LIA GUIDE TO MEDICAL UNDERWRITING FOR LIFE INSURANCE



2024 EDITION

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LIA GUIDE TO MEDICAL UNDERWRITING FOR LIFE INSURANCE

This LIA Guide provides information of a general nature and does not give any life insurance customer any right or cause of action whatsoever to take legal action against LIA or its members.

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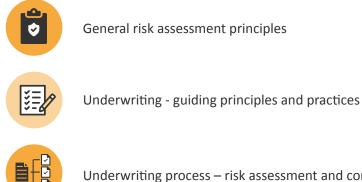
PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE





This Guide provides an overview of the insurers' general underwriting principles and practices relating to the risk assessment of individuals for life insurance and health insurance coverage.

THE FOLLOWING TOPICS ARE COVERED:



Underwriting process - risk assessment and considerations



1

Case studies

The objective of the Guide is to help you¹ better understand how an insurer evaluates your application based on the disclosures made and medical evidence provided by you.



GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES



2

GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES



2.1 PRINCIPLE OF UTMOST GOOD FAITH

The principle of utmost good faith is a principle used in insurance contracts. This requires contracting parties (i.e. the insurer and you) to act honestly and to provide accurate information. This is essential for the insurance contract to be valid.

Any untrue, incorrect, or incomplete information or declaration provided to the insurer can cause the insurance contract to be void or claims to be rejected. For example, non-disclosure of any current or past medical conditions (such as cancer, diabetes, etc.) may cause the insurance policy to be invalid.

The responsibility rests primarily on you to disclose all material facts truthfully and honestly in the application form.

When in doubt on whether to disclose a piece of information, we encourage you to disclose it.



2.2 CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL RISK PROFILE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

An insurance premium is the amount that you pay for an insurance policy. The insurer will consider the risks presented by you and adjust the premiums or coverage to appropriately reflect your risk profile relative to those of others in the insurance pool. Each application is assessed on its own merits, taking into consideration the individual's risk profile. Insurers conduct such assessments on the analysis of life expectancy and health indicators, taking into consideration factors such as build, gender, health/medical profile as well as research and studies based on historical data.

The premiums paid by all policyholders are contributed to a common pool to share financial risks equitably. This is the concept of risk pooling in insurance.

The insurer manages this common pool on behalf of all the policyholders. For the pool to be sustainable, the premiums paid must be commensurate with the risks. In general, as a person grows older, one may be more likely to fall ill, be disabled or experience a higher risk of premature death. As a younger person is generally expected to live longer and less likely to fall critically ill compared to an older person, the younger person will usually pay lower premiums. If a person has a medical condition, the insurance application may either require extra premium to be paid or may even be declined.

Point to note: The common pool will not be sustainable when there are more people with medical conditions relative to healthy people in the insurance pool. This will increase the overall cost of insurance for all the policyholders in the group. Hence, risk assessment is very important in the insurance industry to ensure that the insurance pool is sustainable, with sufficient funds to pay the anticipated claims.



UNDERWRITING GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES



UNDERWRITING GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

3.1 UNDERWRITING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS UNDERWRITING?

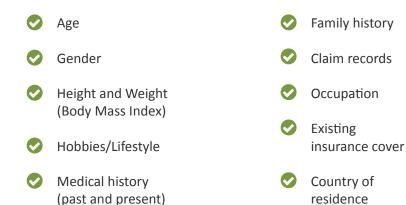
Underwriting is the process that insurance companies undertake to evaluate the risk of insuring a person's life and/or health and the corresponding premium that they should pay.

Insurers follow a set of guiding principles as set out below when they conduct their underwriting process. This is to promote a consistent and fair approach towards risk assessment:

