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# Sense of Belonging in STEM

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### **Abstract**

When analysing academic performances in STEM subjects, there are reports that students of ethnic minorities perform significantly less than their peers, not of minority descent. In the literature a sense of belonging has been identified as one of the contributing factors affecting student engagement, academic performance and overall experience. Therefore, to address this problem and to understand what sense of belonging means, this project aimed to look at what can be done to enhance sense belonging of our students and staff. To do this an analysis of sense of belonging in STEM via a systematic review and focus group discussion was carried out. From the 8 papers that were included in the final review, the results indicated that for all of them the main contributing factors leading to a lack of sense of belong were social support and community, followed by imposter syndrome and race. This was backed up from the focused group where students discussed feelings of isolation and not belonging, looked down on or microaggressions and self-doubt and imposter syndrome. These results will help to implement activities in order to address this issue.

**Keywords:** Sense of belonging, STEM, inclusion, race equality