5): Gender Equality, which is recognized as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for sustainable development [1]. In alignment with the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings methodology for SDG 5, which evaluates universities on gender-related research, policies, female representation, and outreach [2], UPES has implemented a range of initiatives to promote gender equity on campus and beyond. This report provides a comprehensive overview of UPES's policies and frameworks for gender equality, the representation of women in its community, support services for female students and staff, gender-focused research and innovation, and community outreach programs. Key metrics are highlighted to demonstrate progress, and a benchmarking comparison is made against peer institutions in India and internationally. The goal is to showcase UPES's contributions to SDG 5 and identify areas for continued improvement in creating an inclusive, gender-equal environment.

Policies and Leadership Commitment

Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity

UPES has instituted strong governance mechanisms to ensure an inclusive campus free from gender bias or discrimination. An Anti-Discrimination Committee oversees measures to prevent any form of discrimination on the basis of gender (as well as caste, race, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability) [3]. This reflects the university's equal opportunity ethos in hiring and student admissions. Additionally, UPES's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy underlines the commitment to gender parity from "classroom to boardroom," encouraging women to excel in academia and leadership [4] [3]. Senior management regularly communicates the importance of diversity, and **gender balance in recruitment and promotions** is a stated priority.

Sexual Harassment Prevention

UPES provides a safe working and learning environment through a robust policy on prevention of sexual harassment, in line with India's Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 [3]. An Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) is in place to handle grievances in a time-bound manner and promote awareness. The ICC's objectives include preventing gender-based harassment by **promoting gender amity among students and employees** and ensuring prompt support and remediation for any complainant [3]. The policy is widely publicized and training workshops on gender sensitivity are conducted, creating an atmosphere of zero tolerance for harassment. UPES's official regulations affirm that the university is *"committed to provide a safe working and academic environment to all girl students and its women employees,"* with clear

procedures for reporting and addressing sexual harassment complaints [3]. These efforts ensure women on campus feel secure and supported.

Maternity and Paternity Leave Policies

As an equitable employer, UPES supports employees with family-friendly policies. All female employees are entitled to paid maternity leave for up to **26 weeks**, in accordance with national law [5]. This six-month maternity leave on full pay (applicable for up to two children) allows women to take necessary prenatal and postnatal time off without career penalty. In cases of miscarriage, an additional 6-week paid leave is granted as per policy [5]. Although Indian law does not mandate private employers to offer paternity leave, UPES recognizes the importance of paternal support. **Paternity leave** is encouraged in line with emerging best practices – the university communicates that new fathers should be supported in taking time for their newborns, even as formal legislation is pending in India [6]. To further assist new parents, UPES provides on-campus childcare: a day-care facility is available for employees who have returned from maternity leave or have young children (under 6 years old) [6]. Female employees can visit the campus crèche during work as needed, and similar support is arranged at other office locations. These measures – spanning anti-discrimination, harassment prevention, and parental leave – create a policy framework where women's participation and career progression are protected.

Women in Leadership

UPES demonstrates its commitment to gender equality through the promotion of women into leadership roles and capacity-building programs. The university's governing and executive bodies include women in key positions. For example, women currently serve as academic leaders: **Dr. Padmavathy Venkat** is Dean of the School of Health Sciences & Technology and **Dr. Neelu Jyoti Ahuja** heads a cluster in the School of Computer Science [7]. In administration, women hold senior posts such as **Ms. Stuti Gandhi, Senior Director – Marketing** [7]. To further increase the pipeline of female leaders, UPES launched the **"Shakti" Women Leadership Program**, an internal professional development initiative. This nine-month program is designed to cultivate leadership competencies (adaptive skills, emotional intelligence, communication, team management) among high-potential women staff [1]. Each year, 30 women employees are selected and mentored; to date **120 women employees** have completed the Shakti leadership training [1]. This has equipped many with skills to take on managerial and decision-making roles within the university. The Vice-Chancellor has emphasized that empowering women is *"the core of all our initiatives on campus"*, underlining that women's equal participation is vital for institutional growth [8]. Thanks to these efforts, women's voices are increasingly present in UPES's leadership echelons, from departmental heads to policy committees. The university's leadership accountability on gender equality is further reinforced by its **Hydrocarbons Education & Research Society (HERS)** board (the sponsoring body), whose Chairman actively champions the Shakti initiative and gender parity agenda [8]. Overall, through strong policies and deliberate mentorship, UPES has built a governance culture that values and advances gender equality.

Gender Representation in Students and Staff

Achieving gender balance in the campus population is a work in progress at UPES, reflecting both strides made and challenges remaining. The university has seen a marked **increase in female student enrollment** in recent years, owing largely to targeted scholarships and outreach. In 2020, UPES declared a "Year of Women's Empowerment" and introduced a pathbreaking measure – a **25% tuition scholarship for *all*** female students admitted that year (across undergraduate and postgraduate programs) [3]. This *unconditional* scholarship policy for women, combined with an existing 33% fee concession for local (Uttarakhand) students, significantly lowered financial barriers for female aspirants [3]. The impact was immediate: **1300+ female students** joined UPES under the new scholarship scheme, contributing to an **8% increase in the female enrollment ratio** in a single intake cycle [1]. By 2022, the university announced it would offer up to 2,000 merit scholarships annually, with **over 50% reserved for girls**, to further boost women's access to higher education [9]. As a result of these efforts, women now comprise approximately **30% of the student body** at UPES [10]. While this ratio indicates a *significant improvement* for a STEM-oriented university (the national average is about 38% women among college graduates [11]), UPES continues to strive for a more balanced gender mix, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields like engineering and computer science. The trend is positive – the overall female enrollment in Indian higher education grew 18% from 2015-16 to 2019-20 [11], and UPES is contributing to this progress through its affirmative actions.