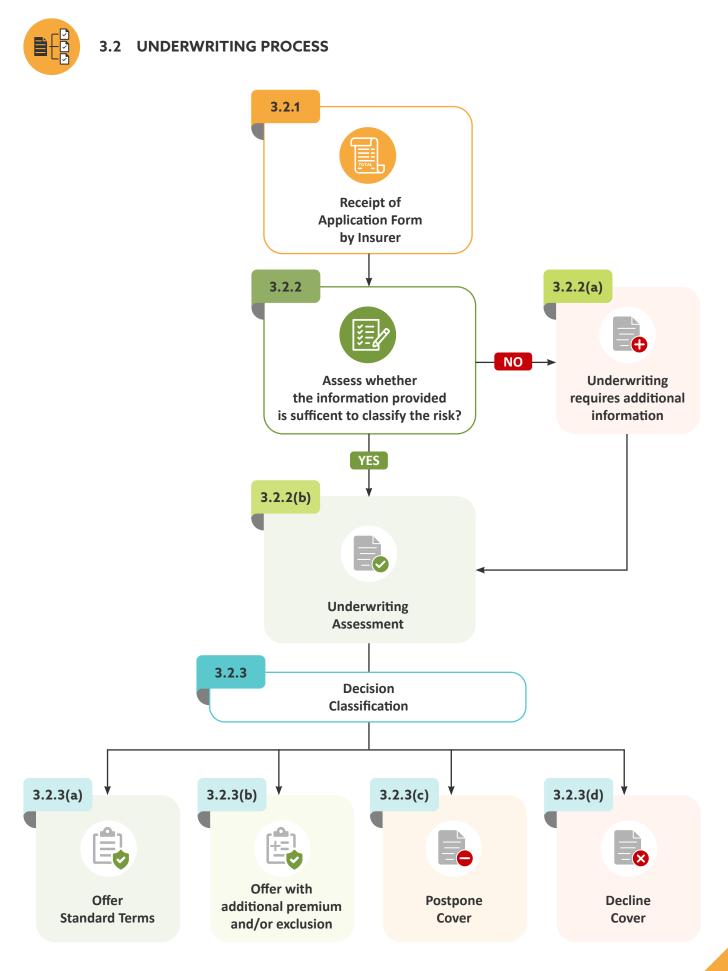
- Act in a fair and reasonable manner
- Assess each application based on the merits of the case, according to each person's risk profile
- Assess objectively and holistically based on disclosures and medical evidence e.g. a medical report from attending physician, medical tests, results of statistical or actuarial data etc.
- Underwriting will be based on the same set of principles and practices for all types of medical conditions and risk profiles
- Charge premium that is commensurate with the risk profile



WHAT DOES AN UNDERWRITER CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING THE RISK PROFILE?







RECEIPT OF APPLICATION FORM BY INSURER

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3.2.1

The application form (also known as "*proposal form*") is the insurer's main source of underwriting information. To facilitate its underwriting assessment process, the insurer will ask for relevant information to assess the "risk profile" (also known as "material information") of the person or subject matter to be insured.

As part of the underwriting process, Underwriters may ask for additional information to be provided to assess the severity of the conditions (if any) and to perform a proper risk assessment.

- Depending on your age and amount of insurance in your application, you may have to undergo a <u>routine</u> medical examination and/or tests to be conducted by the Insurers' panel of doctors.
- Based on the disclosure of your medical condition or lifestyle, Underwriters may request for additional information via questionnaires. For example, you may need to complete the "Asthma Questionnaire" if you have disclosed asthma condition or "Diving Questionnaire" if you engage in scuba diving.
- Medical Examination and Tests to be conducted by the Insurers' panel of doctors based on disclosure of your medical conditions or lifestyle.
- Any other relevant reports (medical and/or non-medical related) if the information provided is not enough to assess the risk profile (For example, if the application states that you have co-morbidity or are still on follow-up, the Underwriter may write to your attending doctor/other professionals for reports).

For hospitalisation cover, you will be asked to provide the report at your own cost.

However, for other types of coverages (refer to Section 4), any fees incurred for the Medical Examination, tests performed by the Insurers' panel of doctors and medical reports may be borne by the Insurers. If the case is subsequently offered on Standard term by the Insurer and not taken up by you, you may have to bear the cost. However, if the case is counter offered with exclusion or loading and you decide not to take up this offer, the fees will be borne by the Insurers (refer to Section 3.2.3 for Underwriting Decisions).

3.2.2

UNDERWRITING ASSESSMENT



In an insurer's underwriting assessment, it will consider the severity of your medical condition(s) and the types of coverage in the application, amongst other factors.

For example, if you have previously suffered from a slipped disc, the insurer may still offer you standard terms for the life cover. However, the insurer may impose an exclusion on your spine for

the total and permanent disability benefit (TPD) and the hospitalisation benefit because of the higher risk of surgery and hospitalisation.

Where the associated risks involve multiple organs, most benefits such as disability (TPD), critical illness, and hospitalisation cover will not be offered. One example could be diabetes which potentially affects the heart, eyes, nerves, skin, kidney, etc. If your diabetes is poorly controlled, the insurer may not be able to offer any type of coverage to you.

Where the medical condition does not affect other organs, the insurer may offer you certain benefit(s). However, the specific medical condition and its associated risks may be excluded from the benefit(s). One example could be blindness. In general, the insurer considers the risks associated with the medical condition when imposing an exclusion on the policy.

Each insurer has their own underwriting guidelines and risk appetite. Hence, the underwriting outcomes may differ.

3.2.3 UNDERWRITING DECISIONS

Following the underwriting assessment, the final decision on the application will be one of the following outcomes.

3.2.3(a) Offer Standard Terms



If the Underwriter classifies your risk profile as standard risk, which is in line with the standard premium chargeable for the insurance plan, the insurer would accept your application on standard terms as originally quoted without having to charge extra premiums or impose any exclusions. Most applicants would fall under this outcome.

