New NTU hub to be hive of learning and interaction

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LIKE a beehive, the latest learning hub unveiled by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) on Monday looks remarkably self-sufficient.

The eight-storey building, involving a collection of towers surrounding a central space, has 56 new-generation smart classrooms which are fully equipped for collaborative learning and student interaction.

Each of the classrooms comes complete with flexible clustered seating for small group discussions, electronic white boards, multiple LCD screens, and wireless communication tools.

In line with NTU’s garden campus, the learning hub incorporates abundant natural foliage in its design, with internal greeneries reducing solar glare and natural heat gain. This reduces the hub’s reliance on artificial cooling devices.

The inverted shape of the building also enables upper floors to shade the lower levels, further reducing their exposure to solar heat.

Environmentalists will also celebrate the building’s energy-efficient light and motion sensors, as well as natural ventilation via the openings between pods, which reduces the need for fans to ensure air distribution.

The hive-shaped architectural icon, handiwork of top UK designer Thomas Heatherwick, will also feature other facilities that will cater to students’ needs. These include a library outpost offering a vast array of video and book titles, an automated book dispensing machine, as well as a Communication Cube run by NTU’s Language and Communication Centre.

Wi-fi will be available throughout the hub to allow users to stream audio and visual materials from the library outpost to their mobile devices.

Aesthetically, the hub is also a treat for the eye. As part of Mr Heatherwick’s design, the walls of the inner corridor and staircases are embedded with 700 specially commissioned drawings from illustrator Sara Fanelli, which are cast into the concrete and take reference from diverse disciplines ranging from science and technology to art and literature.

Set to be open this August for use by students, the learning hub will provide “an exciting mix of learning, community and recreational spaces for NTU students, professors, and researchers from various disciplines to gather and interact”, said NTU professor Kam Chan Hjn, senior associate provost (Undergraduate Education).

“By bringing people and their ideas together, NTU can spark future innovations and new knowledge that increasingly happen at the intersection of disciplines.”