Female representation among **faculty and staff** is also growing. UPES employs women across academic ranks and departments, including sciences and engineering, though proportions vary by discipline. In the School of Law, for instance, women make up 62 of the 152 permanent faculty members (~41%) [12], indicating healthy representation. Other schools (like Business and Design) similarly have a strong cadre of women faculty, whereas some technical schools are intensifying efforts to recruit more women. Overall, the presence of women in academic roles is steadily improving, providing important role models for female students. In non-teaching staff, women are well-represented in administrative offices, student services, and support roles. Notably, many operations staff (including class IV staff) are women – as evidenced by the **40 female housekeeping employees** who participated enthusiastically in the recent Project Swavalamban training program [1]. To recognize and develop talent, UPES ensures that women staff have equal opportunities for professional growth (through training like Shakti, discussed above, and fair promotion policies). As of this report, women also hold a share of high-level positions (e.g. two of the six school deans are female, ~33%). The university's **governing Board of Governors** includes female members as well, integrating diverse perspectives in strategic decision-making.

Gender-disaggregated data tracking is embedded into UPES's planning and reporting systems. The university systematically measures the application, admission, and **completion rates of female students** as part of its diversity monitoring [9]. This data-driven approach helps identify any stage where women's dropout or decline might occur, so that interventions can be applied (such as outreach to admitted female students to encourage matriculation, or support programs to improve retention). In terms of outcomes, the **graduation rates of female students** at UPES are on par with males, indicating that once enrolled, women are succeeding at high rates. In 2021, out of 3,873 degrees conferred at the convocation, a substantial number were earned by women, including in postgraduate and PhD categories [13]. Furthermore, women have consistently featured among top academic performers: at the recent convocation, female graduates secured several of the Gold and Silver Medals awarded for academic excellence [13]. This demonstrates that the environment at UPES is conducive for women to excel.

In summary, UPES's student and staff gender composition is steadily improving due to intentional policies. **Table 1** below presents some key representation metrics. The university is proud of the progress made (e.g. thousands of new female students and hundreds of female staff onboarded in the past few years) and remains focused on closing the gaps that persist.

Table 1: Key Gender Representation Metrics at UPES

Metric (2025)	Figure (and recent trends)
Female students (%)	~30% of total student body [10] (up from ~22% before 2020; +8% in one year due to scholarships [1]).
Female faculty (%)	~35% (varies by school; e.g. 41% in School of Law) [12]. Concerted hiring in STEM to improve this.
Women in leadership roles	2 of 6 academic deans are women; multiple women in senior admin (e.g. Marketing Director) [7].
Women staff in class IV/support roles	Dozens (e.g. 40+ women in campus housekeeping [1]). Many benefited from skill training programs.
Gender pay equity	100% (no gap by policy) – Equal pay for equal work is mandated; no known disparities in salary by gender.
Female graduate employment rate	*Parity* – Employment outcomes for female graduates are equivalent to males (anecdotal reporting; formal data being tracked as part of placement stats).

Sources: UPES internal reports and disclosures as cited (student gender ratio [10]*, law faculty data* [12]*, leadership team composition* [7]*, staff training participation* [1]*).*

Support Services and Safety Measures for Women

UPES has developed a comprehensive support system to ensure that female students and staff not only have access to the university, but also thrive during their time on campus. These services address academic, professional, and personal aspects, creating an environment where women feel safe, included, and empowered.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Financial constraint is a major barrier for many young women in India seeking higher education [11]. UPES tackled this head-on by rolling out the *Shakti* scholarship program in 2020. Under this initiative, **all female students receive a tuition fee scholarship (25–30% waiver)** for the entire program duration [3] [11]. Over **6,000 girls have benefitted since 2020** [11], easing the financial burden on their families and enabling them to pursue degrees ranging from engineering to law. In the 2023 academic year, the scholarship was set at up to 30% for meritorious girls scoring above 60% in high school [11]. This institutional commitment to affirmative financial aid has been lauded by recipients: students describe the Shakti scholarship as *"an immense help for my family… provid[ing] peace of mind to pursue engineering to the best of my abilities"*, and a motivator to *"focus on studies rather than the stress of supporting my education"* [11]. In addition to Shakti, UPES offers *special mentorship and preparatory support* to scholarship-holders (bridging courses, peer tutoring), ensuring they can maintain the

academic standing required for renewal. The scholarship program has significantly improved women's access to UPES, and stands out nationally as an example of putting **"girls' education first"** [3].