3.2.3(b)

Offer with Loading (Extra Premium) and/or Exclusion



If the Underwriter is unable to accept your application on Standard terms due to factors such as being overweight and/or pre-existing medical conditions, they may accept the case with Loading (Extra Premium) and/or with Exclusion(s). For example, if applicant has Loss of Hearing as a pre-existing condition, an exclusion of "any disability resulting directly or indirectly from loss of hearing" may be imposed.

In such cases, the Insurers will counter offer you the revised terms and you may decide if you want to take up the policy.

3.2.3(c)

Postpone Cover

Decline Cover



The insurer may decide to postpone your application for a period of time. For example, if you have indicated on the application form that you are due for some surgery (e.g. spine surgery), the insurer may not be willing to offer you any terms now due to the high risk and uncertainty of the impending surgery.

3.2.3(d)



If your risk profile is assessed to be unacceptable to the insurer, the insurer will decline your application. This decision is made for more severe cases (e.g. Uncontrolled Hypertension). However, if your condition improves, you can always resubmit a new application to the Insurer.

For policies that have been previously accepted with loading (extra premiums) and/or exclusions, you may submit fresh medical evidence to Insurers to reassess your risk profile if your medical conditions have improved.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSURANCE COVER





DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSURANCE COVER

This table list out the common types of insurance cover as illustrated in the case studies in Section (9):-



LIFE (DEATH) COVER

Life insurance pays out a sum of money on the death of the insured or at policy maturity (e.g. whole life policy or endowment plan).

2



CRITICAL ILLNESS COVER

Critical illness insurance pays out a sum of money when the insured is diagnosed with a critical illness covered by the policy. Types of critical illness cover may vary from insurer to insurer.

3

TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY COVER (TPD)

Total and Permanent Disability insurance pays out a sum of money when the insured is severely disabled with no hope of recovery. What is considered as total and permanent disability is defined in the policy and may differ from insurer to insurer.



HOSPITALISATION COVER (HEALTH INSURANCE)



Health insurance helps to pay for healthcare costs in the event of injury or illness. Singaporean and Permanent Residents are covered by MediShield Life – a basic health insurance plan that provides universal, lifelong coverage for large hospital bills and selected costly outpatient treatments, regardless of age, gender, or health condition. The coverage is sized to cover Class B2/C wards in public hospitals. Those who prefer additional coverage for private hospitals or A/B1-type wards in the public hospitals may wish to consider an Integrated Shield Plan (IP).



CONSUMER GUIDES



5 CONSUMER GUIDES

If you are interested to obtain a life or health insurance plan and want to find out more before engaging a representative, please click on the link below:





MANAGING AND SERVICING YOUR COMPLAINTS

6

MANAGING AND SERVICING YOUR COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint about your insurance policy, you should first refer the matter to your insurer. Insurers provide information and clear instructions on their websites on how to lodge a complaint. You may also contact your representative.

Insurers should handle complaints promptly in an independent and fair manner.

LODGING A COMPLAINT



STEP 01

Provide details such as name, contact numbers and exact nature of your complaint, including the background, i.e. what has taken place and the documents to support your case.

STEP 02

The insurer will acknowledge your complaint within two business days.



STEP 03

Within 15 business days after the date of receipt of your complaint, the insurer will provide an interim response if a final response has not been sent.

STEP 04

Within 30 business days after the date of receipt of your complaint, the insurer will provide the final response.

STEP 05

If the outcome of your complaint is unsatisfactory, you may appeal to the insurer in writing and the insurer will respond to your appeal within 14 business days.

STEP 06

Every insurer maintains a Complaints Register to record and monitor the status and outcome of all complaints.



RESOLVING YOUR DISPUTE



7 RESOLVING YOUR DISPUTE

If you are dissatisfied with the insurer's final response to you, the insurer will refer you to an independent disputes resolution institution known as the Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre (FIDReC), if appropriate.

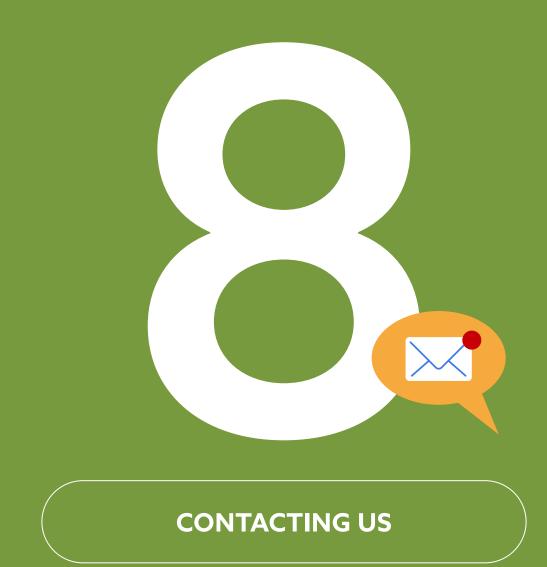
Contact FIDReC for more information on the types of complaints or disputes it handles.

