Timeline & Checklist for Graduate School

Top two pieces of advice when considering graduate school:
1.) Start early (spring of junior year) and
2.) Know your goals and the RIGHT TIME for graduate training.

Junior Year - Spring
Identify Important Factors to YOU
Identify characteristics that are important to you in a graduate school such as:
1. Type, specialization and strength of academic programs
2. Faculty scholars in the program
3. Curriculum or types of courses offered
4. Location
5. Cost
6. Cultural environment
7. Research opportunities and
8. Success of alumni to name a few.
For example, if you want highly specialized academic training in music therapy with autistic children, you need to find institutions that focus on that particular area.

Research institutions
Once you know what you want, use these resources to research programs.

Online Resources
- Grad Schools.com  http://www.gradschools.com/
- Grad View  http://www.gradview.com/
- Match College  http://www.matchcollege.com/

Professional Associations
Every career field has a number of professional associations based around that career. These associations provide a variety of resources related to finding a job, preparing for careers and researching graduate programs. Many times these associations will include a list of accredited graduate programs in the field. Simply do a google search on “Professional Associations in ___ (your career field)___”

Department Faculty
Faculty within your current department are scholars in the field and will have advice on reputable programs within your area of study. Let your faculty members know what you are seeking and ask them to recommend various programs and characteristics of each.
Know deadlines!
Planning for graduate school begins during your junior year. Application deadlines are generally during the early part of the fall semester of your senior year. Be aware there may be a series of deadlines to track. For example, often the institution admission deadline may be different from the department program deadline which may be different from the deadline to apply for Graduate Assistantships.

Research admission exams & STUDY
Learn about how to prepare and register for entrance exams at these sites.

GMAT  http://www.mba.com/us
GRE    http://www.ets.org/gre/
LSAT   http://www.lsac.org/JD/LSAT/about-the-LSAT.asp
MCAT  https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/

Know if your graduate program requires specific subject exams on the GRE. The GRE is a general entrance exam, but some programs require a specific subject area exam in addition to the general test.

PREPARE for the exam before you take it. There are resources available online to help you prepare for the exams including practice test questions. On average, entrance exams cost several hundred dollars each time you take them, and you want to be prepared!

Junior Year - Summer
Take admission exams
Register online for entrance exams at the websites listed above.

Write personal statement/essay/cover letter
It takes time, research, and good writing skills to craft a solid personal statement for each application. Each institution has specific criteria to include in the personal statement. Read this list of criteria very carefully. You need to customize each personal statement for that institution. Ask faculty members and Career Services staff to read drafts of your personal statement.

Key points to address in your personal statement:
1. Why you are applying to graduate school
2. Why you have selected that particular institution and program (program strengths)
3. Why you are a good fit for this program
4. How you have demonstrated your ability to handle the academic rigor of graduate school
5. Your career goals
6. How this graduate degree will help you reach those goals
7. Your level of understanding of and passion and commitment for the field

Senior Year - Fall
Prepare resume or curriculum vita
Contact Career Services for assistance and view the sample resumes in the Hire-a-Hornet Resource Library.

Apply for admission, financial aid and graduate assistant positions
Be sure to complete all required applications for these items. Some institutions have separate applications (and deadlines) for admission and graduate assistant positions.

Verify your application is complete
Contact institutions to verify they have received your completed application materials.
Too many times candidates don’t follow up and miss deadlines and opportunities because materials were missing.

**Complete practice interview**

Schedule your practice interview with Career Services staff at career@emporia.edu or 620-341-5407. If your faculty advisor is willing, invite them to participate in the practice interview with you as well. Faculty serve on selection committees for graduate or professional school and can simulate a typical graduate school interview.

**Letters of Recommendation**

Request letters of recommendation from faculty members. Keep in mind that you need to give them at least a month to write this letter; some faculty members may want you to give them as much information as possible at the beginning of the semester, so know what they prefer. If you apply to multiple schools, they will need to send multiple letters, though it may include the same content. Give faculty complete instructions for sending the letters including envelopes that are addressed and stamped if needed. Writers are doing you a huge favor in writing these letters—be gracious and conscientious.

**Senior Year – Spring**

**Make Selection**

You will hear about admission generally in the spring semester. Review criteria for schools that have accepted you and make your decision. Inform other schools that you have made your selection.

**Write thank you notes to reference writers**