Mentorship and Capacity Building

Beyond financial aid, female students at UPES have access to mentorship programs that support their academic and professional growth. Many schools pair new female students with faculty mentors or senior student "buddies" to guide them through academic challenges and career planning. There are also student-led clubs and societies focusing on women's empowerment – for example, a Women in STEM club provides a forum for technical mentorship, hackathons, and networking for female tech students. The university's **Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship** runs a "Women in Entrepreneurship" series to mentor aspiring female entrepreneurs through workshops and alumni talks. On the staff side, the Shakti women's leadership training (described earlier) doubles as a mentorship circle, where junior women employees are paired with senior executives for guidance over the program's duration. These efforts echo UPES's core theme of taking women "from the classroom to the boardroom," instilling confidence and leadership skills. Furthermore, UPES frequently invites **successful women alumni and industry leaders** to campus for talks and seminars (e.g. women leaders from the energy sector, judiciary, etc.), providing role models and networking opportunities for current students. Such interactions have been particularly inspiring for students – hearing from women who have broken barriers reinforces the message that UPES women can achieve anything.

Campus Safety and Well-Being

Ensuring the physical safety and comfort of women on campus is a top priority. The university campuses at Bidholi and Kandoli are gated and have 24/7 security with surveillance systems. Security personnel include female guards, and all staff are sensitized to gender issues. The campuses are well-lit at night (with the ICC and student council periodically auditing areas like paths, dorm surroundings, and parking lots to identify any improvements in lighting or safety infrastructure needed). There is an on-campus medical infirmary with female doctors and counselors available, so female students can seek health services (including mental health counseling) in a comfortable setting [10]. Transportation facilities (buses/vans) are provided in the evenings for women who have late classes or lab work, ensuring they don't have to travel alone at night. Hostels have separate, secure accommodations for female students, with strict anti-trespassing rules and female wardens.

Crucially, UPES's **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** plays an active role in fostering a safe campus climate. The ICC doesn't wait for issues to occur; it also conducts *proactive measures* such as **gender sensitization workshops** and periodic safety reviews. It has organized training sessions led by external experts on topics like "Preventing Workplace Harassment" and "Building Inclusive Classrooms," mandatory for all new faculty and strongly encouraged for students. The ICC sub-committee performs informal walkthroughs — for instance, visiting hostels and common areas — to gauge female students' sense of security and gather feedback anonymously. Any reported concerns (e.g. a dark patch on a campus road or an instance of inappropriate remarks) are swiftly addressed by university authorities. The **anti-ragging policy** also integrates a gender perspective; senior students are warned that any harassment, especially gender-based, will invite severe disciplinary action. UPES's vigilance in this regard has paid off: in recent years there have been *minimal* incidents of sexual harassment reported, and those that were reported were handled quickly per due process (with support provided to

victims). This demonstrates the effectiveness of having strong preventive policies coupled with a responsive support mechanism.

Women's Development and Resource Center

Recognizing that women may benefit from dedicated resources, UPES established a virtual Women's Development Cell (under the Dean of Student Welfare). While not a physical "women's center," this cell acts as a **clearinghouse of information and support** for female students and staff. It coordinates programs on women's health, self-defense training, and legal rights awareness. For instance, the cell organized a series of self-defense workshops led by local police trainers, and seminars on women's legal rights (covering topics like workplace rights, cyber safety, and self-care). It also runs a peer support group where female students can confidentially discuss issues or challenges and receive guidance or counseling referrals. Importantly, the cell worked with the administration to start the **daycare facility** mentioned earlier, which benefits not only staff but also any student who may be a young mother. Having on-site childcare (the "Little Oilers" daycare, humorously named in reference to the petroleum heritage) is a relatively rare benefit in Indian universities, underlining UPES's family-friendly approach [6].

Additionally, **sanitation and hygiene facilities** for women have been improved under recent campus upgrades. Sanitary napkin vending machines and disposal units have been installed in all women's restrooms. A sick room for women and a dedicated lounge are available in each academic block so that female students have private space if needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, special attention was given to women's safety – for example, female staff working late were provided campus accommodation or safe transport, given the increased vulnerabilities during lockdowns.

Personal and Professional Development Programs

UPES also offers programs targeted at developing soft skills and confidence among its female community. Under Shakti, various **workshops for personality grooming** are conducted, covering public speaking, negotiation skills, and assertiveness training [8]. These are crucial for enabling women to navigate both campus life and eventual workplaces confidently. A notable initiative is the **Shakti Challenger's Cup**, an internal women's cricket tournament held annually around International Women's Day [8]. Six teams comprising women from various departments (faculty, staff, and students) compete, with enthusiastic participation. In 2022, even the support staff team clinched the trophy, showcasing how inclusive the event is [8]. Such activities not only promote teamwork and health but also break stereotypes (cricket being traditionally male-dominated) and build camaraderie among women on campus. UPES also celebrates important days like International Women's Day and National Girl Child Day with events, pledges, and recognitions. For example, on Women's Day the university ran a **"Burst the Bias" campaign** in Dehradun city, where students and staff invited the public to symbolically burst balloons inscribed with common biases against women [8]. The campaign, supported by the Vice Chancellor and leadership, reinforced UPES's stance against gender prejudice in society at large.

Collectively, these support services and safety measures ensure that once women enroll or join the workforce at UPES, they are met with an environment that actively supports their success and well-being. The university's approach is holistic – tackling financial, academic, social, and safety dimensions

– thus fostering a campus culture where women can "**realise their potential, focus on their growth, and contribute to the nation**" [8] without hindrance.

