

LEARNING HUB TO BE OPENED IN AUGUST

NTU's S\$45m facility to spur student-faculty engagement

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University (NTU) has unveiled a S\$45 million facility that is set to be the school's next-generation centre of learning and which will be opened for use by students and faculty in August. The beehive-like structure features 56 new-generation "smart" classrooms equipped with flexible

SINGAPORE – Nanyang Technological



Mr Thomas Heatherwick's firm Heatherwick Studio, which was behind the London Olympic Cauldron, was appointed to design the beehive-like Learning Hub, which features classrooms with electronic white boards and LCD screens.

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clustered seating for small-group discussions, electronic white boards, multiple LCD screens and wireless communication tools. Nooks, balconies and gardens for informal collaborative learning are also available throughout the eight-storey building.

These features are designed to support the "flipped classroom" pedagogy that NTU has adopted, under which students first learn through online materials in their own time, while class time is used to engage with professors and classmates in discussions and debates.

Speaking at the opening of the Learning Hub yesterday, Professor Kam Chan Hin, NTU's senior associate provost (undergraduate education), said the shift in the university's teaching method is to bring about more productive face-to-face time between professors and students, and encourage collaborative learning.

The Learning Hub will also feature an automated library with a collection comprising about 11,000 video titles and 1,200 books, which will eventually grow to 5,000 books, as well as a student-run cafe. The facilities will be open to all NTU students, professors and researchers all day, every day.

Heatherwick Studio, which was behind the London Olympic Cauldron, was appointed to design the building after a competition for the best design concept in 2011. Founder Thomas Heatherwick said: "In this information age, the most important commodity on a campus is social space to meet and learn from one another."

NTU's Learning Hub also received the Green Mark Platinum Award from the Building and Construction Authority in 2013. The hub's environmentally-friendly features include natural ventilation and energy-efficient lights with motion sensors. Natural foliage has been incorporated to reduce reliance on artificial cooling devices.