FIDReC

36 Robinson Road #15-01 City House, Singapore 068877

- Phone: +65 6327 8878
- Email: info@fidrec.com.sg
- Fax: +65 6327 8488
- https://www.fidrec.com.sg/

If you are dissatisfied with the final decision of FIDReC, you may reject the decision and consider other options, such as taking legal action, to follow up on the matter.







You can contact the LIA Singapore in the following ways:



Email: lia@lia.org.sg

www.lia.org.sg

Contact details of the members of LIA Singapore (i.e. life insurers) are stated at:



https://www.lia.org.sg/about-us/membership/





9 CASE STUDIES

The ten case studies or descriptions of matters are purely illustrative to provide a better understanding of the requirements that a particular insurer may need for underwriting assessment depending on the insurer, applicant's risk profile and type of coverage applied for.

The underwriting outcome depends on an insurer's assessment of your personal information and a variety of factors that are unique to your case.

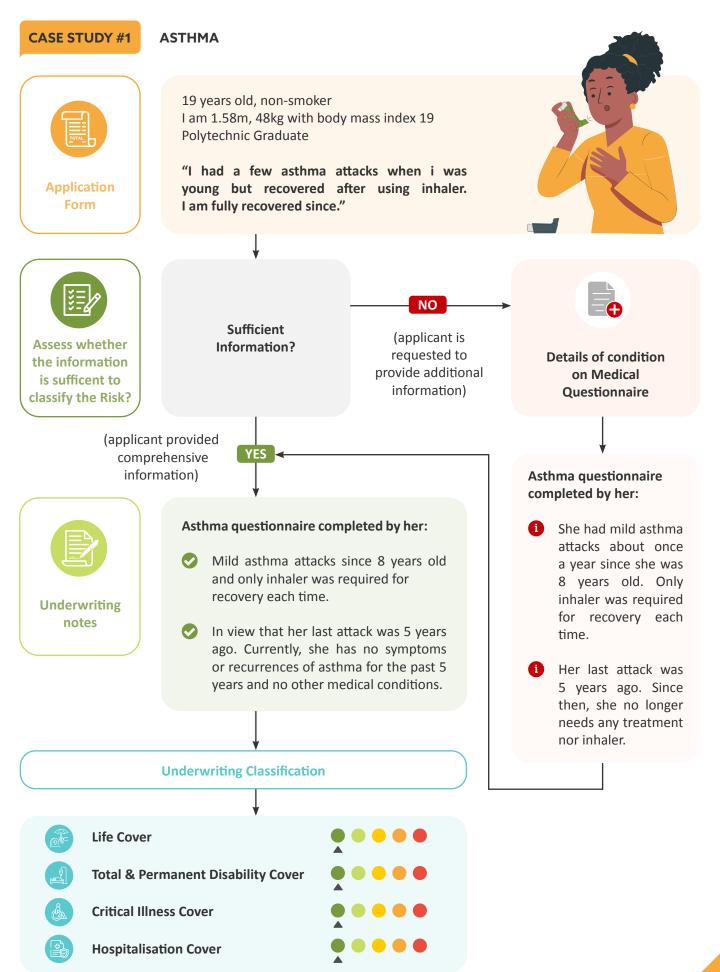
These case studies do not provide all the underwriting outcomes of all insurers. Any prior underwriting outcome reached by an insurer or as illustrated in the case studies does not guarantee a similar outcome in another case.

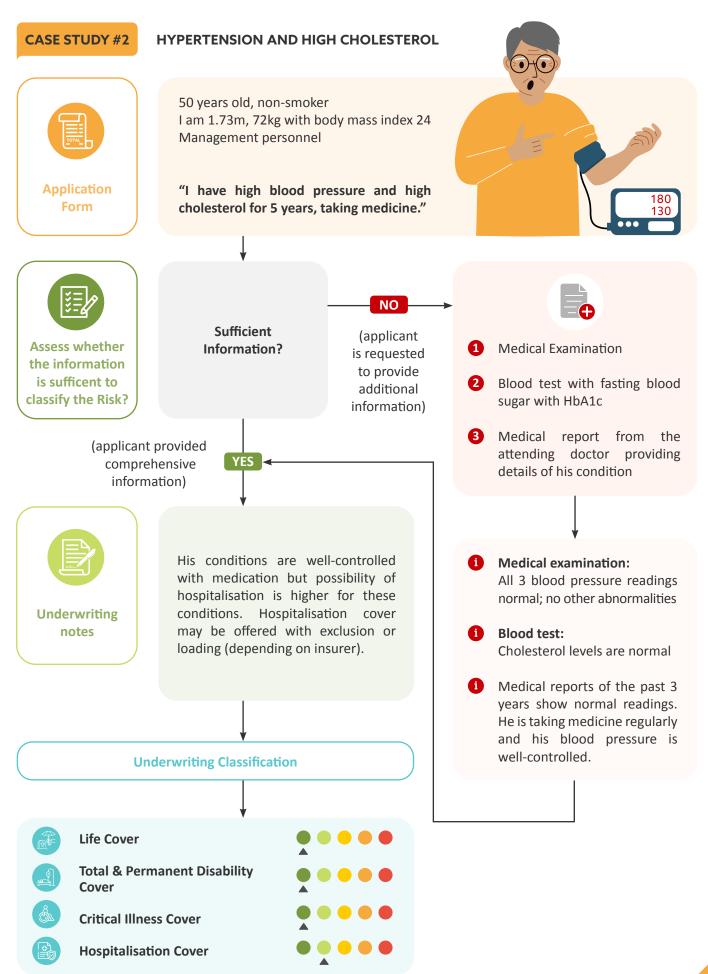
** For the purpose of the case studies illustrated under "Hospitalisation Cover", it refers to IP coverage.