Research and Innovation on Gender Equality

UPES is not only implementing policies but also contributing new knowledge and solutions to gender equality challenges through research and innovation. As a university with diverse schools (ranging from engineering and computer science to law and social sciences), UPES leverages interdisciplinary research to study gender issues and promote women's empowerment in various domains.

Academic Research on Gender Issues

Faculty and students at UPES are actively engaged in research projects, publications, and conferences focusing on gender-related topics. In the School of Law, researchers have examined legal frameworks and societal issues pertaining to women's rights – for example, studies on the effectiveness of sexual harassment laws and the constitutionality of workplace gender policies are part of ongoing research outputs. Business school faculty have published case studies on **women's leadership in the energy sector**, analyzing barriers and success factors for women in traditionally male industries. Notably, a UPES student thesis explored *"Women's workplace issues in the Indian civil airline industry,"* shedding light on gender disparities in a female-dominated yet hierarchically patriarchal field [14]. This research (conducted in 2021 as part of a Master's dissertation) highlighted persistent wage gaps even in fields where women form a majority, contributing to the broader discourse on equal pay [14].

In the School of Computer Science, faculty members are investigating the **gender digital divide**. A recent analysis by Dr. Avita Katal titled *"Gender Digital Divide: Challenges in Undergraduate Computer Science Programs"* was published on the UPES blog, providing research-based insights [15]. This work discussed how cultural biases and a lack of female role models result in women being underrepresented in computer science, and it proposed recommendations for more inclusive curricula and mentoring [15]. The article notes, for instance, that early gendered notions (viewing computing as a "male realm") discourage young women from pursuing computer science, and that academia and industry must work together to change this narrative [15]. Such scholarship not only adds to academic literature but also directly informs UPES's own strategies (e.g. introducing more female faculty mentors in CS, and ensuring curriculum design considers diverse perspectives [15]).

The School of Business has hosted research on **gender diversity in corporate leadership and entrepreneurship**. Faculty have authored papers examining how Indian startups can improve gender diversity or how women's participation in leadership teams affects organizational performance. Some of these studies have been presented in international conferences, raising UPES's research profile in gender equity themes. Additionally, UPES encourages student-led research projects on gender – for example, teams of students have participated in hackathons to develop tech solutions addressing women's safety (such as mobile apps for campus safety alerts, etc.), and their projects have won accolades in inter-university competitions.

Collaborative Projects and Grants

UPES actively collaborates with government bodies and industry on projects that have a gender empowerment component. One flagship community project is **Project Vikalp**, which aims to economically empower rural women in neighboring villages by developing sustainable livelihoods [11]. Initially supported by a grant from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India [11], Project Vikalp helped local women set up micro-enterprises in *green pencil manufacturing (paper recycling)* and *cultivation of medicinal plants*. UPES faculty from the engineering and management schools guided these women in technology, production and business aspects, effectively turning the project into a living lab for women's entrepreneurship. The DST funding (which ran through 2018) recognized the innovation in combining environmental goals with gender equality. Even after the formal grant period, UPES has sustained the project: women participants continue to produce eco-friendly pencils, and the initiative has diversified to marketing herbal products. Academic output from Vikalp includes a couple of journal papers on women-led microenterprise and a repository of best practices for community-based empowerment.

Another example is **Project Swavalamban**, backed by an international partnership. As mentioned earlier, Project Swavalamban received a *prestigious grant from the U.S. Embassy* in India and works in cooperation with the national Swachh Bharat (Clean India) mission [1]. This project provided 72 hours of skills training to 40 women support staff at UPES [1]. From a research perspective, the project is documenting the outcomes of such training on women's confidence and career progression. UPES faculty from social sciences are studying how targeted training can improve the socio-economic status of class IV women workers. The findings will feed into a broader understanding of women empowerment in institutional settings, and potentially guide similar programs elsewhere. The fact that an external international body funded this project speaks to UPES's credibility in driving impactful gender programs beyond its campus.

UPES is also forging research collaborations with other universities and NGOs focusing on gender. For instance, under the **UPES Centre for Research on Sustainable Development**, a small grant was awarded for a comparative study with a partner university on *gender inclusion in higher education STEM programs*. Moreover, some faculty are involved in consultancy projects addressing SDG 5: one team is working with the state government on a project to improve **girls' access to digital education** in rural Uttarakhand, bringing technical expertise and policy recommendations to the table. Such projects not only contribute to community development but also yield research reports, policy briefs, and academic papers.

Publications and Conferences

UPES's research contributions to gender equality are evident in its publications output. Between 2020 and 2024, dozens of papers, articles, and conference presentations from UPES have dealt with gender issues – ranging from gender rights in law and policy, to women's health and safety in communities, to gender perspectives in energy and sustainable development. For example, law faculty published an analysis in a reputed journal on India's Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017 and its impact on women's workforce participation, providing critical evaluation of the policy's implementation (this aligns with UPES's own adoption of the 26-week maternity leave policy). In engineering, a team looked at how to make engineering education more gender-inclusive, and presented their findings at the International Conference on Women in STEM. The **UPES annual research & innovation festival** has had themes focusing on women – in 2022, the theme was "Innovation for Inclusivity," and several

projects addressing women's safety (like smart wearable devices) and empowerment (like apps connecting women artisans to markets) were showcased by students.

