

Press release

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Tanaka Business School at Imperial College London Topping Out

The topping out ceremony for the Tanaka Business School at Imperial College London designed by Foster and Partners was held today at the Business Schools new location on Exhibition Road, South Kensington.

The project marks a continuation of the Masterplan undertaken by Foster and Partners in the early 1990s and the third project by the practice on the campus. The 26 million building costs have been met by noted technology investor and alumnus Dr Gary Tanaka. The new home for the School will occupy a prominent location adjacent to a new main entrance for the College, which also forms part of the project.

Sitting amongst existing 1960s institutional buildings and the Grade II listed Royal School of Mines, the Tanaka Business School will house teaching, research and office facilities. The School, with structural, building services, civil, geotechnical, IT, AV and communication systems consultation by Buro Happold, has been divided into two parts the teaching element is within a new building and the office areas within three refurbished floors of the existing Royal School of Mines.

The entire new-build element, together with a new College entrance, will be cloaked in a protective envelope, creating a year round usable atrium space within. The 24m-high glass facade will hang from roof and wind loads will be carried back to the columns via slender T-section struts. The atrium is capped with white translucent ETFE pillows measuring 20 x 4.2 metres. These provide better insulation than glass and will admit generous amounts of filtered daylight into the atrium space. In the event of fire the pillows can be released to act as smoke vents.

The base of the atrium space will contain a social Forum space, which will be the social hub of the new School, and a cafe. A six-storey high drum containing six circular lecture theatres based on the interactive Harvard Business School model rises from the Forum. The drum will be clad with 12mm diameter stainless-steel tubes, acting as an acoustic baffle. The spaces between the tubes also act as vents for the lecture theatres. A cantilevered steel staircase rises the full height of the drum, providing additional access to the upper floors of office accommodation in the Royal School of Mines.

The adjacent ground level entrance space will serve as a new front door for the College and will provide exhibition space creating a new shop window for the College and a chance to showcase its achievements in the fields of science, technology and medicine.

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