NTU’s second learning hub boasts ‘smart’ classrooms

Newly opened The Arc has 56 such rooms to encourage more discussions, better learning.

Amelie Fong
Education Correspondent

Classrooms with university students getting to know each other in small discussion groups, listening passively to lectures from lecturers, are becoming a less common sight.

For an university, a ‘smart’ classroom is not just one that comes equipped with multiple LED screens, higher-defination loudspeakers and video-conferencing tools.

Since 2010, NTU has done away with traditional classroom layouts so that students can learn more actively, engage with each other and keep up with the changing demands of workplaces.

Yesterday, NTU launched its In-Exeter learning hub, The Arc, a six-storey building with 56 smart classrooms.

The Arc, which cost S$415 million, is designed by local firm ONG&ONG. It has 124 rooms in discussion rooms, 11 rooms for group teaching and a trio of lecture theatres.

Over the past two years, NTU has been working on the new learning facility, which is part of the university’s S$1.6 billion Smart Campus project.

The Arc is designed to provide more opportunities for students to discuss ideas and interact across disciplines.

‘The Arc is designed to elicit more diverse learning, teaching, the delivery of knowledge and the effectiveness of the whole learning experience,’ said Prof. Andrew Glew, director of learning and teaching services.

With new learning arrangements, the so-called ‘big-headed’ classroom model, NTU students access material and content online.

Class time is thus devoted to deeper learning activities, such as working in small groups, engaging in more discussions with professors.

Third-year mechanical engineering student, Andrew Lin, said that with the flexible setup, students can work in a less formal environment.

“We can think about our own ideas, so we can for forward the recorded lectures or handwriting, compared with physical lectures — ours is more open,” said the 23-year-old.

But some students feel that there’s more interaction with professors.

Other universities such as the National University of Singapore are also moving towards more interactive and in-depth learning in their classrooms.

NTU’s SMART Campus approach — adapting digital technologies to support better learning and discovery, and to improve the sustainability of campuses.

NTU PRESIDENT SUBRA SURESH

280
Number of ‘smart’ classrooms at Nanyang Technological University

$415m
Cost of building the structure The Arc, learning hub

SMART CAMPUS
The Arc is the first part of Smart Campus approach — adapting digital technologies to support better learning and discovery, and to improve the sustainability of campuses.

NTU PRESIDENT SUBRA SURESH