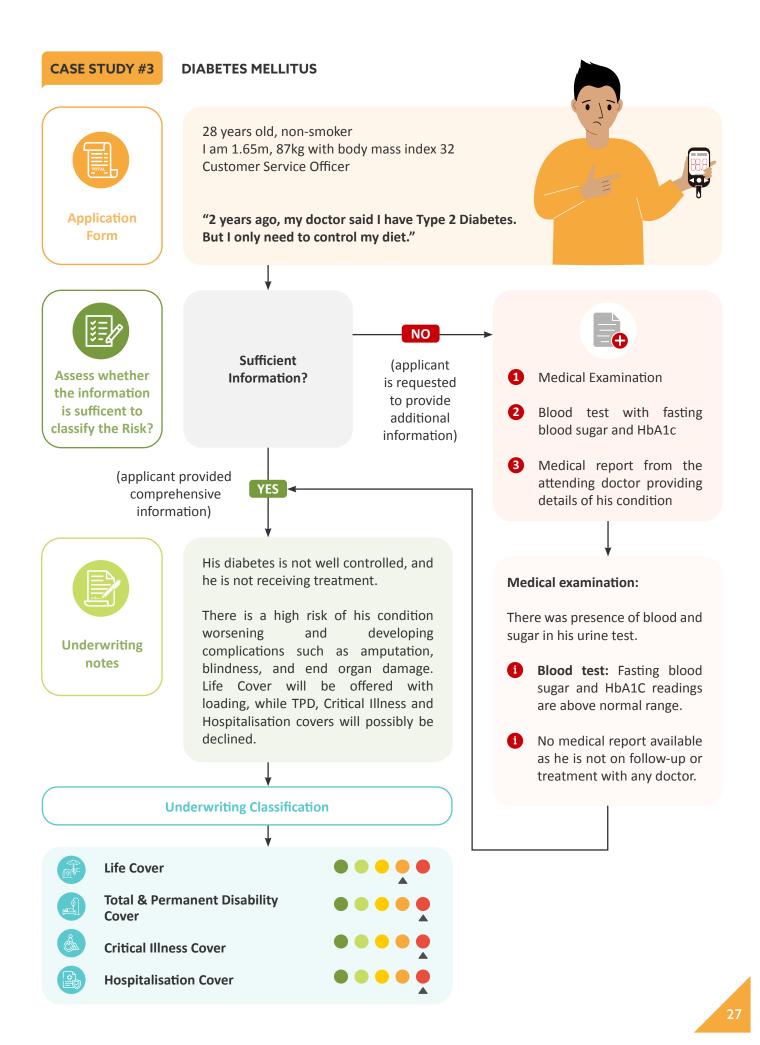
"Traffic Light illustration" is used to depict the possible underwriting outcomes for each case study.

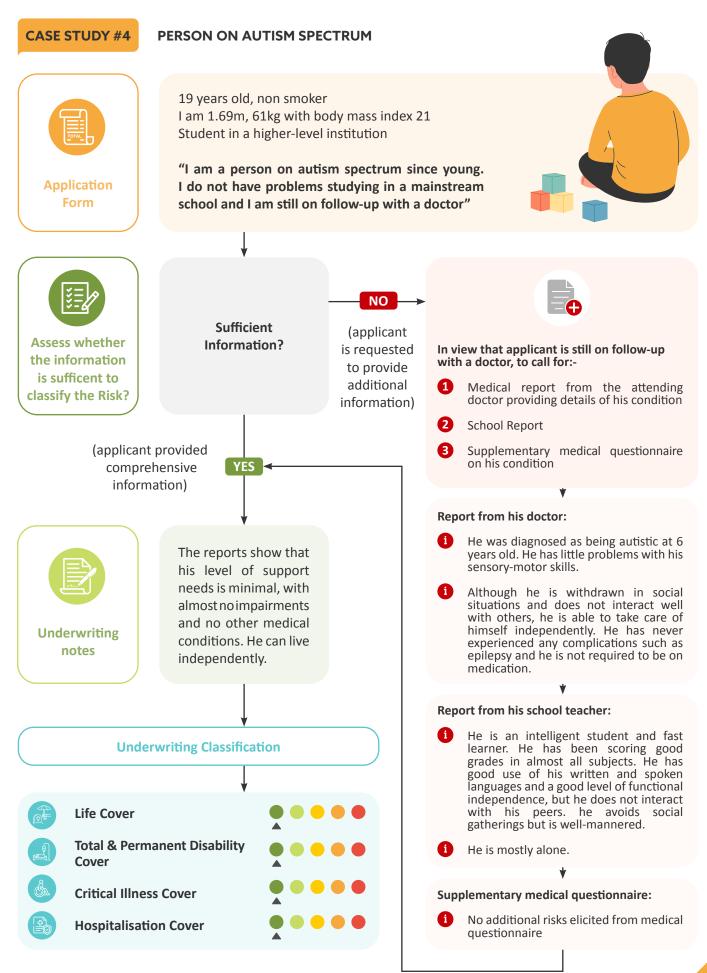
Each colour does not represent a single outcome but illustrates a possible range of outcomes ranging from the best possible outcome of standard rate (i.e. no extra premium), standard rate with exclusion(s), through to extra premium payable and the most severe outcome of rejection or postponement of coverage as follows:

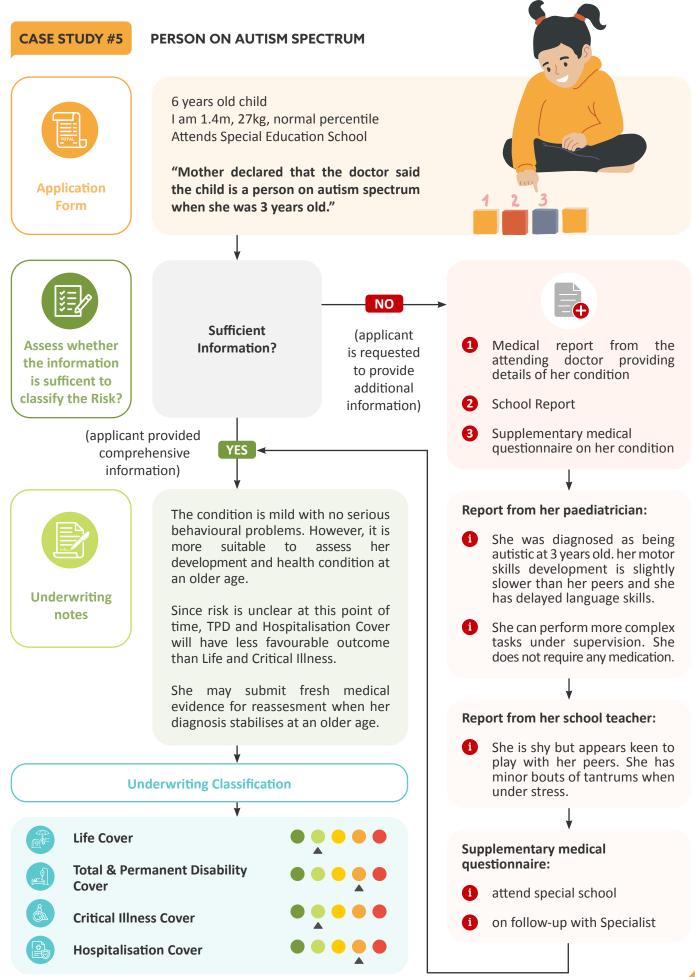


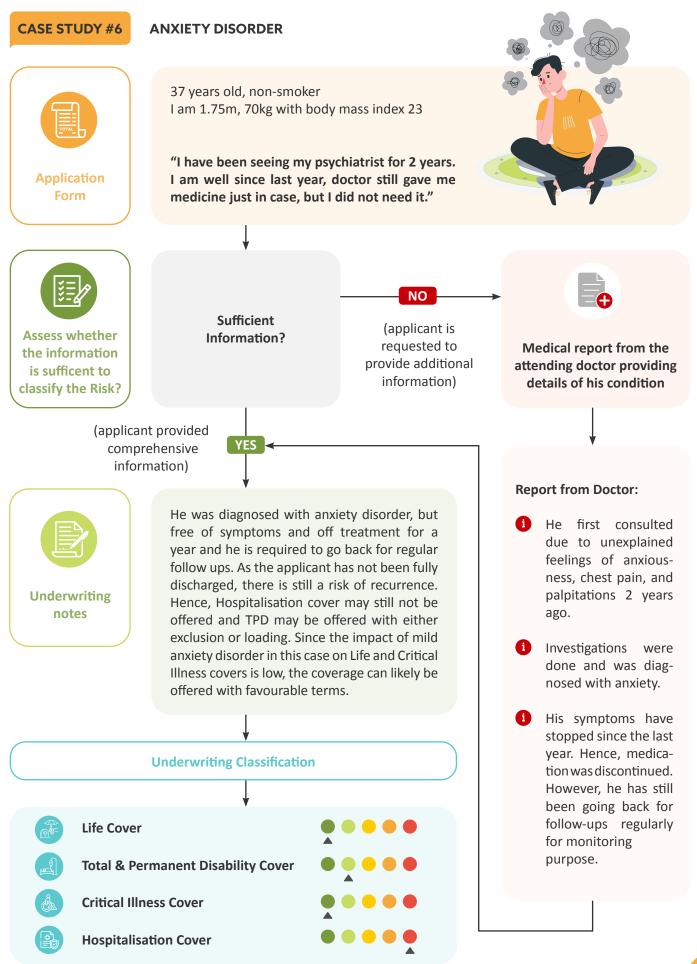


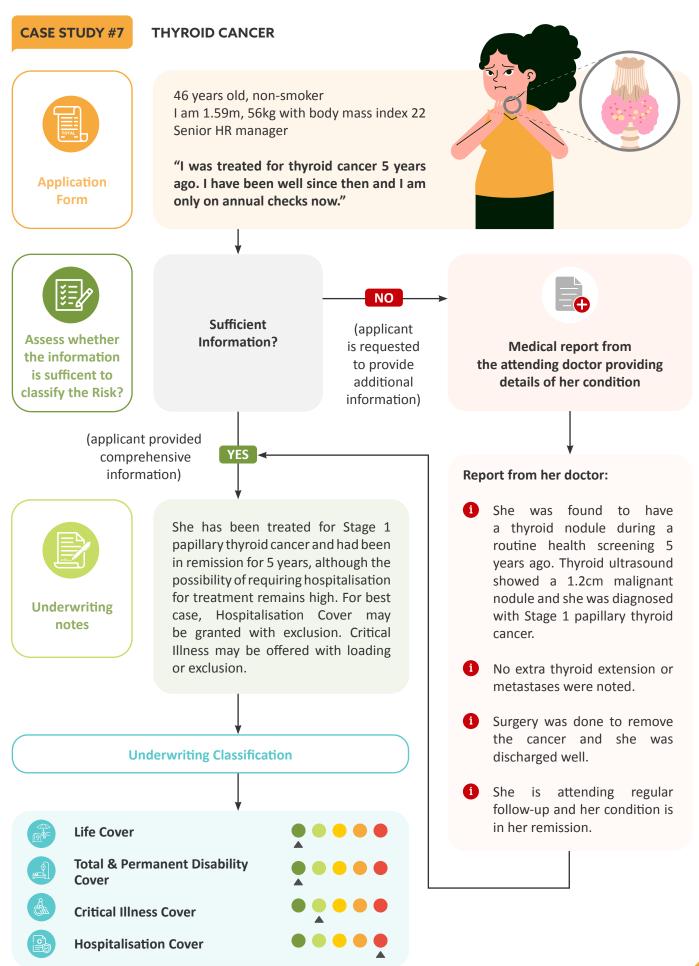