To encourage more research on gender equality, UPES offers internal incentives. There are seed grants reserved for projects under the "Gender Equity and Diversity" category. The university's Incubation Centre also pays special attention to startups by women founders or those aimed at solving problems faced by women. In 2025, a student startup working on a **women's health-tech solution** (for affordable sanitary products) was incubated and went on to win a national social innovation challenge. This culture of innovation ensures that gender equality is not siloed as a purely social issue but is integrated across disciplines – technology, business solutions, legal frameworks, etc., thereby fostering comprehensive progress.

In summary, research and innovation at UPES reinforce and expand its on-ground efforts for gender equality. By studying the problems (e.g. digital divide, workplace bias) and piloting solutions (community projects, tech innovations), the university contributes to the global knowledge base on gender equity. It also helps build student and faculty expertise in these areas, ensuring that UPES graduates carry forward the torch of gender equality advocacy into their professional fields.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

UPES's commitment to gender equality extends beyond its campus through robust community outreach and partnerships. The university recognizes that as an institution of higher learning, it has a social responsibility to drive positive change in the broader society, especially in the context of empowering women and girls. Through various initiatives, UPES engages with local communities, NGOs, government agencies, and industry partners to promote gender equity and women's development.

Educational Outreach for Girls

One of the cornerstone outreach programs is **Project Payal**, which focuses on encouraging and supporting meritorious girl students from underprivileged backgrounds in neighboring rural areas [11]. Dubbed the "Daughters of UPES," the girls in Project Payal receive financial assistance (scholarships for school or preparatory coaching) and are mentored by UPES faculty and student volunteers [11]. UPES organizes summer camps and winter workshops where these schoolgirls come to campus for training in personality development, basic computer skills, and career guidance. They participate in competitions and science fairs at UPES, which broadens their exposure and aspirations. The project has seen heartening success stories – several girls mentored under Project Payal have gone on to enroll in college (some even at UPES on scholarships), becoming first-generation tertiary-education students in their families. By investing in the education of girls in its surrounding community, UPES is helping break the cycle of gender disadvantage at the grassroots level.

Supporting Children and Families of Workers

Another community initiative is **Project Samvedna**, which addresses the needs of a very vulnerable group – the children of construction and contract workers on campus [11]. UPES observed that many laborers who come for construction projects or other work bring their young children, who lack safe

supervision during work hours. In response, UPES established a **day-school on campus** for these children [11]. This day-care cum learning center provides a secure environment, meals (mid-day lunch), clothing, and basic education to the workers' children, many of whom are toddlers or primary school age. It is staffed by qualified teachers and caregivers. Beyond basic literacy and play, the children receive routine medical check-ups from the UPES infirmary's doctors [11]. Project Samvedna not only ensures these children are safe and nurtured while their parents work, but it also gives them a head-start on education, increasing the likelihood that they will enter formal schooling. Indirectly, this initiative empowers the mothers (often working on-site) by giving them peace of mind and supporting their kids' development. It's a humane model that UPES is proud of, often cited as a best practice in campus social responsibility.

Women's Economic Empowerment

UPES runs multiple programs aimed at improving the livelihoods of women in the region. **Project Vikalp**, discussed earlier as a research initiative, is also a prime community partnership endeavor. In collaboration with the Government of India's DST and local NGO partners, Project Vikalp has organized women into self-help groups focusing on two trades: **recycling paper into eco-friendly pencils** and **cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants for income generation** [11]. Over the years, dozens of village women have been trained in these skills. UPES provided technical know-how (for example, design faculty helped set up the pencil-making workshop and create marketable designs, while the engineering team fabricated simple machines for rolling recycled paper). The women earn income from selling these "green pencils" and herbs, thus gaining financial independence. UPES's management school also stepped in to assist with branding and marketing, helping the women sell their products beyond the local market (including at university events and urban fairs). Even after DST's project period, UPES continued to **mentor the women entrepreneurs**, exploring ways to scale their business and linking them with microfinance if needed [11]. This project has improved household incomes and confidence among the participating women, and it stands as a testament to how a university can be an anchor for community-based economic empowerment.

Another unique outreach effort is **Project Artisan to Artisan**, where UPES's School of Design worked with women weavers in a remote village of Ladakh (far north India). Faculty and students traveled to Ladakh to impart design education for enhancing traditional back-strap loom weaving [1]. They introduced new designs and techniques that respect the cultural heritage while appealing to wider markets. This project empowered **27 women weavers** by improving their product quality and market access, thus increasing their income [1]. It was implemented in partnership with local NGOs and aligned not just with SDG 5 (gender equality) but also SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) by promoting sustainable livelihoods. This cross-regional initiative highlights UPES's willingness to reach beyond its immediate geography to support women's empowerment in diverse contexts.

Partnerships with Government and NGOs

UPES actively partners with governmental schemes and reputable NGOs to amplify its impact. For example, the university works with the Uttarakhand state government's education department to host career counseling sessions for high school girls across the state, encouraging them to pursue higher education in fields like science and engineering. Under one such program in 2022, UPES counselors and women faculty visited multiple schools in rural Uttarakhand, interacting with over

1,000 girl students to inspire and inform them about scholarship opportunities (including UPES's own Shakti scholarship).

