

Blog Ideas and Blog Posts for the Centre for Nutraceuticals at the University of Westminster

A Day in the Life of a Receptionist at the Centre for Nutraceuticals

If you've ever visited the Centre for Nutraceuticals at the University of Westminster, there's a good chance we've already met. Hello, my name is Zach and I'm one of the first faces you see when you walk through our doors. My desk sits right at the entrance of the Centre just opposite the 4th floor elevators, and from here, I get to witness an interesting blend of science, innovation and everyday humanity all in one place.

My day usually starts a little before 09:00. Upon arrival, I switch on the lights (if they aren't on already), drink some water, especially as we approach the summer and temperatures soar (very important!), and take a few moments to review the day's schedule. From visiting academics to industry partners, students coming in for research projects, or seeing mysterious boxes labelled 'temperature-sensitive' — no two days are ever the same.

One of the things I love most is the nonstop energy here. You never know who's going to walk in — perhaps a guest speaker from a global nutraceutical company or one of our PhD students juggling a tray of samples and a laptop. There's always something going on and although I'm not in a lab coat, I get to hear snippets of exciting research just by being here; things about gut health, plant-based supplements or even personalised nutrition. It has been fascinating just learning a little bit just from overhearing insightful conversations in the lobby!

Part of my role is making sure everyone feels welcome and at ease, especially if it's their first time visiting. The Centre has a very scientific, futuristic aesthetic from the very moment you arrive, but scientific spaces can sometimes feel intimidating. My job, in this respect, is to try to make sure that from the moment someone steps in, they know we're approachable, helpful and genuinely excited about what we do.

There are practical parts to the job, of course, such as: signing visitors in, helping students find their way to labs or meeting rooms, making sure events run smoothly and occasionally troubleshooting 'urgent' issues like where the coffee cups have gone or figuring out how to operate the projector. But it's also the small, human moments that make the job special. Like chatting to a nervous student before their assessment or catching up with staff over their latest project in the works.

By the afternoon, the rhythm changes slightly — fewer visitors, more admin tasks. After my lunchbreak, I usually spruce up the reception area, check on bookings for the next day, and maybe sneak in a cheeky cuppa of herbal tea (a perk of working in a place where nutrition is taken seriously!). Sometimes, researchers pop by just to say hi or share how their day's gone, which makes me feel more connected to the work happening here.

Working at the Centre for Nutraceuticals has been more than just a job behind a desk — it's being part of a community that's driven by curiosity, innovation, and care for people's health and from my little corner at reception, I get to be a small part of that big picture, every single day.

By: Zach Omitowaju

Conversations at the Front Desk: What People Really Want to Know

Light-hearted take on FAQs or funny/interesting questions you get often.

During my time as a receptionist, experiencing everything at the Centre for Nutraceuticals is such an exhilarating adventure from the coming and going of students, staff, visitors and industry partners. From first-time guests to regular researchers, everyone has questions when they arrive. After a while, you start to notice that many of those questions are about more than just directions or schedules — they reflect people’s curiosity about who we are and what we do.

Here are some of the questions that curious people have asked:

1. What exactly are ‘nutraceuticals’?

It is such a valid question. Many visitors have a rough idea — something to do with nutrition and / or supplements — but they’re eager for a clearer answer. My explanation is that nutraceuticals are products derived from food sources that offer extra health benefits, beyond basic nutrition. That includes things like fortified foods, dietary supplements, and functional drinks. By the time they have taken in my answer, people are genuinely excited to learn more — and sometimes a bit amazed at how much science goes into that bottle of vitamins they bought at the shop.

2. Is this a clinic where I can get advice?

While the Centre focuses mainly on research — studying how ingredients, supplements and functional foods impact health — we are not a clinic offering individual health consultations. However, we do work closely with academic and industry partners to bring better science to the products people use every day. I usually redirect them to the Centre for Nutraceuticals if they are keen to learn more.

3. Can I take a tour of the labs?

Who doesn’t want a behind the scenes sneak peek? Although access to our labs is restricted for safety reasons, we occasionally run tours for special guests, prospective students or during public engagement events. I always encourage people to keep an eye out for these opportunities — it’s a real treat to see where groundbreaking research happens. It can be very insightful, interesting and beneficial for the ultra-curious.

4. Do you have any student opportunities?

It’s wonderful how many students ask about internships, placements or volunteer roles. The Centre is proud to support the next generation of scientists and there are often opportunities for students to get involved, whether through research projects or public engagement activities. If you are enthusiastic and curious, there is usually a way to contribute!

5. What is it like working here?

When people ask what it's like to be part of the Centre, people simply want a personal connection and I'm always happy to share that it's inspiring. There's a real sense of collaboration and discovery here, and even from my seat at reception, I feel part of something bigger — helping bridge the gap between scientific research and better health for everyone.

By: Zach Omitowoju