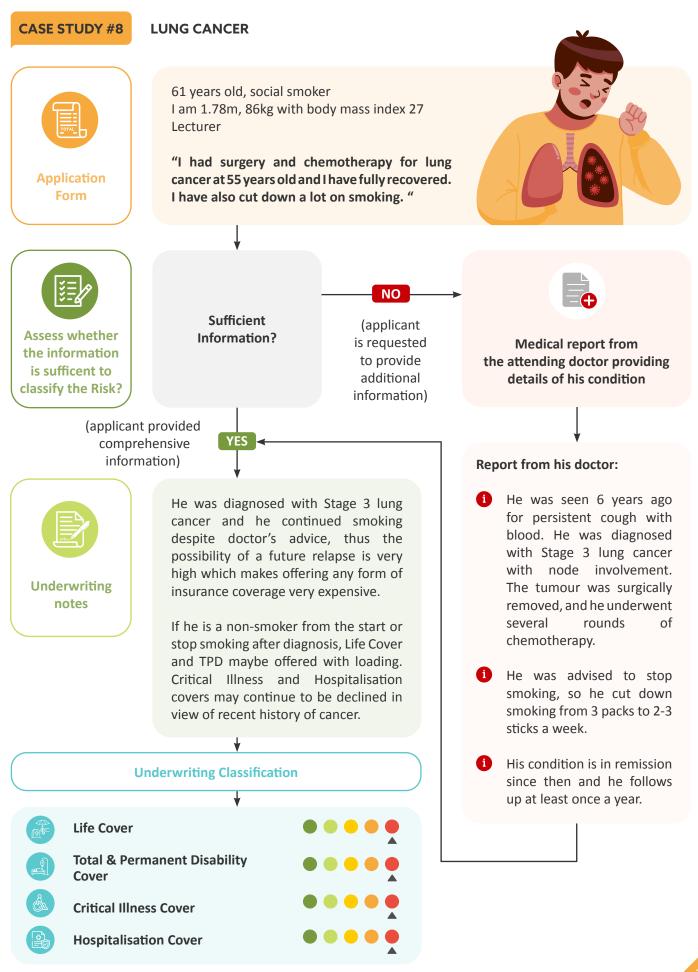


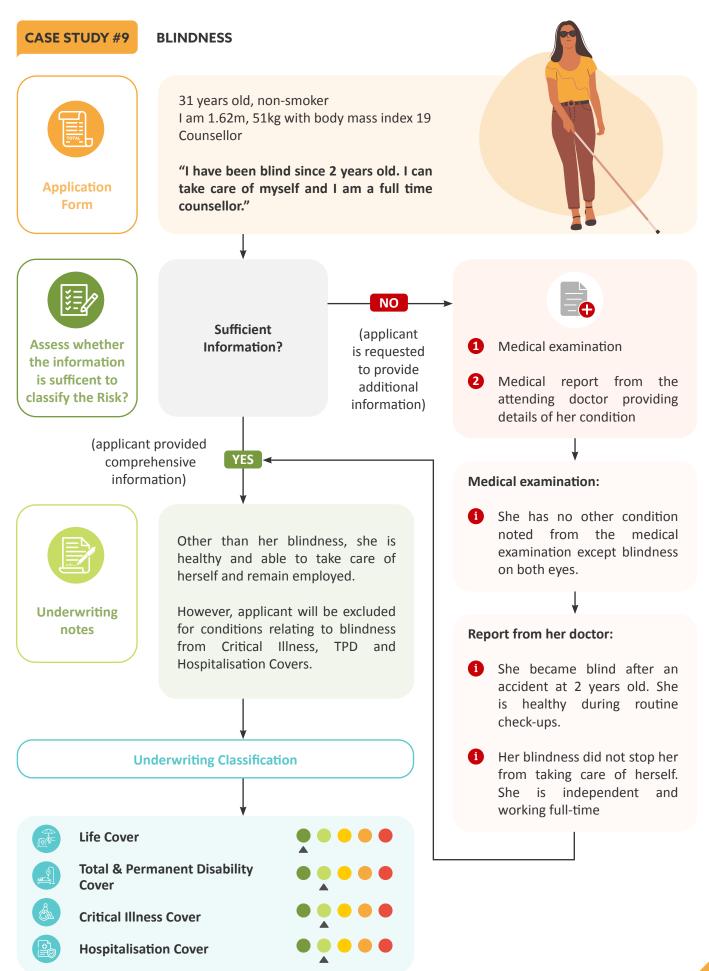