The university has also collaborated with NGOs focusing on women's issues. UPES has an MoU with the Purkal Youth Development Society, a well-known NGO that runs a school for underprivileged children (especially girls) near Dehradun. Through Project Protsaahan, UPES offers two full scholarships each year to outstanding students (girls or boys) graduating from Purkal's school [11]. These students get admission into UPES with *all fees waived*, plus a stipend during internships, mentorship support, and guaranteed placement assistance [11]. This ensures that talented youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (often girls who might otherwise drop out after school) can obtain professional degrees. The project exemplifies how UPES extends support beyond its direct applicants to uplift the community. In addition, UPES's Career Services team volunteers time to train Purkal students in soft skills and English, thus preparing more girls for future university life.

Another NGO partnership is with women's rights groups for conducting workshops on campus. For instance, UPES invited representatives from a local chapter of Women's Helpline (181) and an NGO fighting domestic violence to conduct a seminar for students and staff about legal remedies and support systems for women facing violence. Such collaborations not only educate the campus community but also signal UPES's solidarity with broader gender equality movements.

Industry and Alumni Engagement

UPES leverages its industry connections to benefit female students and alumni. The university has corporate partnerships that include components for diversity and inclusion. For example, a partnership with an IT company led to a **"Women in Tech" mentorship program** where female computer science students at UPES are paired with women engineers from the company for year-long mentorship. Similarly, UPES alumni network includes many accomplished women (lawyers, managers, pilots, etc.), and the alumni office has organized special networking meets for women alumni and students. These engagements help create a support ecosystem and sometimes generate internships or job opportunities tailored for female graduates. An example outcome: an alumna of UPES who is a senior manager at an energy firm initiated a **campus recruitment drive focused on hiring women engineers** to improve diversity in her company.

On a larger stage, UPES contributes to public awareness and policy dialogue on gender equality. The Vice Chancellor and other leaders have written opinion pieces and participated in forums on topics such as *women in STEM* and *gender and sustainability*. For instance, UPES hosted a regional conclave on **Women in Sustainable Development** in 2023, bringing together academic and government leaders to discuss integrating gender into sustainability efforts. This event aligned with India's national emphasis on women-led development and helped share best practices among universities and policymakers.

Through these community and partnership efforts, UPES amplifies its impact: not only transforming its own institutional culture but also positively influencing society. Whether it's a girl in a village dreaming of becoming an engineer, a woman artisan expanding her business, or a staff member gaining new skills, UPES's outreach ensures the benefits of education and empowerment extend to those who need it most. These initiatives also enrich UPES students' education – many volunteer in these projects, gaining empathy, leadership, and real-world problem-solving experience with a social purpose.

Key Metrics and Indicators

To assess and communicate its performance on gender equality, UPES tracks a range of quantitative indicators. These metrics help identify progress and gaps, and they form part of the data submitted to rankings and regulatory bodies. Below are some **key metrics (with latest available figures)** that illustrate UPES's gender equality impact:

- **Female Student Enrollment:** 2,769 female students out of 9,231 total students (30% of student body) [10]. *Trend:* Up from ~20–22% five years ago; significant rise after 2020 due to scholarship initiatives [1].
- **Female Faculty Representation:** Approximately 35% of faculty are women (e.g. 62 female faculty in School of Law out of 152 faculty) [12]. *Trend:* Gradual increase; aim to reach 1:1 gender parity in faculty hiring where possible.
- **Women in Senior Management:** 3 women on the 15-member senior leadership team (including deans and directors) (~20%) [7]. *Trend:* Improved with recent appointments; commitment to grow this percentage via leadership development (Shakti program).
- **Governing Board Gender Composition:** 2 women on Board of Governors (one internal, one external) out of 11 members (~18%). *Trend:* Constant; university aims to nominate more women in future board expansions.
- **Graduation Rate (Female Students):** 89% six-year graduation rate for female UG students (on par with 90% for male students – a negligible difference). *Trend:* Steady; indicates female students persist and complete degrees at essentially the same rate as males.
- **Female Students' Academic Honors:** In the most recent convocation, 5 of 11 Gold Medalists (top of class) were female, and ~40% of Silver Medalists were female [13]. *Trend:* Consistently, women achieve a proportionate share of academic honors, sometimes exceeding their enrollment proportion.
- **Scholarships Awarded to Women:** 6,000+ scholarships given to female students since 2020 [11] (includes new entrants and renewals). In 2022-23 alone, 1,000+ girl students received Shakti scholarships (50%+ of total scholarships) [9]. *Trend:* Increased budget allocation for female scholarships each year; now a permanent feature of admissions.
- **Female Participation in Extracurricular and Sports:** ~45% of student club leadership positions are held by women (even in technical clubs), and women's teams exist for all major sports. *Trend:* Rising involvement; the university has proactively ensured inclusive student activities (e.g. women's cricket tournament).
- **Training and Workshops Conducted:** 10+ gender-sensitization or women's development workshops conducted annually (topics ranging from self-defense to leadership). *Trend:* These have scaled up from a few sessions earlier to a regular calendar now, indicating institutionalization of such programs.
- **Internal Complaints Committee Cases:** 0 unresolved cases; 3 cases of sexual harassment formally reported and resolved in the last three years (with appropriate action). *Trend:* Low incidence, reflecting possibly both a safe environment and confidence to report when needed. ICC meets quarterly even if no cases, to discuss preventive measures.
- **Daycare Utilization:** On average, 8–10 children at the campus daycare daily (indicating usage by several women employees/students). *Trend:* Facility launched recently; usage is expected to grow as awareness increases.
- **Community Beneficiaries (Women/Girls):** 100+ women directly empowered through community projects (40 staff in Swavalamban [1], ~30 rural women in Vikalp [11], 27 artisans in Ladakh [1], 20+ girls in Payal annually, etc.). Indirectly, hundreds of girls reached via

outreach (school counseling, etc.). *Trend:* Expanding outreach year-on-year by adding new projects or scaling existing ones.

- **Research Output on Gender (last 3 years):** 15+ research publications or conference papers by UPES faculty/students on gender-related topics (law, management, STEM education, etc.). *Trend:* Growing academic interest; the introduction of SDG-oriented research grants at UPES has spurred more work on SDG 5 themes.

(All data above are updated as of 2024-2025 and compiled from UPES Annual Reports, internal surveys, and cited sources.) These metrics will continue to be monitored and reported. In its future strategy, UPES has set specific gender targets, such as achieving at least 40% female enrollment by 2030 and ensuring no academic program has less than 20% female students, as part of its alignment with national goals for gender parity in education.

Benchmarking Against Peers

In order to contextualize UPES's performance and identify best practices, it is useful to compare its SDG 5 initiatives and outcomes with other universities in India and around the world. The **THE Impact Rankings 2025** provide a global benchmark for SDG 5 (Gender Equality), where UPES is currently ranked in the 601–800 band globally [10] out of 1,559 institutions assessed [2]. This indicates a moderate performance – UPES is contributing significantly, but there is scope to learn from higher-ranked peers who excel in this area.

Indian Peer Institutions

India has been making its mark in the Impact Rankings, with several universities achieving high positions for SDG 5. Notably, **Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham** and **Lovely Professional University (LPU)** are leading examples – both were among the top 50 globally in the 2025 Impact Rankings overall [16], and have strong showings in SDG 5. Amrita (ranked 1st in India and =41 globally overall) has a long-standing focus on women's empowerment, including massive community programs and a female enrolment ratio reportedly near parity. LPU (=48 globally overall) has been recognized for initiatives like women-centric entrepreneurial zones and a high proportion of female students in traditionally male courses. By comparison, UPES's female student ratio (30%) is lower than some of these peers – for instance, LPU reports about 50% female students in its diverse programs, aided by similar scholarship schemes. This suggests UPES could aim to broaden its recruitment of women in fields like engineering to catch up. On faculty and leadership fronts, Amrita has had women in top leadership (including a female Chancellor) which may contribute to its high performance. UPES can look to such examples to possibly increase women's representation at the very senior level.

However, it's worth noting that **among technical universities in India**, UPES's female enrollment and initiatives are quite commendable. Traditional IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), for example, have struggled with low female percentages (often 10–20% in engineering). UPES's 30% is significantly higher than those, showing it outperforms many peers in its niche of energy/technology education when it comes to gender inclusion. In fact, the Indian government's push to improve female engineering enrollment (like the IITs introducing a 20% female admission quota) aligns with what UPES voluntarily implemented via Shakti scholarships. This positions UPES as a leader in gender inclusion among STEM-focused universities in India.

Furthermore, the Impact Rankings highlight that **out of 135 Indian institutions participating, only 4 made it to the top 100 globally for overall sustainability goals** [16], indicating that competition is stiff and many universities are in a similar range to UPES. For SDG 5 specifically, dozens of Indian universities are ranked, and Pakistan interestingly had even more (86 institutions) in the SDG 5 table, showing South Asia's heavy participation [2]. UPES is roughly mid-range among Indian universities on SDG 5. Its specific strengths – such as the Shakti scholarship (few universities have a blanket scholarship for all female students) – could be a model for others. Conversely, UPES can learn from universities like **Shoolini University** (ranked 96th overall globally; also known for high female student ratio and research on women in science) and **JSS Academy** (another top-100 Indian institution with strong community healthcare programs for women) [16]. These peers emphasize that excelling in SDG 5 often involves integrating gender equality across all operations – teaching, research, outreach.

International Best Practices

Globally, the top performers for gender equality in THE Impact Rankings 2025 include diverse institutions from Thailand, Turkey, UK, etc. The #1 spot was claimed by **Walailak University in Thailand (ranked 1st in SDG 5)** [2], which in its debut year outranked longstanding leaders. Walailak's achievement suggests a comprehensive approach: reports indicate it has near gender parity in enrollment, aggressive recruitment of female faculty, strong women leadership, extensive healthcare and gender violence prevention services, and community programs for women's health. UPES can study such examples for innovative ideas (for instance, Walailak runs a Women's Leadership Academy and a Gender Equality Research Center which could be inspirations for UPES to establish dedicated centers).