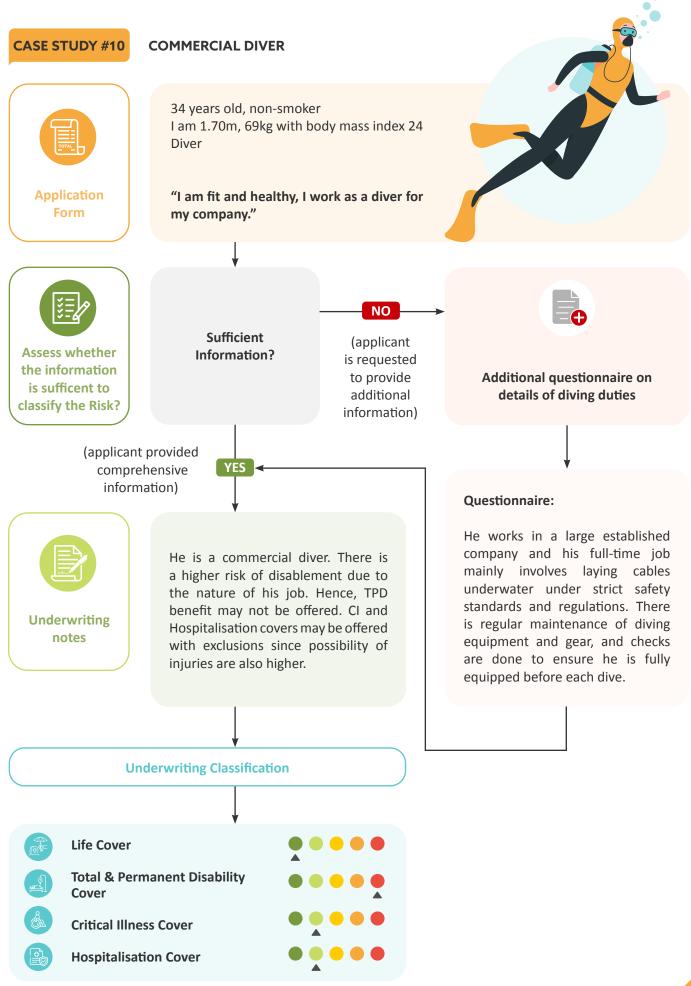








CASE STUDIES



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