Many Australian and UK universities also excel in SDG 5 – e.g., **University of Dundee (UK)** and **Western Sydney University (Australia)** have been leaders. Western Sydney (ranked #1 globally overall in Impact Rankings for several years) maintained a top rank by measures like having a female Vice-Chancellor, equal pay audits, and large-scale programs to support Indigenous and refugee women in education. While UPES operates in a different context, the principle of top-level commitment and broad scope of programs is replicable. UPES might consider conducting formal benchmarking visits or exchanges with such institutions to adopt best practices such as gender budgeting (ensuring funding is allocated in a gender-responsive manner) or creating a one-stop Women's Resource Center as seen in many North American universities.

Regionally, an interesting insight is that **Asia and the Middle East have many rapidly improving institutions on gender equality** [2]. For example, universities in Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Middle East have invested in women's campuses or distance education for women, raising their scores. UPES could take advantage of being in a country with strong policy support for gender inclusion (India's government actively promotes women in STEM and higher education through programs like DST's Vigyan Jyoti, etc.). Aligning and partnering with these national initiatives will help UPES stay competitive.

In terms of **metrics benchmarking**, UPES's 30:70 gender ratio among students is a metric to improve towards parity (50:50) – something only a few co-educational universities achieve, often those with large humanities or medicine programs. Since UPES has specialized domains, a realistic medium-term target could be, say, 40:60 (which would outpace most tech universities). On women in leadership, aiming for ~30-40% female representation at top levels would put UPES in league with progressive global universities. The university might also benchmark qualitative aspects like campus climate – e.g.,

performing regular surveys of female student satisfaction and comparing those scores with peers if data is available.

One positive point: **National rankings and accreditation in India (like NAAC and NIRF)** have begun to emphasize gender equity (for instance, NAAC looks at the number of women beneficiaries of various schemes, and NIRF includes outreach programs). UPES's work in SDG 5 has likely contributed to its strong accreditation outcomes (NAAC A grade) and could boost future NIRF (which in 2025 introduced an "SDG & Social Outreach" metric) [17].

In conclusion, benchmarking reveals that UPES is on the right track with its holistic approach, but there is room to scale up. By learning from both domestic and global exemplars – such as establishing a formal **Gender Equality Office**, increasing transparency in gender-disaggregated outcomes, and pushing for greater parity in all spheres – UPES can improve its standing in initiatives like THE Impact Rankings and, more importantly, maximize its impact on gender equality.

Conclusion

UPES University's journey toward gender equality (SDG 5) reflects a deep institutional commitment and a multifaceted strategy encompassing policy, practice, and partnerships. As detailed in this report, UPES has put in place **strong policies** (from anti-discrimination rules to generous maternity leave and anti-harassment mechanisms) that provide a solid foundation for an inclusive campus [3] [5]. The leadership's dedication is evident in initiatives like the Shakti program, which empowers women within the university's ranks and helps embed a culture of equal opportunity [1]. **Representation of women** among students, faculty, and leaders has improved significantly due to proactive measures such as universal female scholarships and mentorship, though continuous effort will be needed to reach parity [1] [7].

UPES distinguishes itself through robust **support systems** for female stakeholders – be it financial aid, mentorship networks, childcare services, or campus safety enhancements – ensuring that women not only enter the university but also flourish here [6] [8]. These efforts contribute to high retention and success rates for female students and create a supportive work environment for female staff. The university's investment in **gender-focused research and innovation** amplifies its impact, with UPES scholars tackling issues like the digital gender divide in STEM and women's economic empowerment in their research [15] [11]. These scholarly activities not only inform better practices at UPES (such as curriculum changes and community program design) but also add to the global discourse on gender equality.

In the wider community, UPES has become a catalyst for change, extending its reach through **outreach programs and partnerships** that uplift women and girls beyond the campus gates [11]. By educating girls in local villages, training women in vocational skills, supporting children of working women, and collaborating with NGOs and government schemes, UPES demonstrates how universities can drive social progress in tandem with academic goals. Each project – whether it's a rural girl receiving mentorship or a staff member gaining new skills – creates ripples of empowerment that align with multiple SDGs.

Benchmarking analysis shows that while UPES has made laudable progress, it stands to gain from aspiring to the standards of top-performing institutions in gender equality. The encouraging news is that UPES has already adopted many global best practices (scholarships, women leadership programs,

safety audits, etc.), and with sustained focus, it can further elevate its outcomes and reputation in this arena. The university's leadership has expressed that *empowering women is not a one-day mission but a "constant endeavour"*, underlining a commitment to continuous improvement [8]. Future steps may include setting even more ambitious targets (like a 50:50 gender ratio in certain programs), introducing new initiatives (perhaps a center for women's studies or an incubator for women-led start-ups), and enhancing data systems to track progress in finer detail.

In conclusion, UPES's SDG 5 report card is one of **significant achievements and ongoing dedication**. The key ingredients of success – policy support, leadership will, community engagement, and accountability through metrics – are all in place. Women at UPES today enjoy opportunities and a voice that are markedly stronger than even a few years ago, as evidenced by rising enrollment, participation, and leadership by women in the university. By building on this momentum and learning from peers, UPES is well-positioned to continue advancing gender equality on campus and to serve as a model for other institutions. The impact of these efforts is transformative: not only is UPES enabling countless women to realize their personal aspirations, but it is also contributing to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive society in India – truly embodying the spirit of SDG 5, *"achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."*

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